

Everyone's favorite classroom pet!



The World according to Humphrey

Betty G. Birney

Good-bye
Pet-O-Rama

Hide-and-Go-Squeak



Ms. Mac is
NICE-NICE-NICE

lock-that-
doesn't-lock



The Return of Mrs. Brisbane



Today was the worst day of my life. Ms. Mac left Room 26 of Longfellow School. For good. And that's bad.

Worse yet, Mrs. Brisbane came back. Until today, I didn't even know there was a Mrs. Brisbane. Lucky me.

Now I want to know: What was Ms. Mac thinking? She must have known that soon she'd be leaving without me. And that Mrs. Brisbane would come back to Room 26 and I'd be stuck with her.

I still like—okay, *love*—Ms. Mac more than any human or hamster on earth, but what was she thinking?

"You can learn a lot about yourself by taking care of another species," she told me on the way home the day she got me. "You'll teach those kids a thing or two."

That's what she was thinking. I don't think she was thinking very clearly.

I'm never going to squeak to her again. Of course, I'll probably never see her again because she's GONE-GONE-GONE—but if she comes back, I'm not even going to look at her.

(I know that last sentence doesn't make sense. It's hard to make sense when your heart is broken.)

On the other hand, until Ms. Mac arrived, I was going nowhere down at Pet-O-Rama. My days were spent sitting around, looking at a bunch of furry things in cages just like mine. We were treated all right: regular meals, clean cages, music piped in all day.

Over the music, Carl, the store clerk, would answer the phone: "Open nine to nine, seven days a week. Corner of Fifth and Alder, next to the Dairy Maid."

Back then, I feared I'd never see Fifth and Alder, much less the Dairy Maid. Sometimes I'd see human eyes and noses (not always as clean as they should be) poking up against the glass. Nothing ever came of it. The children were excited to see me, but the parents usually had other ideas.

"Oh, come see the fishes, Cornelia. So colorful and so much easier to take care of than a hamster," Mama might say.

Or "No, no, Norbert. They have the cutest little puppies over here. After all, a dog is a boy's best friend."

So there we were: hamsters, gerbils, mice and guinea pigs—not nearly as popular as the fish, cats or dogs. I suspected that I'd be spinning my wheel at Pet-O-Rama forever.

But once Ms. Mac carried me out the door a short six weeks ago, my life changed FAST-FAST-FAST. I saw Fifth! I saw Alder! I saw the Dairy Maid with the statue of a cow in an apron outside!

I was dozing when she first came to Pet-O-Rama, as I do during the day because hamsters are more active at night.

"Hello." A warm voice awakened me. When I opened my eyes, I saw a mass of bouncy black curls. A big, happy smile. Huge dark eyes. She smelled of apples. It was love at first sight.

"Aren't you the bright-eyed one?" she asked.

"And might I return the compliment?" I replied. Of course, it came out "Squeak-squeak-squeak," as usual.

Ms. Mac opened up her purse with the big pink and blue flowers on it.

"I'll take him," she told Carl. "He's obviously the most intelligent and handsome hamster you have."

Carl grunted. Then Ms. Mac picked out a respectable cage—okay, not the three-story pagoda I'd had my eye on—but a nice cage.

And soon, amid squeals of encouragement from my friends in the Small Pet Department, from the teeniest white mouse to the lumbering chinchilla, I left Pet-O-Rama with high hopes.

We sped down the street in Ms. Mac's bright yellow car! (She called it a Bug, but I could see it was really a car.) She carried my cage up the stairs to her apartment! We ate apples! We watched TV! She let me run around outside my cage! She gave me my very own name: Humphrey. And she told me all about Room 26, where we'd be going the next morning.

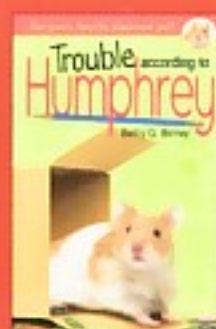
"And since you are an intelligent hamster who is

Welcome to Room 26, Humphrey!

You can learn a lot about life by observing another species. That's what Humphrey was told when he was first brought to Room 26. And boy, is it true! In addition to his classroom escapades, each weekend this amazing hamster gets to sleep over with a different student. Soon Humphrey learns to read, write, and even shoot rubber bands (only in self-defense). Humphrey's life would be perfect, if only the teacher wasn't out to get him!

"Humphrey is wry-humored and big-hearted. This read is simply good-good-good!"
—Kirkus Reviews

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Hide-and-go-sneak

FUN-FUN-FUN