

LEVELED BOOKS

# Morty and the Mousetown Talent Show



Written by Kathy Hoggan  
Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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Morty was up early. If he got to the television first, he could pick his favorite Saturday cartoons. But instead he stood outside the bathroom, waiting impatiently for his sister to come out.

Morty had gone to the refrigerator right after he awoke for a quick swig of juice. He was so groggy that he accidentally grabbed the bottle of garlic and stinky cheese vinegar instead. Now he had a horrible taste in his mouth. He couldn't wait to brush his teeth and rinse with mouthwash to get rid of it.

*When I grow up, I'm going to have my very own bathroom, Morty thought. I'll never have to wait, there won't be any squeaky mice baby toys in the tub, and I'll have a huge stack of Mega Mouse towels all to myself.*

His daydream was interrupted by an even stronger awareness of that horrible taste in his mouth. Pounding his paws on the door, Morty squeaked, "Get out of the bathroom NOW!" His command woke up everyone in the house. Morty groaned loudly when he heard his little brothers scamper downstairs toward the television.



Morty finally got his turn in the bathroom, but it was too late for his Saturday cartoon hopes. The sounds of *The Junior Mouse Cartoon Club* made it clear that he had missed out on being the cartoon commander for the morning.



*I hate this, Morty thought. If it weren't for Miss Primp and Pretty, as Morty called his sister when she spent hours in front of the bathroom mirror, I'd be watching Mega Mouse. Instead I'll be listening to mice singing songs about vowels and manners.*

Morty was so mad that he completely ignored bathroom courtesy. He squirted toothpaste on the counter and splashed water on the mirror. He let the towel slide to the floor when he finished drying. His tail swung around and knocked over the wastebasket before he slammed the door and stomped down to breakfast.

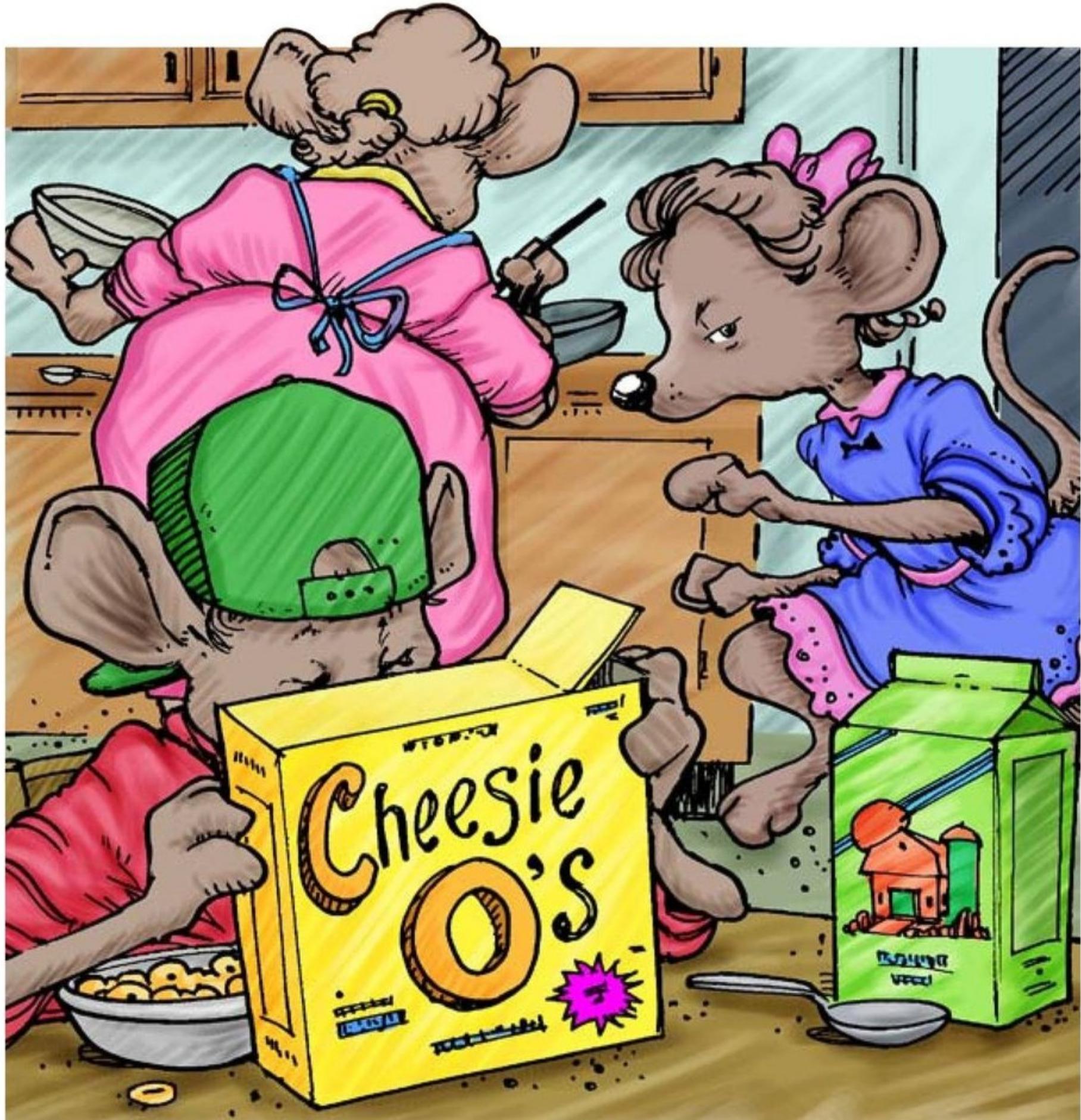




"Good morning!" Mother greeted him cheerfully.

"What smells so good?" Morty asked as he headed for the pantry to get the Cheesie O's.

"Tonight's the Mousetown Talent Show, and it seems my best talent is making cheese drop cookies. So I'm baking some for the dessert table."



Morty was about to ask for a delicious warm sample when his sister swept into the kitchen. "Mother, you should see how Morty left the bathroom!"

Ducking behind the cereal box, Morty's ears perked up to hear his sister tattling away. Luckily, Mother didn't have a chance to react before Miss Primp and Pretty moved on to whining about her cold.

“I think we have a good chance of winning the Mousetown Best of Show this year,” his sister boasted. She and her friends had been rehearsing a song-and-dance number for the past four months. Nibbling around her breakfast, she described their costumes and fancy moves. “But my voice is scratchy, my ears are plugged, and I can’t even smell those cookies!”

Mother took the oven mitts off her paws and hugged her sick daughter. “Take a hot bath and rest today, and we’ll see how you feel later,” she suggested.

“I don’t want to let my friends down,” Morty’s sister said.



Morty heard only two things: an annoying song about sharing with others that blared from *The Junior Mouse Manners Club*, and a clear indication that his sister would be spending half the day in front of the bathroom mirror. Then Morty had a very mischievous idea.

A few minutes later, Mother and Morty's sister left the kitchen. Morty silently grabbed two bottles from the refrigerator and tucked them under his Mega Mouse pajamas. He quietly sneaked upstairs and closed the bathroom door. *First, I'll dump all her Fruity Tootie shampoo in the toilet*, he said to himself. Then he carefully refilled the shampoo bottle with garlic and stinky cheese vinegar.

Next to go in the toilet was his sister's favorite Mouse of Mystery perfume. Morty filled the pretty blue bottle with sugar water. Flushing the toilet, Morty looked in the mirror and remembered how carefully his sister always applied her lipstick to avoid getting any on her whiskers.

*Hmmm*, Morty thought, as he sneaked to the hobby cupboard for the small, yet massively strong gluestick. Pawing through his sister's purse, he found her favorite tube of lipstick and switched the cap with the gluestick cap. He tossed the gluestick cap and the lipstick in the wastebasket and placed the gluestick with the lipstick cap back into his sister's purse. Smiling to himself, Morty thought, *She's going to have trouble belting out her show-stopping song now. I wish I'd glued her lips shut BEFORE she tattled to Mother.*

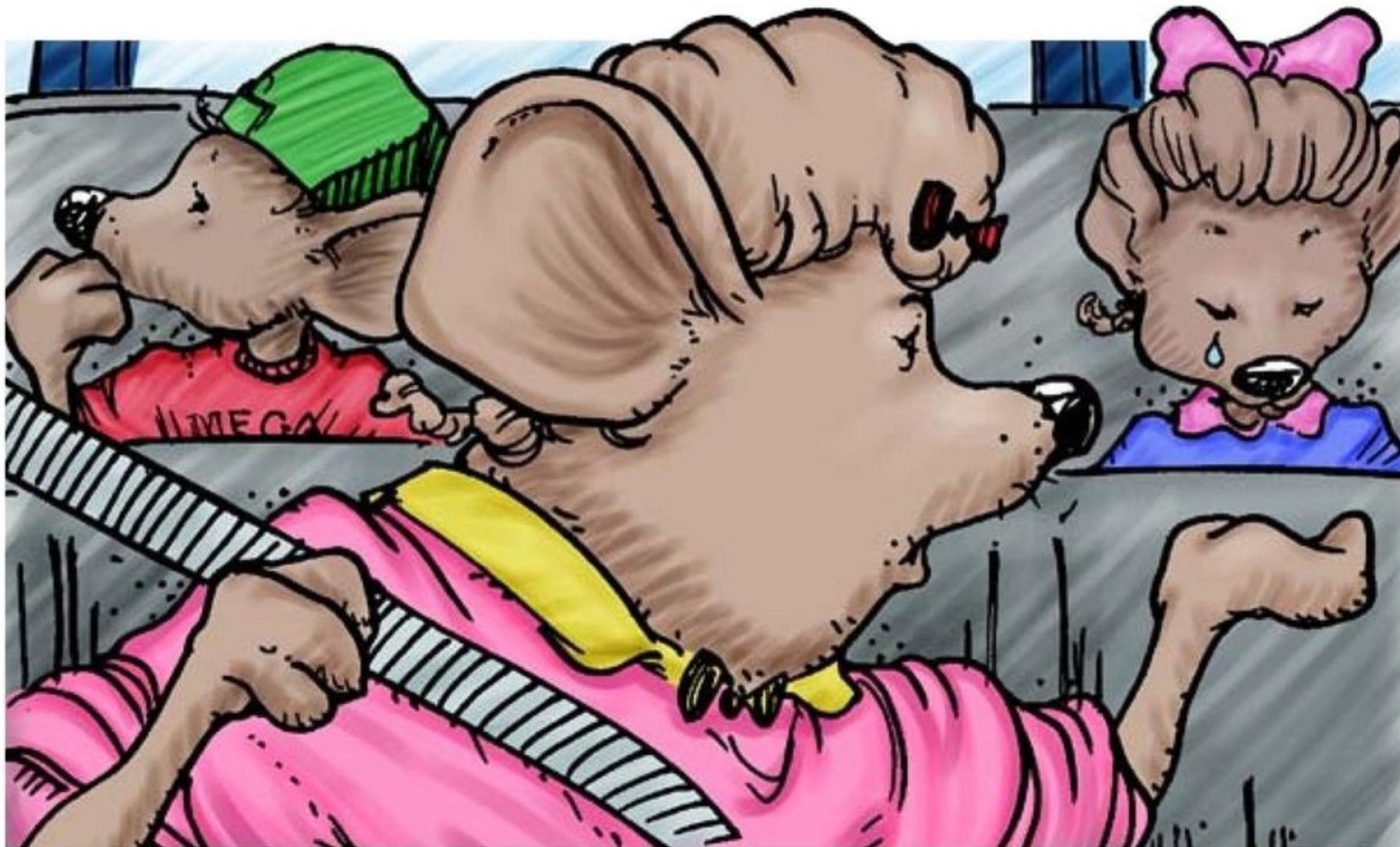


Early evening came, and everyone piled into the mouse minivan for the Mousetown Talent Show. Morty's sister, the last to climb in, was in a disastrous state. She had a very offensive stink about her. Morty didn't just get a little whiff of a bad smell; it was so nasty that he pulled the neck of his Mega Mouse T-shirt over his nose. Mother quickly rolled down the car window.

"Yucko!" Morty's little brother yelled.  
"Someone stinks, and the smell won't go away!"

Morty noticed that his sister's ears were stuck back from the sugar-water perfume. Morty smirked and thought, *She almost looks bald.*





"Honey, how are you feeling? Are you a little nervous?" Mother asked Morty's sister. Then she added, reassuringly, "I know you'll be fabulous." Morty noticed his mother handing his sister a tissue.

*Is she crying?* Morty wondered. He looked over to see a tear running down his sister's cheek. Morty started to get that squeezy lump in his throat brought on by a heavy dose of remorse.

Morty stuck his nose out of the window for a breath of fresh air. *Maybe she's just crying from the smell*, he rationalized. Then Morty caught his breath as he watched his sister paw through her purse for her lipstick.

Morty watched her apply the gooey glue to her lips. She smacked them together twice and tried to rub them back and forth. A flash of fear appeared in her eyes as her lips locked together. She struggled to pull them apart and then made a horrible muffled sound.

Mother looked back, and Morty's sister handed her the gluestick with the lipstick cap. "We need to stop at the store quickly," Mother told Father. "We need some last-minute lipstick, tissues, and rubbing alcohol to remove glue."





Just minutes before the curtain opened, Morty's family walked into the auditorium of Mousetown High School. Morty scanned the audience for his buddies Ben and Fred, who usually skipped out at intermission. Judging from the expressions on the faces around him, Morty quickly learned two lessons: Mice have super-sensitive sniffers, and family members tolerate stinky smells that strangers won't.

Mother helped Morty's sister backstage. Morty glanced at the program. His sister's act was scheduled after intermission. *I won't be skipping out this year*, Morty thought. *If she wins, what I did to her won't seem quite as bad.*



When Morty's sister and her friends skipped on stage, the mice in the front rows began to gasp. The garlic and stinky cheese vinegar wafted clear to the back row where Morty sat with his family. Many mice in the audience put handkerchiefs over their noses, and some got up to leave.

Morty noticed that his sister's friends wouldn't stand near her. Their voices were clear and beautiful, and their dancing was superb, but the audience was too busy whispering about the odor to pay attention. Morty was mortified.

There was a smattering of applause as his sister exited the stage. Morty knew she didn't win. He wished the house lights wouldn't go on. He was pretty certain that the guilt he felt was showing on his face.

Morty's sister was sitting in the mouse minivan when the family came out. "You were wonderful!" Morty's mother said as she hugged her sad, sick daughter. Morty quietly climbed in the van and stared out the window.

"Morty?" Mother asked. "Do you know how your sister got glue for lipstick and why she smells so badly?" The van was quiet as all eyes were on Morty.



Now, there is one thing about Morty: HE ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH. "Yes," Morty said, "I pulled some tomfoolery." That was his new vocabulary word, and he thought he'd try using it. His mother kept staring at him, and he figured she wanted more of an explanation.



“I filled her shampoo bottle with garlic and stinky cheese vinegar. Her ears are stuck back that funny way because I put sugar water in her perfume.” Mother was still staring expectantly. “I did it because I was mad at her for hogging the bathroom. I am really, really sorry,” he added quietly.

There wasn’t a squeak in the mouse minivan on the way home. As soon as they got in the house, Morty went to his room and put on his Mega Mouse pajamas. Then he counted his money. While waiting to brush his teeth—his sister was taking a long bath—Morty found Mother and asked her for help.

“Will you help me go to the store tomorrow and get a few things? In exchange, I will scrub the bathroom twice a week for the next month.”

Mother looked at Morty sternly. “Yes, Morty, I’ll go with you to the store. But I want you to take some time to think about what you’ve learned from this experience. Your sister’s reputation may not be quickly repaired. It can take a long time for others to forget.” Then Mother gently kissed Morty behind the ears.

The next afternoon, Morty's sister entered the bathroom to a wonderful surprise. On the counter was a colorful bag with her name on it. Inside was new Fruity Tootie shampoo, Mouse of Mystery perfume, and three tubes of Miss Mouse Luscious Lips. Next to the bag was a beautiful bouquet of flowers and a note in Morty's best cursive. Morty's sister smiled as she read it:



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.

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Level S Leveled Book

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A Morty Mouse Story

Written by Kathy Hoggan

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