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# Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH



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35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF NIMH!



ROBERT C. O'BRIEN



ALADDIN

FANTASY



## *The Sickness of Timothy Frisby*

**M**rs. Frisby, the head of a family of field mice, lived in an underground house in the vegetable garden of a farmer named Mr. Fitzgibbon. It was a winter house, such as some field mice move to when food becomes too scarce, and the living too hard in the woods and pastures. In the soft earth of a bean, potato, black-eyed pea and asparagus patch there is plenty of food left over for mice after the human crop has been gathered.

Mrs. Frisby and her family were especially lucky in the house itself. It was a slightly damaged cinder block, the hollow kind with two oval holes through it; it had somehow been abandoned in the garden during the



summer and lay almost completely buried, with only a bit of one corner showing above ground, which is how Mrs. Frisby had discovered it. It lay on its side in such a way that the solid parts of the block formed a roof and a floor, both waterproof, and the hollows made two spacious rooms. Lined with bits of leaves, grass, cloth, cotton fluff, feathers and other soft things Mrs. Frisby and her children had collected, the house stayed dry, warm and comfortable all winter. A tunnel to the surface-earth of the garden, dug so that it was slightly larger than a mouse and slightly smaller than a cat's foreleg, provided access, air, and even a fair amount of light to the living room. The bedroom, formed by the second oval, was warm but dark, even at midday. A short tunnel through the earth behind the block connected the two rooms.

Although she was a widow (her husband had died only the preceding summer), Mrs. Frisby was able, through luck and hard work, to keep her family—there were four children—happy and well fed. January and February were the hardest months; the sharp, hard cold that began in December lasted until March, and by February the beans and black-eyes had been picked over (with help from the birds), the asparagus roots were frozen into stone, and the potatoes had been thawed and refrozen so many times they had acquired a slimy texture and a rancid taste. Still, the Frisbys made the best of what there was, and one way or another they kept from being hungry.

Then, one day at the very end of February, Mrs. Frisby's younger son, Timothy, fell sick.

That day began with a dry, bright, icy morning. Mrs.



Frisby woke up early, as she always did. She and her family slept close together in a bed of down, fluff, and bits of cloth they had gathered, warm as a ball of fur.

She stood up carefully so as not to awaken the children, and walked quietly through the short tunnel to the living room. Here it was not so warm, but not really cold either. She could see from the light filtering down the entrance tunnel that the sun was up, and bright. She looked at the food in her pantry, a hollowed-out space lined with small stones in the earth behind the living room. There was plenty of food for breakfast, and lunch and dinner, too, for that matter; but still the sight depressed her, for it was the same tiresome fare they had been eating every day, every meal, for the last month. She wished she knew where to find a bit of green lettuce, or a small egg, or a taste of cheese, or a corn muffin. There were eggs in plenty not far off, in the hen house. But hens and hens' eggs are too big for a field mouse to cope with; and besides, between the garden and the hen-house there was a wide sward of shrubs and grass, some of it grown up quite tall. Cat territory.

She climbed up the tunnel, emerging whiskers first, and looked around warily. The air was sharp, and there was white frost thick on the ground and on the dead leaves at the edge of the wood across the garden patch.

Mrs. Frisby set off over the gently furrowed earth, and when she reached the fence, she turned right, skirting the border of the forest, searching with her bright round eyes for a bit of carrot, a frozen parsnip, or something green. But there was nothing green at that time of year but the needles on the pine trees and the leaves on the holly, neither of which a mouse—or any other animal, for





# Mrs. Frisby, a widowed mouse with four small

children, must move her family to their summer quarters immediately, or face almost certain death. But her youngest son, Timothy, lies ill with pneumonia and must not be moved. Fortunately, she encounters the rats of NIMH, an extraordinary breed of highly intelligent creatures, who come up with a brilliant solution to her dilemma.


★ "Loyal, resourceful Mrs. Frisby . . . is the engaging heroine of this thoroughly engrossing, thought-provoking fantasy."


—*SLJ* (starred review)

"Both the story and the tale within it are deftly told, fulfilling the first requisite of fantasy by making the impossible believable." —*BCCB*

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