

**me tawk
funny**



Neil Roy McFarlane

Me Tawk Funny
by
Neil Roy McFarlane

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And now it's time for ...

Me Tawk Funny

Hector Dumble thought the name 'Hector Dumble' was a really dumb name.

"Of course it isn't," said Mrs Dumble. "It's a very cool name."

"It's not cool," said Hector. "It's dumb – just like me."

"Don't be silly Hector," said Mrs Dumble. "You're not dumb. You just need to study harder, that's all."

Hector was bottom of the class. One problem was his teacher Mr Weazel. Mr Weazel always seemed to be picking on Hector and making him do lines and giving him extra homework and making him stay behind after class. Hector didn't like Mr Weazel and it seemed that Mr Weazel didn't like Hector.

Another problem was that Hector just didn't want to study. He wanted to go outside and have fun. And what was it with all these exams anyway? It sometimes seemed to Hector that life was just one exam after another, an endless procession of exams stretching off into the future. Would they ever end?

You might think Hector was lazy but actually he was a very active boy. He wasn't one of those kids who just likes to stay in and watch TV all the time. Hector liked to go out and ride a bike and kick a ball and go fishing and play with Buster and that kind of thing.

Buster was the Dumbles' dog. Hector and his father had found him on a fishing trip one time. Buster had been abandoned and was lying on the grass by the river. He was so hungry he couldn't walk. His ribs were sticking out and he was the skinniest dog you ever saw in your life. Hector's father didn't think Buster would live but they carried him to the car and took him home anyway. They fed Buster and he soon put on weight and after a couple of weeks he was jumping around and fetching sticks just like any other dog.

Mrs Dumble said she didn't want a dog because it was enough work looking after Hector and Mr Dumble and they weren't going to keep Buster. But she changed her mind in the end because Buster was such a nice dog that she couldn't help growing to like him. Everyone liked Buster.

One Saturday Mrs Dumble was doing the laundry and Mr Dumble was in the garage putting up some shelves. Hector was going to go out to play but his mom said, "Have you done your math homework yet?"

Hector said, "Nearly!"

His mom said, "Show me." So Hector showed her his exercise book and she said, "Hector, you have ten sums to do and you haven't even finished the first sum."

"I nearly finished it," he replied.

"Well, you can finish it now, and when you've finished all ten, then you can go out."

Hector didn't like that. It was the weekend, the sun was shining, and he had to stay in and do his homework. Aaaaaaaaagh! But he did as he was told. It took him an hour. A whole hour! Buster was lying by the door watching him the entire time. He wanted to go out too.

When he'd finished, Hector showed his mom and asked her, "Can I go out now?"

"OK, Hector. But I want you to do an errand for me. Here's some money. Go to Mr Carroll's Store and buy some soap powder. We ran out."

Hector put on his jacket and shoes. Buster looked really excited.

"Can I take Buster with me?" Hector asked.

“Sure,” said his mom. “Be careful crossing the road.”

“Yes, Mom.”

“And don't lose the money.”

“Yes, Mom.”

“And come straight back.”

“Yes, sir!”

“And don't be cheeky.”

“Yes, Mom.”

At that very moment, as Hector and Buster were walking over to Mr Carrol's store, Professor Evil was at home changing into his new Professor Evil super-villain costume. It was black and purple and had a big symbol on the front with the letters P and E.

He put on his mask and looked in the mirror to admire himself.

“Very good,” he said. “Very good indeed. Soon the whole town will know and fear the name 'Professor Evil', and when I steal the super-intelligence formula, I will become super intelligent and nothing will stop me. Mwah hah hah hah!”

Then he turned around and tripped over a shoe.

“Rats and double rats!” he said.

Hector arrived at Mr Carrol's store and told Buster to wait outside, then went into the store to buy the soap powder.

Mr Carrol's store was across the road from the Whizzo Chemical Research Laboratory. While Hector was talking to Mr Carrol, a van pulled up and two security guards got out and went into the laboratory. When they came back out, one of them was carrying a blue bottle and the other was carrying a green bottle.

Suddenly Professor Evil appeared and grabbed the bottles and ran away.

“Stop, thief!” shouted the security guards.

Buster had seen everything. He chased after Professor Evil and bit him on the bottom.

“Ow!” yelled Professor Evil. “You bit my bum!” He dropped the blue bottle and it broke. The liquid poured out onto the road and started disappearing down a drain hole. “Nooo!” cried the Professor. “The super-intelligence formula! Rats and double rats!” He shook his fist at Buster. “You'll pay for this, you mangy mongrel!” But the security guards were approaching, so Professor Evil didn't have time to hang around. Still carrying the green bottle, he ran down the street with the security guards chasing after him.

When Hector came out of the shop, everything was quiet and he found Buster drinking something from a puddle in the road.

“Don't drink that, Buster,” he said. “It may be dirty. Come on, let's go home.”

As they were taking a short cut across the park, Buster suddenly stopped walking.

“Come on, Buster,” said Hector. “Mom's waiting for us.”

But Buster just stood there and started making some funny noises. It wasn't really a growl and it wasn't really a bark. It was like a cross between the two. A 'grark'. Then he coughed a bit and gave

another grark.

Hector looked at him curiously. "Buster, are you OK?"

Buster looked at Hector, grarked again, and then he said, "Kay kay."

"Did you just say 'kay kay'?" Hector asked.

"Nuh nuh," said Buster. "Missa me kay kay."

"Huh?" Hector thought that the noises Buster was making were pretty weird.

"Missay me ko kay," said Buster.

"Buster, are you trying to talk?" Hector said.

Buster cleared his throat again and said, "Me say me OK."

So, thought Hector, *all this studying and homework has finally made me go crazy. Now I think my dog can talk.* "OK, Buster, let's go home. Mom will be worrying."

"Hokay Hector," said Buster. Then he gave another grark, as if he were trying to clear his throat. "Me tawk funny."

"You sure do," said Hector. "Come on."

When they got home, Mrs Dumble said, "Did you get the soap powder?"

"Yes, Mom. Here it is," said Hector. "And I also went crazy."

Mrs Dumble took the soap powder and gave Hector a funny look. "What do you mean, you went crazy?"

"I'm having crazy thoughts," he said. "I actually believe that Buster can talk."

She patted him on the head. "Silly boy," she said, and then she started pouring the powder into the washing machine.

"Me kan tawk," said Buster. Then he coughed and grarked a little, as if he were trying to clear his throat. "But me still tawk funny. Me need mo pracktiss."

Hector's mom stood there with wide open eyes and the soap powder was going all over the floor.

"You see, Mom?" said Hector. "Buster really can talk and I'm not crazy after all. That's pretty weird, isn't it? I mean, it's pretty weird that I'm not crazy after all that studying and homework and exams and stuff."

Hector's mom continued to stand there, frozen to the spot.

"Yo spilly yor sope poder, Misses Dumbo," said Buster.

Then Mrs Dumble fainted.

Later, the whole family sat in the living room and had a talk.

"So how did this start?" Hector's father asked.

"I don't know," said Hector. "We were walking back from Mr Carrol's store and he just started making some funny noises. Then he started speaking."

"Me drink mejic portion," said Buster.

"What magic potion?" asked Mrs Dumble.

"Me no know," Buster replied.

When a dog starts talking, news travels fast. A couple of hours later, there was a knock at the door. It was a reporter wanting to interview Buster.

"So, tell me about your early life," said the reporter.

"Bad man no feed me," said Buster. "Him leave me by river. Dumbbells find me. Dumbbells is my family now."

"And how did you learn to speak English?" asked the reporter.

"Me drink midget pigeon," said Buster.

"You drank a small pigeon?" said the reporter, very surprised.

"He means magic potion," Hector told the reporter. "His English isn't perfect yet."

"Me tawk funny," said Buster. "Need mo pracktiss."

Buster got more practice and after a few days his English was much better. By that time there was a big crowd of reporters from all over the world camped outside the house. The Dumbles found it quite annoying. Whenever they stepped outside, the reporters would take photos and ask questions. Buster was even on the TV news.

One day a man from the government came to visit.

"Hello," he said, shaking Mom and Dad's hands. "I'm Duncan McMuck from the government. The President wants Buster to come with me so that our scientists can study him in a laboratory."

"You mean he'll live in a laboratory?" Hector said. "He wouldn't like that."

"It's a very nice laboratory," said Duncan McMuck. "It's got test tubes and cages and electric wires and lots of needles."

"Mom! Dad! Don't let them take Buster away."

"Well, sir," Mr Dumble told McMuck, "Buster is part of the family. I think we should ask Buster what he wants to do."

Everyone looked at Buster.

"I don't wants to go," he said.

"I'm afraid you must," said Duncan McMuck. "Under section four three nine of the 1966 Homeland Defense Act, I'm authorized to take you whether you like it or not in the interests of national security."

Buster looked into McMuck's eyes and said, "Section four three nine is overruled by directive seven six one stroke three protocol four B, which clearly states that in the event of vocalizing canines, prior responsibility for permissible capitulation applies to ecumenical zygotes in an ontological framework of statistical logistics. Furthermore, if you don't leave this house immediately, you will be liable for arrest and imprisonment under section nineteen of the habeus corpus regulatory ordinance, paragraph six, code red."

"But, but ..."

"*And* I'll bite you on the bum," said Buster.

Duncan McMuck jumped up and left the house and didn't come back.

"Wow, Buster, your English is getting better," Hector said.

"And he's getting smarter," said Mrs Dumble.

"I is," agreed Buster.

Mr and Mrs Dumble decided that since Buster could now talk, he should go to school just like a human. So the next morning, Buster and Hector went to school together.

At first Mr Weazel was very surprised to see a dog in his classroom.

"Rats and double rats!" he said. "Who let this dog in here? And why is he sitting at a desk?"

"He's my dog, sir," said Hector, "and Principal Skuddle said he could attend class."

"Why on earth would Principal Skuddle say that?" said Mr Weazel.

"Because he's a very special dog, sir," Hector replied.

"He *is* special, sir," said Wendy Spouter. "He can talk."

"A talking dog?" sneered Mr Weazel. "Don't be ridiculous."

"It's true, sir," said Jimmy Sprinkle. "It was on the TV news."

"I *can* talk, sir," said Buster. "But I still needs practice."

Mr Weazel stared at Buster. "It was *you*," he hissed.

"Pardon, sir?" said Buster.

"Oh, er, nothing," said Mr Weazel. "Very well. Let's begin the lesson."

Mr Weazel didn't sit down again for the rest of that day. He seemed to have a sore bottom.

That evening, Mr Weazel stood in his living room muttering to himself. On the table was the black and purple Professor Evil costume and the bottle of green liquid.

"So, that dog drank the super-intelligence formula, the only bottle in the world. The effects will become stronger and stronger day after day. Soon that manky mutt will be the world's greatest genius."

It had taken the Whizzo Chemical Research Laboratory ten years to develop the super-intelligence formula. Mr Weazel (AKA Professor Evil) had wanted to steal it because drinking just one drop would have made him the smartest person on the planet. Being so clever, it would have been easy for him to commit any crime, rob any bank, break any code, and become the most powerful super-criminal in the world.

Without the formula, he would just have to manage without having super-intelligence. It would make things much harder and it was all that dog's fault.

Curse that horrible hound, thought Mr Weazel. *And now he's a student in my class and I have to teach him every day. Rats and double rats!*

At first Hector was excited to have his dog in school with him. All the other students wanted to see Hector's talking dog and it made Hector feel very popular. But after a while, Buster learned to read and write and grew smarter and smarter as the effects of the formula kicked in, and Hector soon found that he was still bottom of the class. Can you imagine how humiliating that was? To get worse grades than your own dog!

One day as they were walking home from school, Buster said, "What's wrong, Hector? You seem a little sad these days."

"I just wish I wasn't so dumb," said Hector. "I must be the only boy in the world who has a dog who's smarter than he is."

"You shouldn't feel that way," said Buster. "If you studied more, you'd get smarter and smarter."

"Do you really think so?" Hector asked.

"Sure," said Buster. "But you need to study."

"But I don't like studying," said Hector. "I like to play."

"I know that," said Buster. "But sometimes we have to do things we don't like if we want to achieve our dreams. And anyway, if you played all day every day, playing would become boring,

wouldn't it?"

Hector looked down and sighed. "But maybe I'm just naturally dumb."

"Of course you're not," said Buster. "If you study hard, you'll become smart for sure. You'll see."

"But you got smart without studying," said Hector.

"But that was different," said Buster. "That was just because I drank that secret formula Professor Evil was trying to steal. I was just lucky, that's all."

"I guess," said Hector. "So you really don't think I'm naturally dumb?"

"Of course not. But I think your problem is, you don't try very hard because you're afraid that if you try and end up failing, that will prove that you're dumb. And you're afraid of finding out that you're dumb. But trust me, you are definitely not dumb. So you should try."

"Wow," said Hector. "That is exactly how I feel. Buster, you really *are* smart." He felt much better now after talking to Buster. They carried on walking home.

That evening, Hector spent the whole time studying.

In class the next day, when Mr Weazel asked, "Who can tell me which two atoms make up a water molecule?" Hector raised his hand.

"Yes, Sally Tinkles?" said Mr Weazel.

"Hydrogen and oxygen, sir."

"Correct."

Hector had known the answer but Mr Weazel hadn't picked him.

Then Mr Weazel said, "And who can tell me the name of the chemical added to water to prevent tooth decay?"

Once more, Hector raised his hand and again Mr Weazel picked another student.

"Yes, Tommy Chumpkins?"

"Fluoride, sir."

"Very good."

Hector had known the answer again. Why wouldn't Mr Weazel pick him? It wasn't often that Hector raised his hand in class.

"Now who can tell me how many electrons a helium atom has?"

"Please, sir. Me, sir," said Hector, stretching his hand up high.

Mr Weazel looked around the room very slowly, ignoring Hector completely. Then he chose Wendy Spouter, even though she didn't have her hand up. No one did except for Hector.

"Two, sir," said Wendy Spouter.

"Correct."

Hector couldn't control himself. "Please, sir, why don't you choose me, sir? I knew the answer, sir."

"You?" sneered Mr Weazel. "Don't be ridiculous, Hector Dumble. You couldn't possibly have known the correct answer and nobody wants to hear your dumb comments."

"But I did know, sir," said Hector.

"Don't argue, boy."

"But—"

"I said, don't argue."

"But —"

"That's enough. You can stay behind after school and write five hundred lines: 'I will not argue

with the teacher.”

“But—”

“One thousand lines.”

Hector said nothing. He was so upset he felt like crying. If this was his reward for studying hard then he wasn't going to bother studying any more.

That evening, the Dumbles' broken washing machine was spread out in parts over the kitchen floor as Buster gave Mr and Mrs Dumble instructions on how to fix it.

“Now tighten the hose connector around the water inlet valve,” said Buster. “That's right. Now insert the air dome seal into the center post gasket and screw in the motor pulley. Align the spark plug to the commutator and insert the nucleonic crystal into the tachyon drive motor and you're done.”

Everyone stood back and admired the washing machine. It looked like a new machine.

“It will wash three times faster with two-hundred percent greater efficiency,” said Buster.

“Wow,” said Mrs Dumble. “Thanks so much Buster.”

“Buster,” said Mr Dumble, “could you help fix my computer later?”

“No problem, Mr D,” said Buster. “And we can play chess after, if you like.”

“No thanks, Buster,” Mr Dumble replied. “You always beat me.”

“It's great having a super-intelligent dog to help out around the house,” said Mrs Dumble.

“Hey everyone,” Hector called from the living room. “Come and take a look.”

On the TV was a news report about a bank robbery committed by Professor Evil.

“That's the fourth bank he's robbed this week,” said Hector.

“Really?” said Mr Dumble. “He's getting out of control.”

“It's a shame we don't have a superhero in town who can stop him,” said Mrs Dumble.

Hmmm, thought Buster.

The following weekend, Professor Evil turned up at the Great Western Bank in the center of town and told the clerk, “Hand over the money.”

“Not so fast, Professor Evil,” said a voice.

Professor Evil turned around to see a masked superhero wearing a costume with the letters 'CC' on his chest.

“Who are you, with your long nose and sticky-uppy ears?” said Professor Evil. “You look familiar.”

“Captain Canine's the name; fighting evil's the game,” came the reply.

“So, there's a superhero in town, is there?” sneered Professor Evil. “Well, you've made a big mistake tackling me. Take that!” and he fired a freeze ray gun at Captain Canine.

Captain Canine leapt out of the way just in time and the freeze ray harmlessly hit a chair and froze it solid.

“Rats and double rats!” said Professor Evil.

Hector was at home when a newsflash suddenly came on the TV.

“We are interrupting this programme to bring you an urgent newsflash. Reports are coming in that the Great Western Bank is being robbed at this very moment by Professor Evil. We now hand you

over to Mandy Ricketts who is at the scene. Mandy, what can you tell us?"

"Hello everyone. I'm here in the center of town where earlier Professor Evil attempted to commit another bank robbery. But it seems that his attempt was foiled by a masked superhero calling himself Captain Canine. The staff have managed to escape but it is believed that Professor Evil and Captain Canine are still inside the bank fighting at this very moment."

"Buster?" Hector called, but there was no reply. *Could it be?* he thought, then he ran out of the house.

Inside the bank, Captain Canine and Professor Evil were fighting. After a while, Professor Evil started to lose the battle so he jumped out of the window and ran away, but Captain Canine ran after him.

At the end of the street was Professor Evil's helicopter. As he jumped into it, Captain Canine leapt up and bit Professor Evil on the bottom.

"Ow! Let go of my bum!" yelled Professor Evil.

But Captain Canine didn't let go. The police had arrived at the scene and were running towards the helicopter to catch Professor Evil.

Professor Evil twisted round and tried to grab Captain Canine, but instead he grabbed his mask and pulled it off.

"Buster!" cried Professor Evil. "It's you, is it? Well, you've made a big mistake, you repugnant pooch!" And he got out the green bottle and opened the top. "Do you know what this is?" he said, waving the bottle in front of Buster's face. "This is the antidote to the super-intelligence formula. This will turn you back into a dumb dog. Now let go of my bottom so I can escape or I'll pour it down your throat."

But Buster kept his jaws clamped down on Professor Evil's bottom, so Professor Evil poured the liquid into Buster's mouth. By the time the police arrived and grabbed Professor Evil and took him away in a police van, Buster had swallowed it all.

When Hector arrived at the bank, it was all over. There was a big crowd of people and they were talking excitedly.

"Did you see?"

"It was this dog!"

"This dog caught Professor Evil!"

"What a smart and clever dog!"

"Thank you so much, little doggy!"

"Buster!" shouted Hector, pushing through the crowd. In the center he found Buster and knelt down and hugged him.

"Hello Hector," said Buster. "Buster catch bad man. Bad man go prison. Buster big hero."

"Buster, why are you talking like that?" said Hector.

Buster coughed and grarked, then said, "Bad man make Buster drink mijic passion. Me tawk funny now. Soon no tawk. Must say bye bye Hector."

"No!" said Hector. "I don't want you to go."

"Buster no go. Still stay be yor dog. We play, happy happy. Just no tawk."

"But I want you to talk," cried Hector. "I want to talk with you."

“Me know Hecty want but Busty no can do,” said Buster. “Busty go dumb, but Busty still love Hecty. Hecty be smart.” Then Buster made a funny noise, another grark. Then he growled. “Me tawk funny,” he said. Then he grarked again. It seemed he was trying to speak but couldn't.

“No,” cried Hector. “Say something, Buster. Say something, boy.”

But Buster just wagged his tail and licked Hector's face.

On Monday morning, everyone in class was talking very excitedly about the news that Mr Weazel was really Professor Evil.

Then a lady came into the classroom and said, “Good morning, everyone. My name is Mrs Goodheart and I'll be your new teacher.”

Hector thought she seemed like a very nice, kind lady.

“Today we are going to talk about careers,” said Mrs Goodheart. “Tell me, Wendy Spouter, what do you want to be when you grow up?”

“I want to be a dancer, Miss,” Wendy Spouter said.

“And what about you, Tommy Chumpkins?” Mrs Goodheart asked.

“I want to be a fire fighter, Miss,” Tommy Chumpkins said.

And what about you, Hector Dumble?” said Mrs Goodheart.

“Me, Miss?” Hector said.

“Yes, Hector, you,” said Mrs Goodheart. “Tell us what you want to be.”

“I want to be a chemist,” Hector said.

“A chemist?” said Mrs Goodheart, but she didn't sneer or scowl at him like Mr Weazel had done, but instead gave him a warm and friendly smile. “That's an interesting ambition. Why do you want to be a chemist?”

“I want to invent a super-intelligence formula so I can give it to my best friend and he can talk again.”

“Well, Hector,” Mrs Goodheart said, “I'm sure if you work hard, you will achieve your dream.”

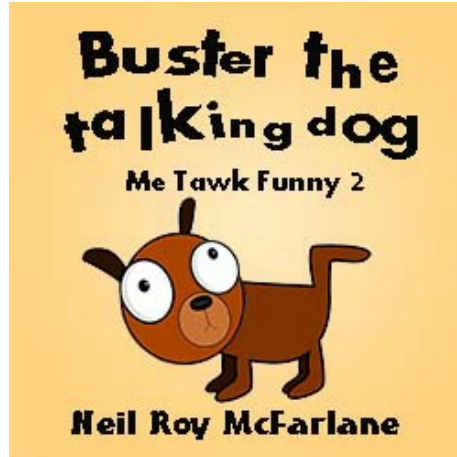
After that, Hector worked really hard at his schoolwork. Of course he also took time off to go out and play with Buster, but he always did his homework and attended to his studies. Soon he was even top of the class and got straight A's in every exam, including chemistry.

Do you think Hector achieved his dream?

You bet he did!

THE END

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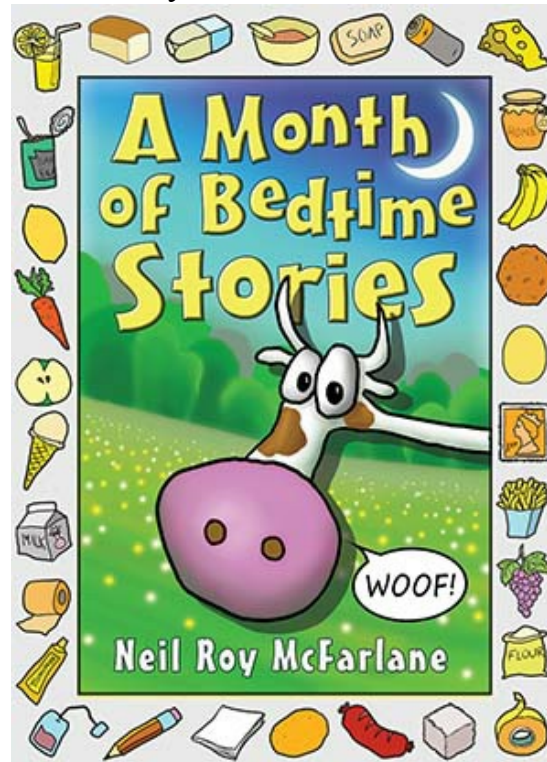
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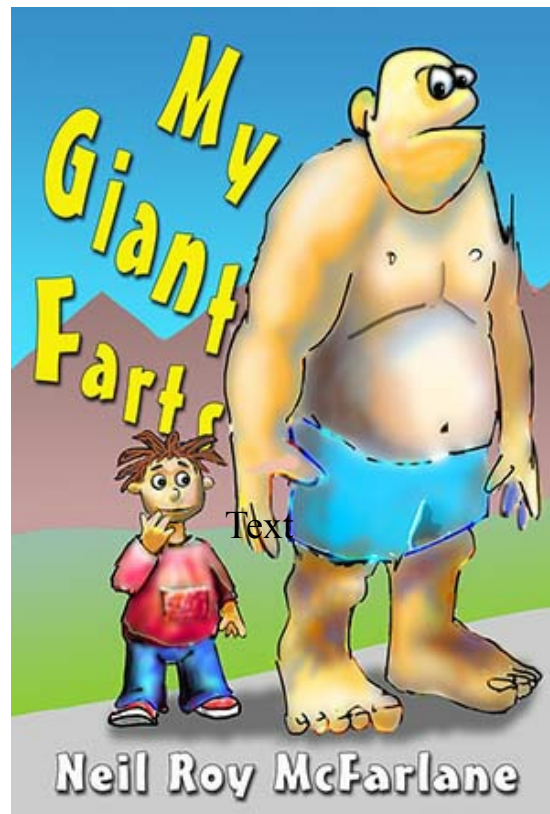
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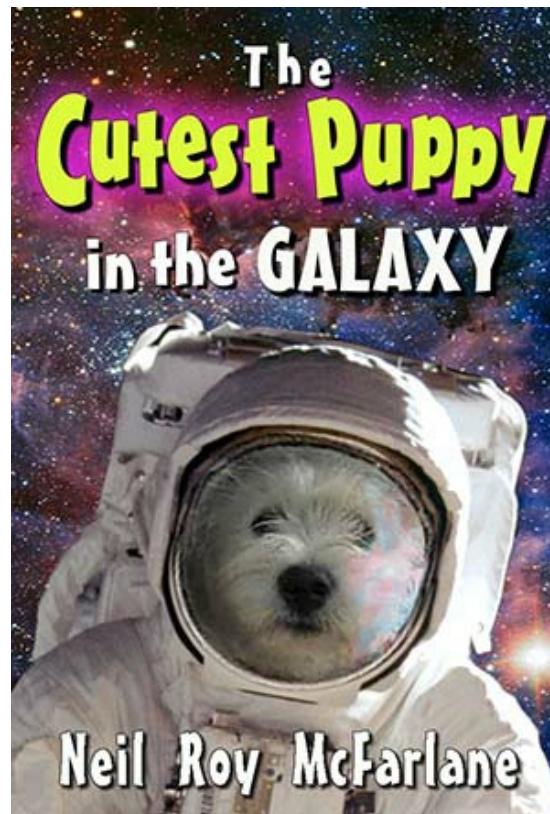
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