

CHAPTER 1

Marvin couldn't keep his eyes off the small rectangular cage at the front of the classroom.

A high-pitched squeak came from inside.

Marvin crept forward for a better look.

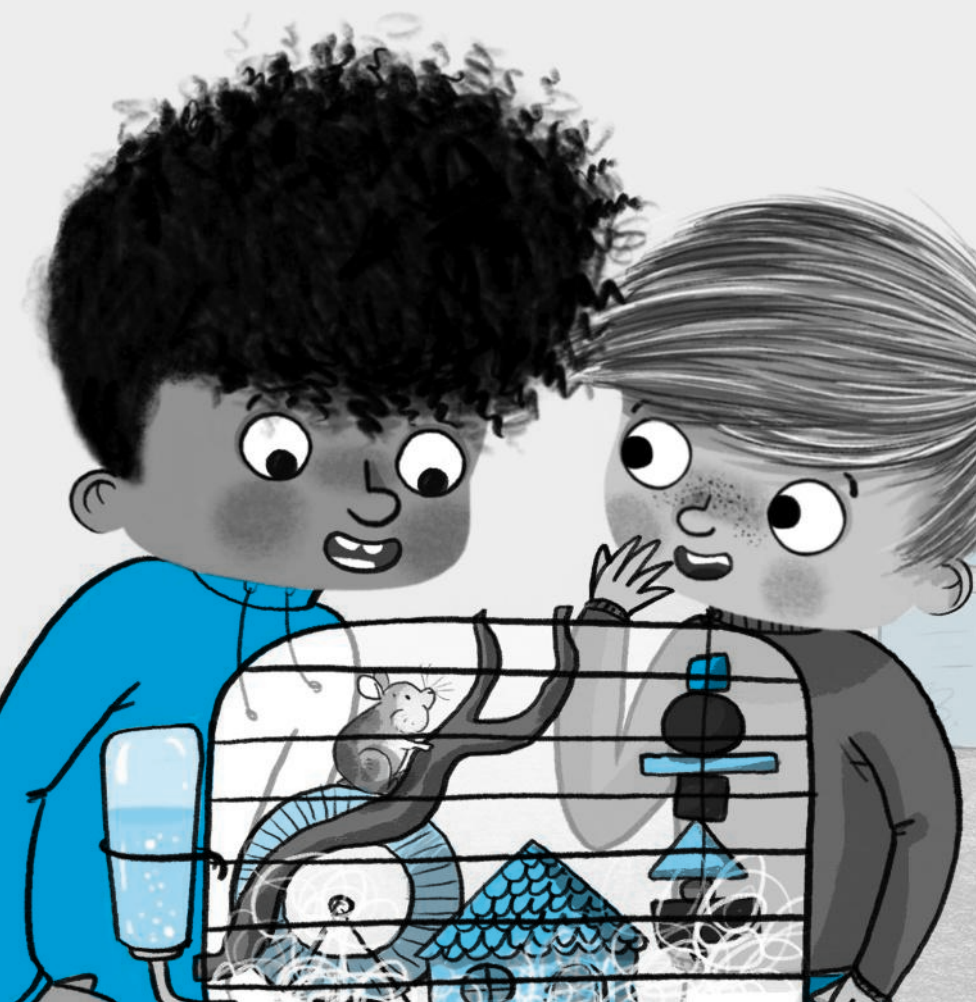
Sawdust rustled around the cage.

Marvin leaned closer, his nose almost touching the bars.

Suddenly, a fluffy creature with golden-brown fur whizzed across the cage floor.

It was Nibbles, the classroom hamster.

There was nothing like the last day of school before the holidays. Sure, school was fun, and Marvin loved hanging out with his friends and seeing



his teachers, but to him, half-term was filled with a whole new set of adventures. This last day of school was even more exciting than usual, and it was all because of Nibbles.



'Who do you think it's going to be?' Joe asked, nudging Marvin. Marvin wanted to say his own name, but he didn't want to jinx it.

Ms Fry was about to announce the pupil who would be looking after Nibbles over the half-term break. Marvin desperately wanted it to be him, but with so many other kids in his class, he knew his chances were slim.

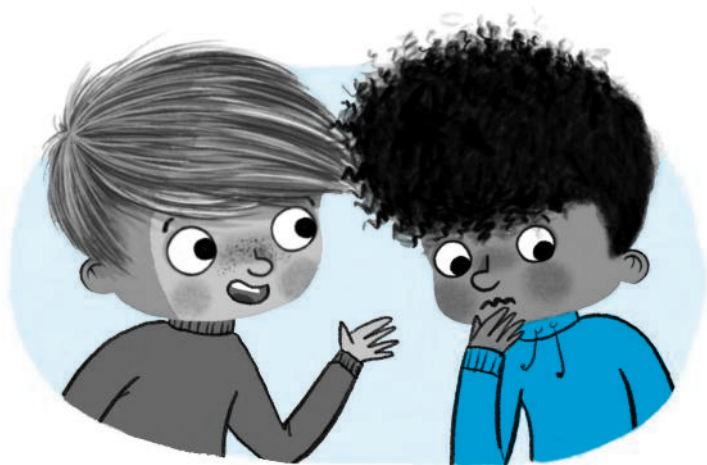
'Maybe Eva will get picked,' Marvin said.

'I'm going on holiday for some of half-term, so I can't take care of Nibbles,' Eva replied from across the room.

'I can't take Nibbles either. Dad says he's allergic,' Joe said, rolling his eyes.

Marvin looked around the room.
He remembered hearing some of his
classmates say that they were going on
holiday too, and others that their parents
wouldn't let them look after Nibbles . . .
Maybe he had a chance after all?

'You think you might have a chance,'
Joe said, smiling.



Marvin stared at him, shocked. It was as though Joe had read his mind. 'How did you—?'

'We're best friends—of course I know what you're thinking!'

'Reading minds *is* a best friend superpower.' Marvin rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

'Anyway, I thought you said that your grandad isn't the biggest fan of small, furry creatures—isn't that why you're not allowed a pet?' Joe said. 'What will your grandad say if Ms Fry picks you?'

'I've already spoken to Grandad about it,' Marvin said. 'He's agreed that if I get picked, we can take Nibbles

home. And, if I can prove that I can look after Nibbles, then maybe Grandad will let me have a pet of my own.'

'Wait, Marvin,' came a voice from behind them. 'You don't have any pets?' It was Marv's classmate, Jasper.

'Well, no,' Marvin said quietly.

'Then there's no way that you should be the one looking after Nibbles. It should be me. I have lots of pets at home already so I'll know exactly how to take care of her,' Jasper said.



'Jasper, come on,' Joe said.

'Sorry, I'm just being truthful. I think Nibbles would be way happier in my house,' Jasper replied.

Before Marvin had a chance to think about what Jasper had said, their teacher, Ms Fry, stood at the front of the class and cleared her throat loudly.

'OK class, back in your seats, please. I've put the names of everyone who was interested in taking care of Nibbles into this hat. Are you ready for me to pick a name?'

'Yes!' replied the class.

'OK. Drum roll, please.'

The whole class began to drum on their desks as Ms Fry rummaged around

in the hat. Marvin's heart trembled in his chest.

'The person looking after Nibbles over half-term is . . . Marvin!' Ms Fry announced, waving aloft a piece of paper with Marvin's name written on it.



Marvin blinked. Was it really him?
Did he really get chosen?!

Joe immediately began to clap and cheer, while Jasper shot Marvin a sour look. Marvin tried to ignore it—after all, he'd won!



At home time, Marvin quickly packed up his things and bounded over to the hamster cage. 'Are you ready, Nibbles?' he asked, peering into the cage to see the hamster's little furry face looking up at him.

'Are you sure that you don't want me to take care of Nibbles? You don't want her to be miserable at your house.' Marvin turned to see Jasper watching

him with a scowl on his face.

'I'm sure,' Marvin replied.

'Really? It's not like you've looked after a pet before, so how will you know what you're doing?' Jasper said.

'I'll be fine,' Marvin said, picking up the hamster cage carefully.

