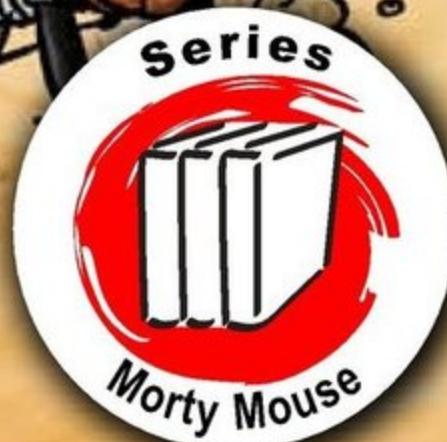
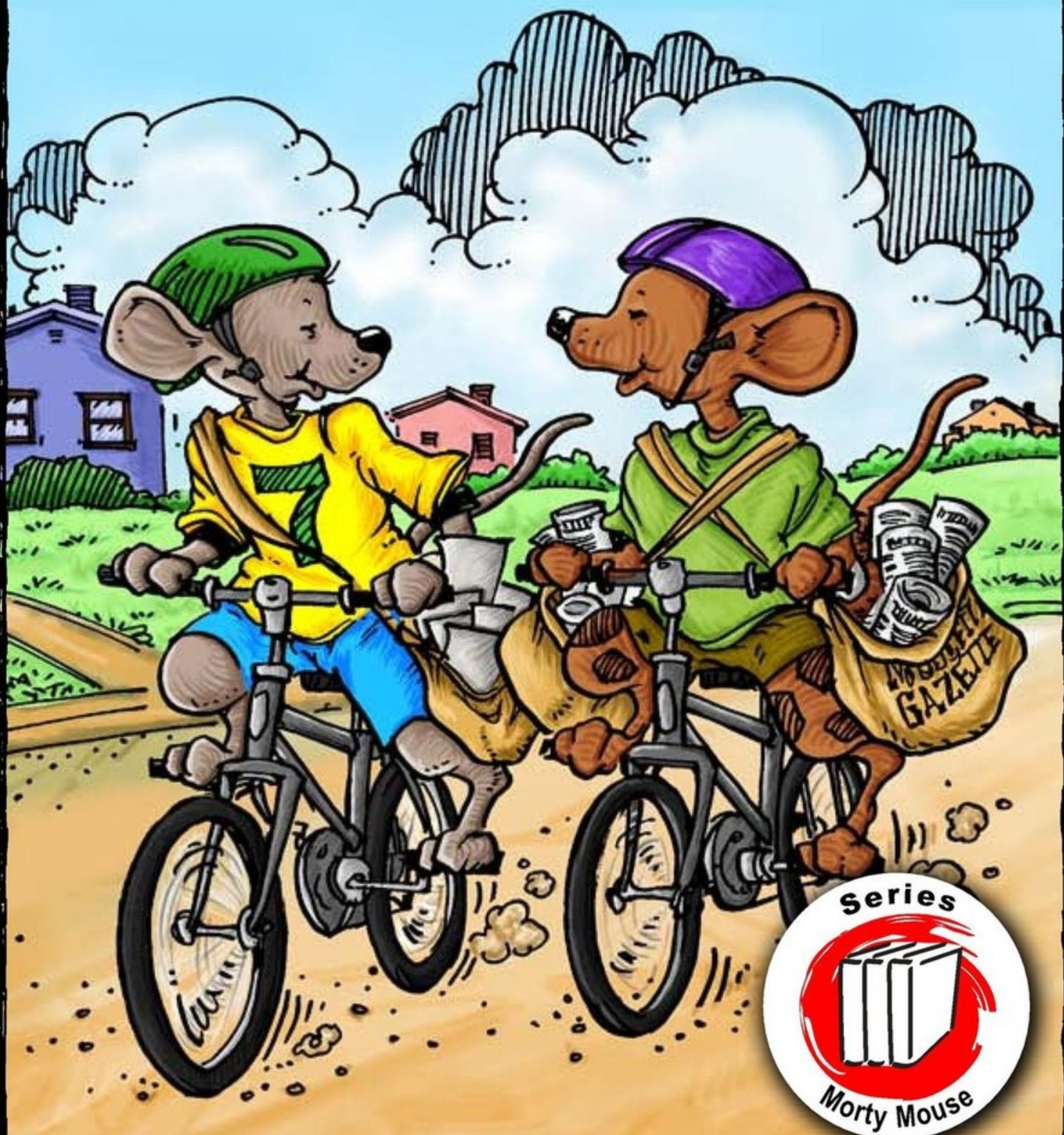


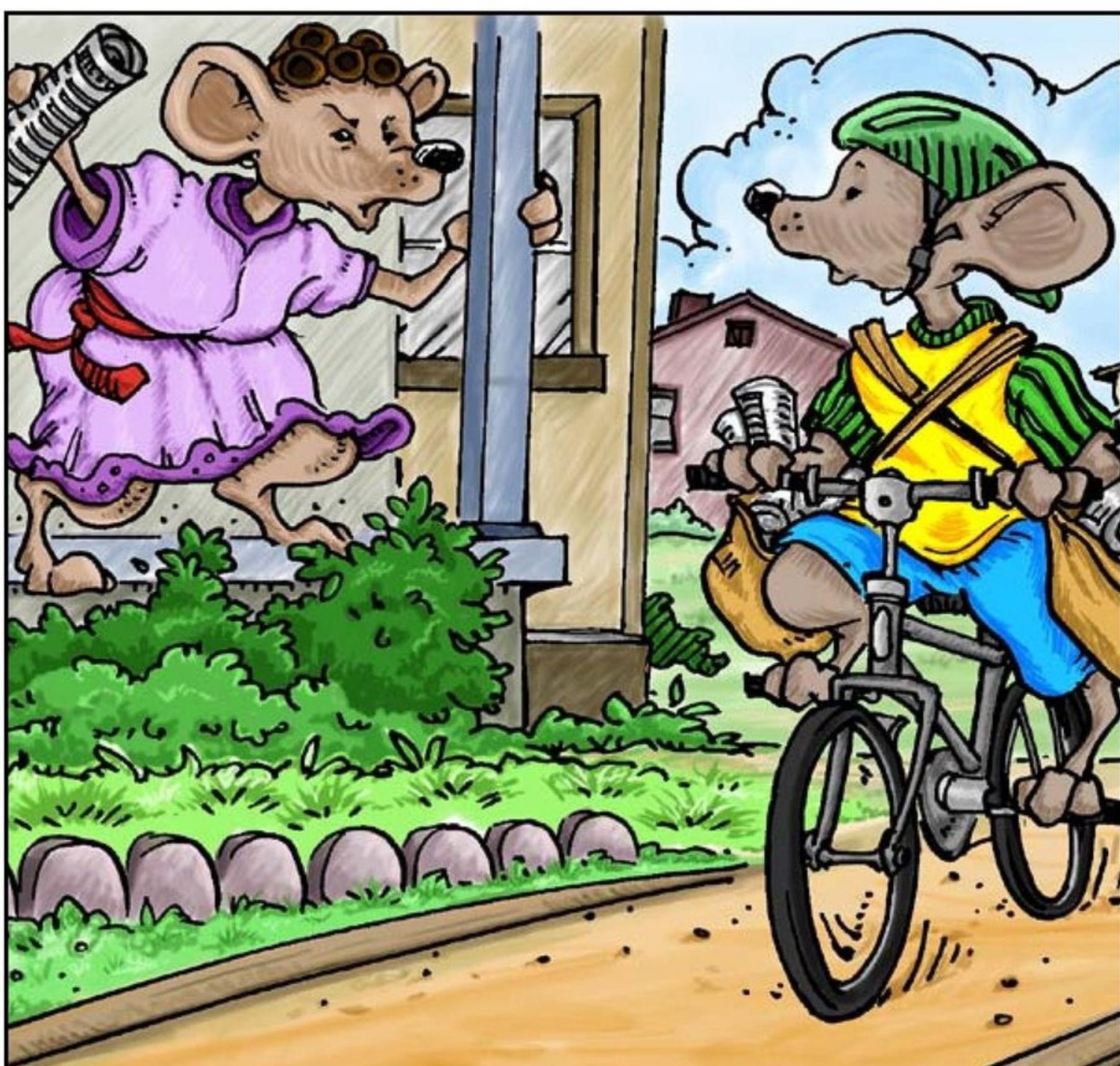
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# Morty and the Mousetown Gazette



Written by Kathy Hoggan  
Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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*It's almost too good to be true,* Morty thought as he smiled at himself in the mirror. Ben's newspaper bags rested on his shoulders. Morty felt the weight of the bags and liked the weight of responsibility that came with the job of newspaper carrier. "I've finally become a real money-making mouse," Morty said aloud.

Every young mouse in Mousetown wanted to be a newspaper carrier. Morty couldn't believe he had this chance. He replayed the scene from earlier on the front porch in his mind.

*"My family is leaving tomorrow for Uncle Joe's funeral," Ben said. "I'll only be gone for three days, but I need someone to do my paper route."*

*"I'll pay you, and if you do a good job covering the route," Ben explained, "my supervisor might give you your own route when one opens up."*





Ben had been delivering the *Gazette* for more than a year. He had faithfully tossed the paper onto Morty's doorstep every morning long before Morty woke up. Ben's older brother had the route before Ben. When Ben's brother left for college, he passed it on to Ben. Morty's dad always complimented Ben on his diligence with the route. Morty had even seen him slip Ben a couple of dollars for a tip.

Getting up early wasn't Morty's favorite idea, but he was already planning what he would buy with his earnings. He replayed more of the scene in his mind.

*"It is really, really important to me that you don't mess up, Morty," Ben said in a very serious tone. "The Mousetown Gazette has a special incentive right now for carriers who maintain a perfect service record for one year. We all get a free trip to Magic Mouseland. The prize includes airfare, three nights at the Mouseland Motel, and passes to the amusement park and all the rides. I have nine months down and only three to go. I'm ready to pack my bags," Ben said with a smile.*

*"I promise I won't mess up your service record," Morty said, smiling back at his friend.*



Morty went over what he had to do in his mind. He had to make sure he delivered all the newspapers on the route by 6 a.m., no matter what. He had to count the papers and make sure he only delivered to the right houses. If people called the *Gazette* to say they had not received a newspaper, Ben's record was ruined. Morty also had to make sure the newspapers remained dry. If it rained, he had to protect the papers by putting each one in a plastic bag. And finally, he had to make sure the newspaper landed on the doorstep of each house—not the driveway, lawn, bushes, or worst of all, the roof.

That night Morty went to bed earlier than his usual time. He set his Mega Mouse alarm clock for 4:00 a.m., but he couldn't sleep. Each time he closed his eyes, he imagined missing the alarm and letting his best buddy down. He stared at the clock and watched the minutes tick. He was up before the alarm went off and got an early start. He put on his paper bags and headed out into the dark, misty morning on his bike.

The bundle of papers was stacked by Ben's garage. Morty loaded them into the paper bags and groaned at the weight. It made getting on the bike difficult. *Now I know why carriers toss the papers*, Morty thought. *Getting on and off the bike to place the papers on doorsteps would be really tough.*

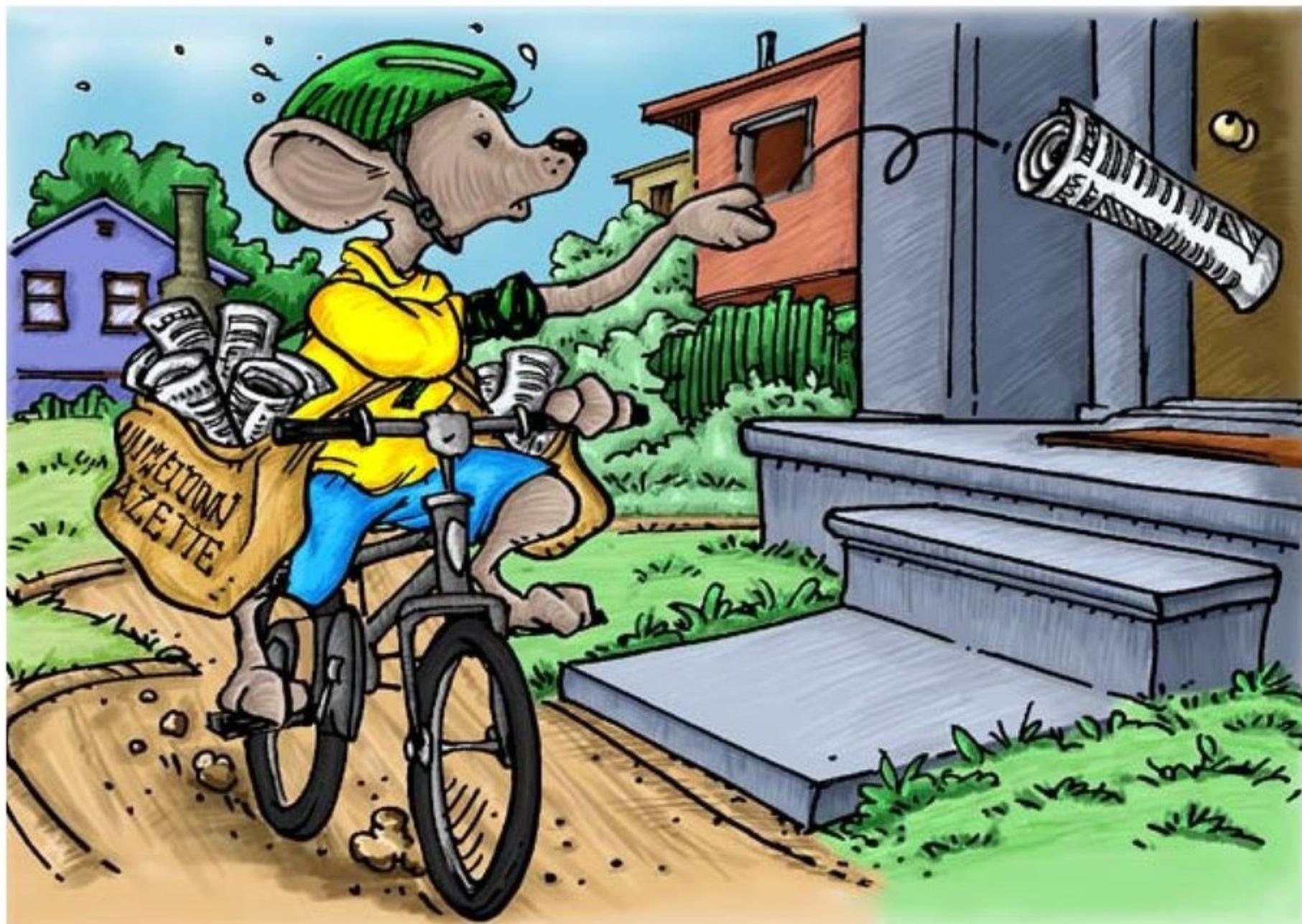
But that is exactly what Morty had to do. Each time he tossed a paper at a doorstep, it fell short or landed in the garden. Then he would have to get off his bike, pick it up, and place it on the porch. Morty kept checking the list and looking for the house numbers to make sure that he only gave papers to subscribers. He didn't want to have to go back and get a paper that was delivered to the wrong house. Between his poor paper-flinging skills and not knowing the route, it took Morty a full two hours to finish.



When he returned home, Morty's shoulders ached. He barely made it upstairs to his bedroom. He didn't even take time to wash the black newspaper ink off his paws. Exhausted and fully dressed, he dropped into bed. One second later, the Mega Mouse clock chimed 6 a.m.



Morty had a hard time staying awake at school that afternoon and almost fell asleep at dinner. He hit the sack at 8 p.m. and was jolted awake by the shrill alarm at 4 a.m. It took Morty a moment to remember why he was getting up when everyone else in the house was sound asleep. *I'll be back in this bed soon*, he thought. Morty slipped on his jeans, threw a sweatshirt over his pajama top and grabbed the paper bags.



Day two as a *Mousetown Gazette* paper carrier went a little better. Morty hit the porch on the first throw at more than half the houses. He remembered some of the houses well enough to toss the paper without having to check the list. This time, Morty was snuggled in his bed and snoring long before the 6 a.m. paper delivery deadline.

Morty wasn't so tired at school on the second day, but he was realizing that a paper route was hard work. He dreaded facing another day of lugging those heavy papers through the dark, quiet streets while everyone else in Mousetown slept.

By the morning of day three, Morty was fairly sure he never wanted a paper route. He had stayed up too late the night before reading Mega Mouse comics. When the alarm went off, he rolled over. *I'll just sleep ten more minutes*, he thought. *After all, I finished plenty early yesterday.*

Morty awoke to the sound of the telephone ringing at 7:30 a.m. He looked at the clock and jumped up in a panic. If there had been lead in Morty's tail and feet, he wouldn't have noticed; his heart was too heavy. Morty seemed to move in slow motion as he loaded the newspapers into the bags and pedaled along the route.





Some angry subscribers were standing on their porches. Others opened the door the minute they heard the paper hit the porch. In his haste, Morty flung some of the papers short and just left them on the lawn. As Morty placed the last paper in the hands of a stern mouse, it began to rain. Morty couldn't tell if raindrops or tears were running down his cheeks as he rushed back to Ben's driveway to get plastic bags. Morty rode through the entire route again, rescuing the damp papers that hadn't been taken inside. He folded them, stuffed them in the bags, and laid them on porches.

Morty couldn't concentrate in school, and he didn't feel like eating lunch. Ben would be coming home today and, thanks to Morty, his dream of Magic Mouseland was gone.

Walking home from school, Morty passed Ben's house. Luckily Ben and his family weren't home yet. Morty decided it would be best if he told Ben what happened before Ben heard from the *Gazette*'s delivery supervisor. Morty called and left a message on Ben's answering machine asking him to call the minute he got home. Now all Morty had to do was come up with a plan to save Ben's trip to Magic Mouseland.

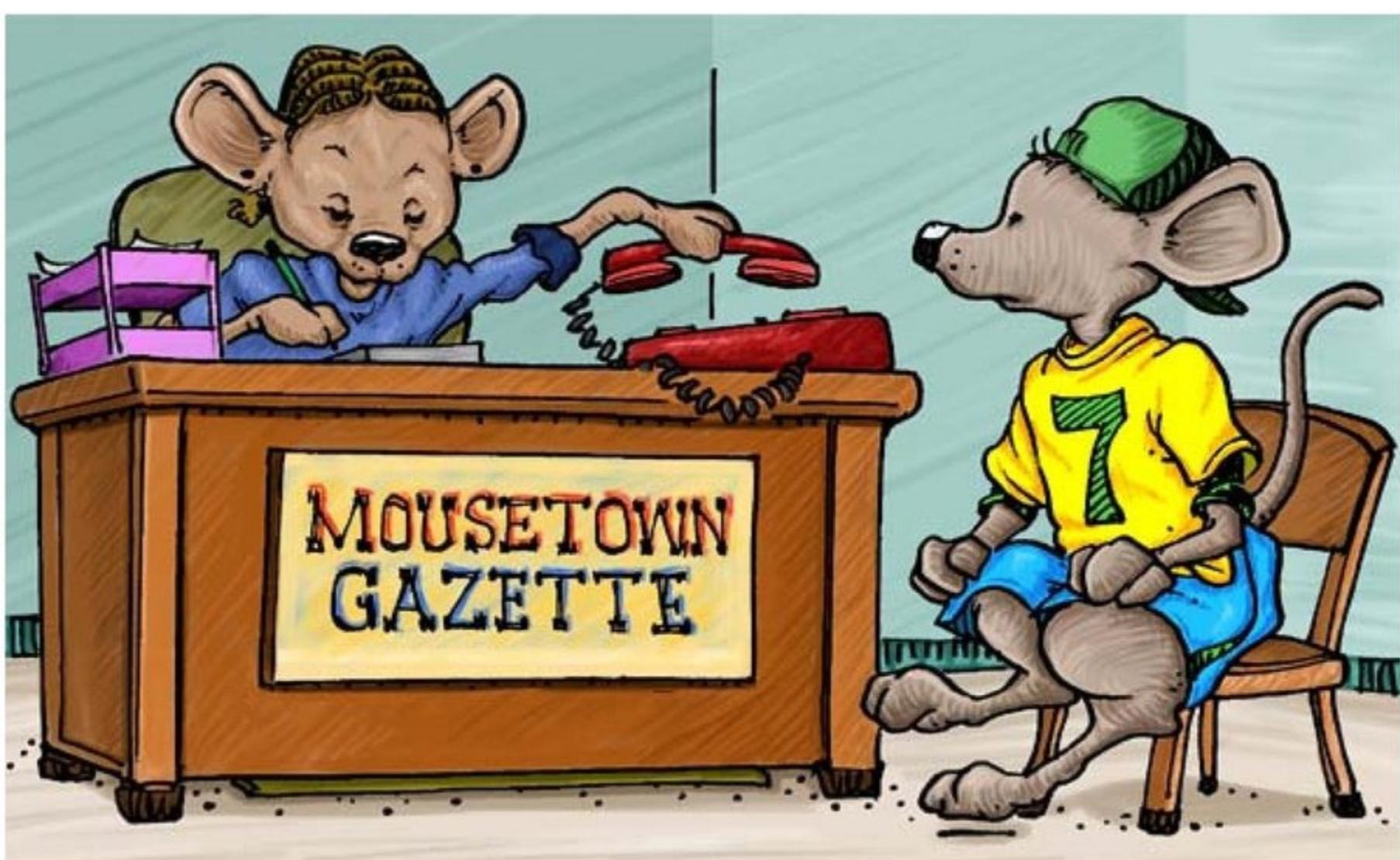


When Ben arrived home, he listened to messages from six angry customers who tried to reach him before calling the *Gazette*. He covered his face with his paws. Ben was heartbroken and took a moment to think before he called Morty. “Morty, I am back,” he said in a flat, sad voice. “Tell me what happened with the paper route.”

Morty wished he could think of a good excuse. But, there is one thing about Morty: HE ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH.



“Ben, I am really sorry. I slept in. It’s my fault there are complaints on your service record. I’ve arranged to meet with the delivery supervisor. Hopefully I can convince him that your route would still show a perfect service record, if I hadn’t failed.”



The next morning, Morty arrived early at the *Mousetown Gazette*. He sat in the reception area, waiting for the delivery supervisor to arrive. He could smell the familiar ink scent from the paper bags in the air. When the supervisor arrived, he shook Morty’s paw and invited him into his office. There was a Magic Mouseland poster on the wall and a list of mice who had already earned the trip.

Morty sat up straight and cleared his throat. "Sir, I have let down a good friend. Ben asked me to cover his newspaper route. I was responsible for the complaints on Ben's route yesterday morning. Ben was out of town. He trusted me, and I didn't deliver the papers on time."

The supervisor looked closely at Morty, but he didn't say a word. Morty continued, "I would like to write a letter to Ben's customers and apologize. I'll include fifty cents in each envelope to pay for yesterday's paper."

The supervisor raised his eyebrows.

"If the *Gazette* guarantees delivery by 6 a.m. and I kept that from happening, then I'm responsible for buying that morning's paper."

The supervisor seemed to like the idea, so Morty forged on with the next part of his plan. "I am asking you not to punish Ben for my mistake. Please don't count my mistake against his perfect record. I know how much it means to him to earn the trip to Magic Mouseland."



It was quiet in the office for what seemed like a very long time. Finally the supervisor spoke. "Young mouse, rules are rules. That trip is for the very best paper carriers. Ben has been one of our best this year. Knowing it was you and not he who made the mistake changes things. I'll give Ben a call and let him know that his record will not be affected."



The next morning, Morty set his Mega Mouse alarm clock and got up to do the paper route with Ben. He was delivering his apology notes and refunds while Ben tossed his papers. “Ben, I now realize that delivering the morning paper is a difficult job,” Morty said.

Ben smiled in spite of his heavy paper bags. “Well, Morty, I guess I won’t ask you to cover the route while I’m in Magic Mouseland.”



"I just don't think I am ready to be a paper carrier," Morty admitted.

"It's a good thing since the *Gazette* is the only paper in Mousetown," Ben chuckled. "After this, there is no way they'll ever hire you."



Morty laughed, too. Then he quietly picked up a heavy rock and placed it in one of Ben's paper bags. "I'll race you to the corner!"

Morty Mouse's stories began with author Kathy Hoggan telling her children about the adventures of a mischievous mouse, inspired by her grandmother's tales of Suzette Scamper. Now, more than a decade after she shared the first Morty Mouse stories with students, you too can enjoy the exciting adventures of mischievous Morty Mouse in this series from ReadingA-Z.com.

Morty and the Mousetown Gazette

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A Morty Mouse Story

Written by Kathy Hoggan

Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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