



"S" is for smart,
and Ralph is going
to school

**BEVERLY
CLEARY**

Ralph S. Mouse

Illustrated by PAUL O. ZELINSKY

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A Dark and Snowy Night

Night winds, moaning around corners and whistling through cracks, dashed snow against the windows of the Mountain View Inn. Inside, a fire crackled in the stone fireplace. The grandfather clock, as old and tired as the inn itself, marked the passing of time with a slow *tick . . . tock . . .* that seemed to say, “Wait . . . ing, wait . . . ing.”

Everyone in the lobby was waiting—the desk clerk, the handyman, old Matt, who also carried

guests' luggage to their rooms, Ryan Bramble, the son of the hotel's new housekeeper, and Ralph, the mouse who lived under the grandfather clock.

The desk clerk dozed, waiting for guests who did not arrive. Matt leaned against the wall to watch television while he waited for the desk clerk to close up for the night. Ryan, sitting on the floor to watch television, waited for his



mother to tell him to go to bed because he had to go to school the next day. Ralph, crouched beside Ryan, waited for the adults to leave so he could bring out his mouse-sized motorcycle. Unfortunately, Ralph's little brothers, sisters, and cousins, hiding in the woodpile and behind the curtains, were also waiting.

On the television set, a sports car crashed into a truck, shot off a cliff, and burst into flames.

"Wow!" Without taking his eyes from the screen, Ryan said, "There's a boy at school named Brad Kirby, who would really like this movie. He has a BMX bicycle for motocross racing, and his father sometimes drives him to school in a tow truck." A police car followed the sports car over the cliff before Ryan added, "Brad isn't very friendly to me. He's sort of a loner."

Ralph was more interested in television than in Ryan's problems. "If I had a sports car like that," he said, "I wouldn't let it run off a cliff."

Ralph was an unusual mouse. He had listened

“Look, Ryan,” he said. “I’m in trouble and I don’t have time to tell you about it. Just take me and my motorcycle with you, and don’t ask questions.”

“To school?” Ryan was surprised.

Ralph’s pesky cousins are wrecking his motorcycle, and his janitor friend, Matt, is in trouble because there seem to be mice in the hotel. All in all things are not going well at the Mountain View Inn. So Ralph persuades his young pal Ryan to take him to school. Ralph is an instant hit with Ryan’s classmates. But he doesn’t like being forced to run through a maze or the threat of an exterminator coming to the school. Worst of all, Ryan gets into a fight with a classmate, and Ralph’s precious motorcycle is broken. Is Ralph S. Mouse smart enough to steer this sad situation to a happy ending?



“Full of amusing vignettes and sudden insights.”

The Horn Book

“Children will eagerly read these further adventures of Ralph.”

(Starred review)—School Library Journal

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