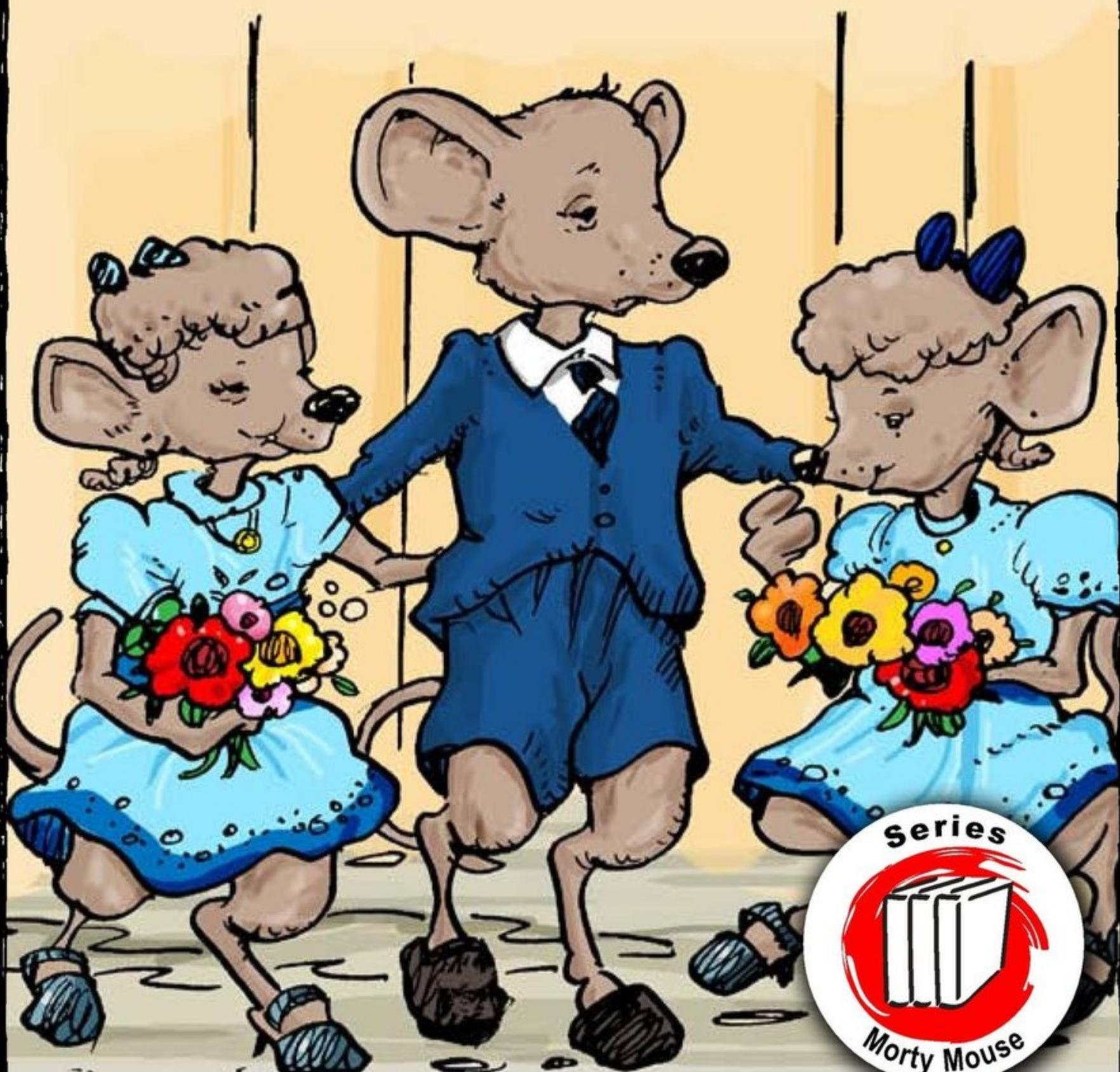


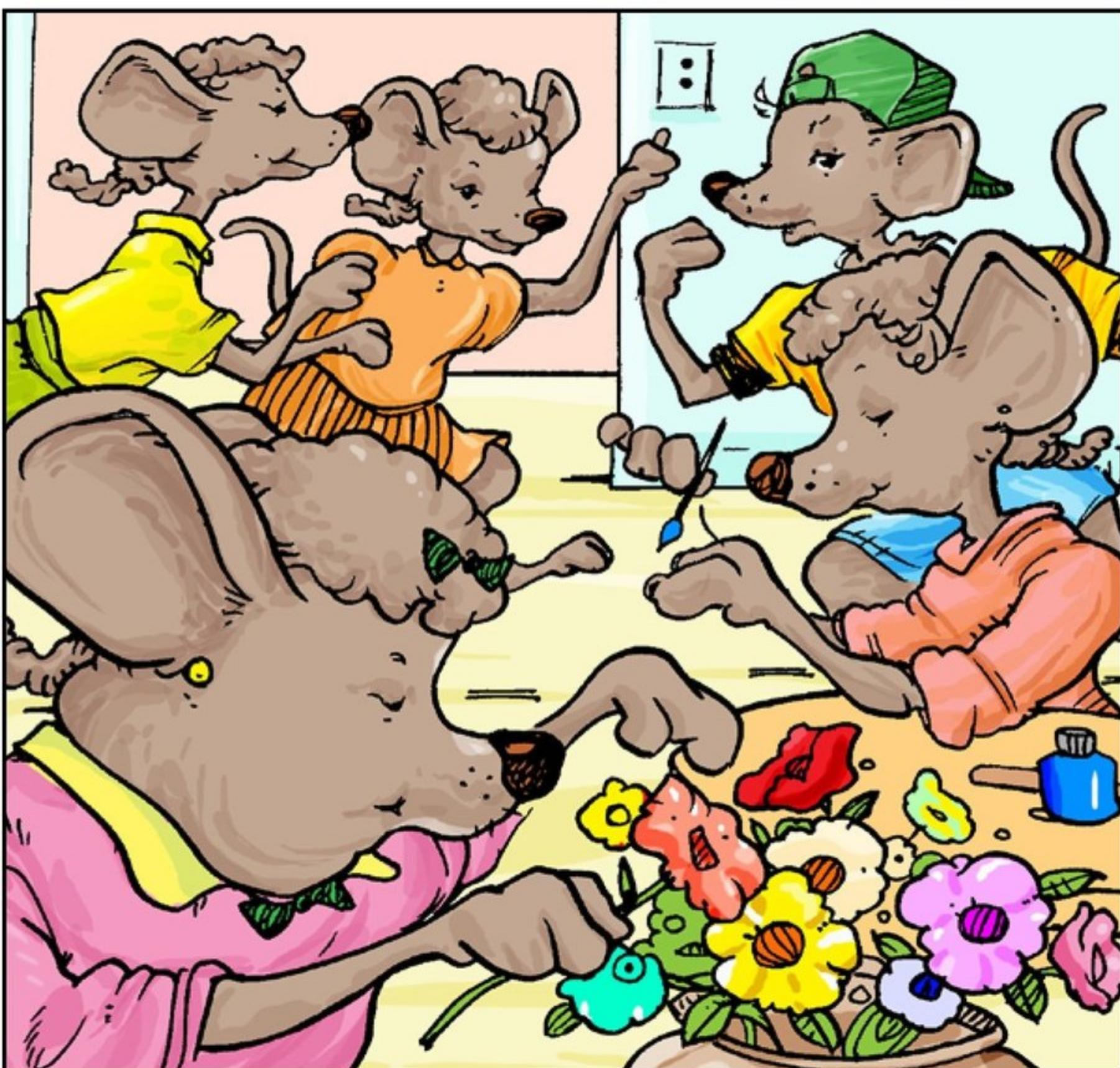
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Morty and the Fancy-Pants Wedding

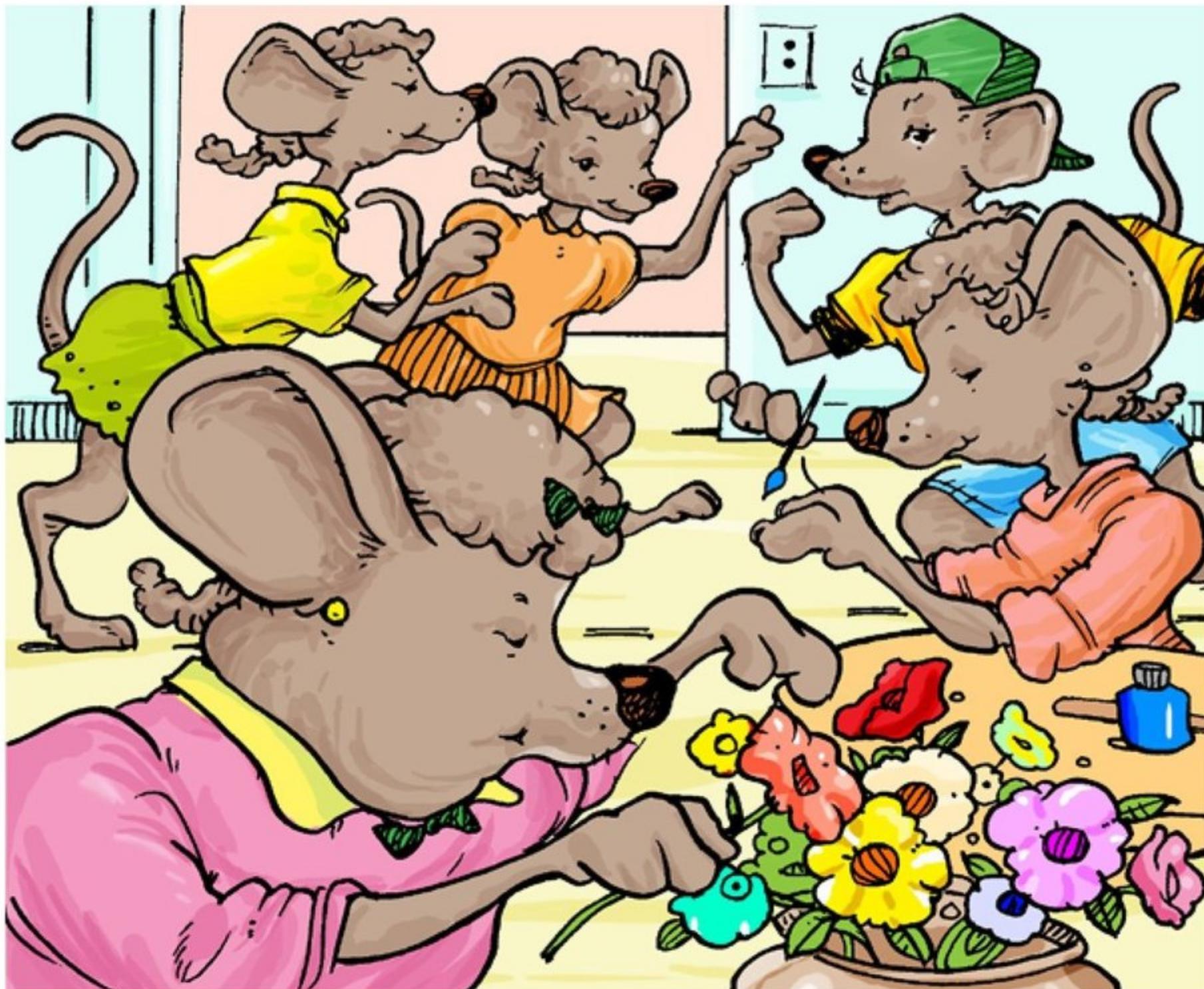


Written by Kathy Hoggan
Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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Morty could only think of one thing that was worse than wasting a Saturday at a boring wedding. He would be missing his best friend's party at the same time.

Tomorrow was the big day, and every mouse in the house was panicking over the final details of their role in Aunt Maggie's wedding. His younger sisters were practicing their "slow walk" as flower mice, his big sister was doing her nails to look perfect while serving punch, and Mother was arranging large bunches of flowers.

Morty's job was to shine everyone's shoes, wear a suit, and sit quietly. That's right—he had to sit quietly while Ben and his birthday party guests would be screaming down the skate-park ramps and eating cheese pizza.

Grabbing the shoeshine kit, Morty flung his tail aside and plopped down on the floor. The dress-up shoes of the entire mouse family were lined up neatly in front of him. Morty didn't mind shining the shoes. He'd watched the shoe shiners in front of Mousy's, the most upscale department store in the Mousetown Mall. They worked quickly and **methodically**, while whistling or talking baseball with their customers.





The shoeshine kit had it all—black shoe polish, brushes, rags, and petroleum gel to put an extra shine on his sisters' and mother's patent leather shoes. Morty pulled out the black polish and a **chamois** (SHA-mee) rag. First he smeared on the dark, inky polish. Then he whipped the rag around and, holding the strip of material on both ends, started “scuffin and buffin” his and his dad's shoes. Morty took a big sniff of the wonderful smell of his black leather going-out shoes. Then he noticed how his dad's dress-up loafers looked practically new by the time he finished shining them. *I'm good, he thought. I wonder how old I need to be to work at Mousy's.*



Next up were the shiny black shoes of his mother and sisters. Morty thought about his sisters. "Ugh, those two are driving me crazy!" he mumbled. His younger sisters had been getting all the attention because of their roles in the wedding. They got fancy new dresses, they were getting their hair and whiskers styled, and Mother was even taking them to get a special mouse manicure.

"What do I get?" Morty asked out loud. "I get to wear the old, stuffy suit that I wore to Great-Uncle Finnegan's funeral."

Patent leather is so lame, Morty thought. His dad once explained where the name “patent leather” came from. Basically it was fake leather—stuff that someone invented and protected with a patent so no one else could steal the idea. The names “not leather,” “trick leather,” “**mock** leather,” or “leather wanna-be” seemed better than “patent leather.”

Morty reached for the petroleum gel and thought about that name, too. *Why spell it “gel” and not “jell”? After all, it seemed just like Mother’s famous huckleberry jelly. Maybe gel was someone’s made-up word to mean, “don’t eat it.” Why didn’t they call it “patent jelly for patent leather”?* Morty puzzled.

Morty thought words were interesting, but his words for the wedding were BORING and WASTE OF A PERFECTLY GOOD SATURDAY, and the words for his feelings were ANGRY and RESENTFUL.

Trying to whistle like the shoe-shiners at Mousy's did, Morty spread the petroleum gel on his sisters' shoes for a glossy shine (you could even see your face and ears in the top of his older sister's sassy Mary Jane high heels). He rubbed the greasy, slimy gel into the shoes while his mind thought about tasty huckleberry jelly and how it slides off onto your plate when you try to spread it on warm pancakes. Then Morty had a very mischievous idea.

If I spread gel all over the soles of my sisters' shoes, they will slip and slide, Morty thought. It would be so fun to get Ben and Fred so we could all put gel on the bottom of our shoes and pretend to ice skate on Mother's kitchen floor.

It would be even more fun to watch the "adorable little flower mice" slip and slide up the aisle with their arms full of flowers. Morty chuckled at the thought and spread even more gel on the bottoms of all his sisters' shoes.





The Big Day

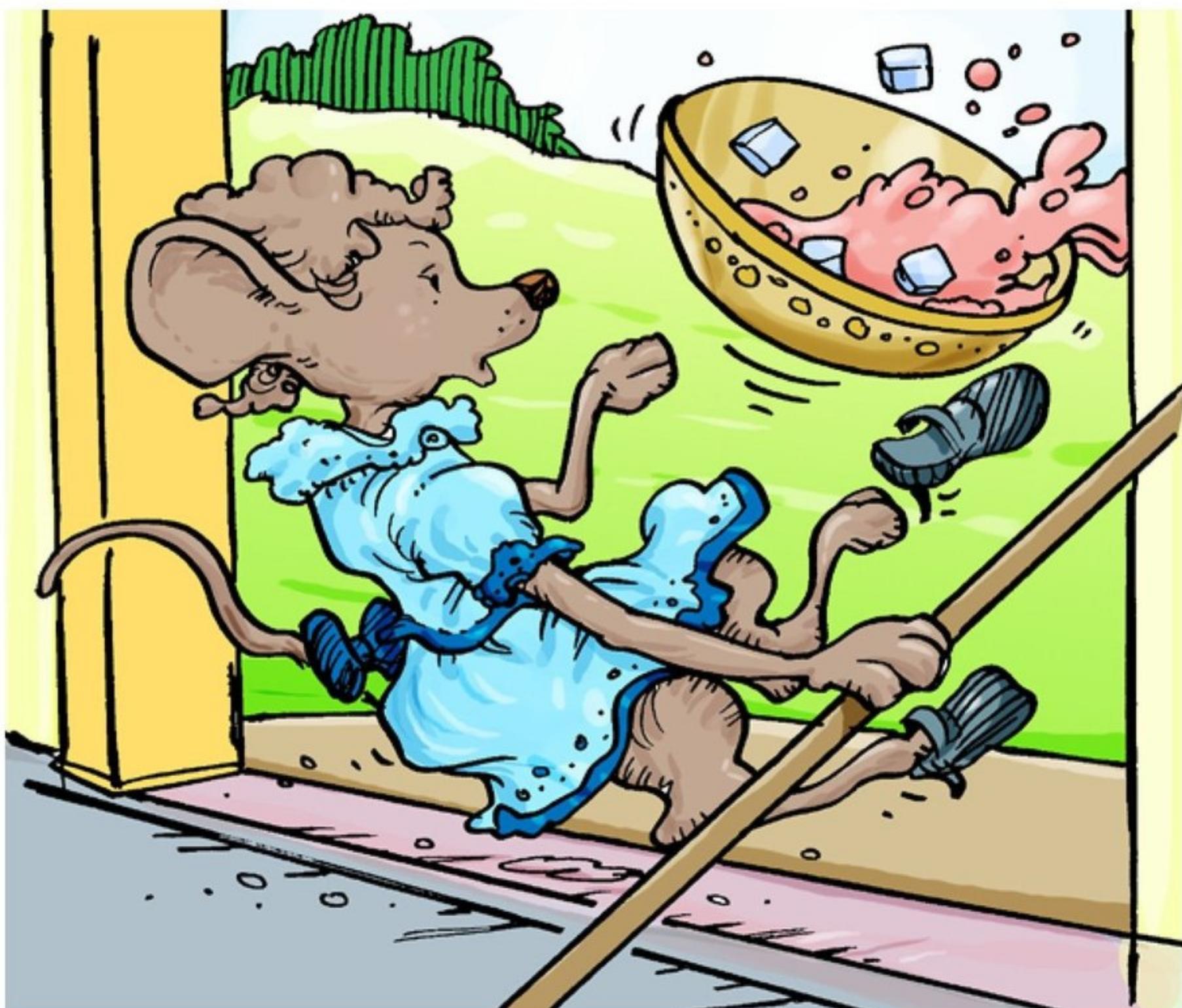
The bright sunlight was shining in Morty's bedroom window. "Good Morning, Sleepy Head!" Mother sang cheerfully as she opened the curtains. "It's a beautiful day for a wedding, and it's time to rise and shine. I need you to hurry and get ready like all the other mice in this family who aren't in the wedding party. Your younger sisters won't be dressing until we get to the hall. We must arrive plenty early."

Morty shook his ears out and mumbled, "It's also a perfect day for the skate park with friends." Then he remembered his prank and spoke louder to catch Mother's attention, "I'll put their shoes in the car."

While he gathered shoes, Morty's older sister startled him. "Hey Morty!" she said softly as she stepped into her high heels. She was dressed for the wedding and looked beautiful. "Thanks for making my heels look so . . ." She couldn't finish her sentence because she started to slip. "Whoa! I'll have to remember to keep my **balance** in these."



Morty's mom called from upstairs because she needed Morty's big sister to carry the punch bowl out to the car. Morty's big sister started out the door and began to slip. In one fast move she freed her paw to grab the railing, but she let go of the bowl. The glass hit the pavement hard and shattered. Mother scampered out to see the disaster and asked Morty to help out by cleaning up the mess. No one guessed what Morty had done, but he began to think perhaps his prank wasn't such a good idea.





The Wedding

Soft music played and Morty's little sisters, carrying baskets of flower petals, stepped off the carpet and onto the walkway up the aisle. In no time they were slip-sliding and flower petals went flying. Father quickly stepped into the aisle and picked up his daughters. The greasy trail behind them looked just like slug slime, and Father quickly checked the bottom of their shoes to discover the cause.

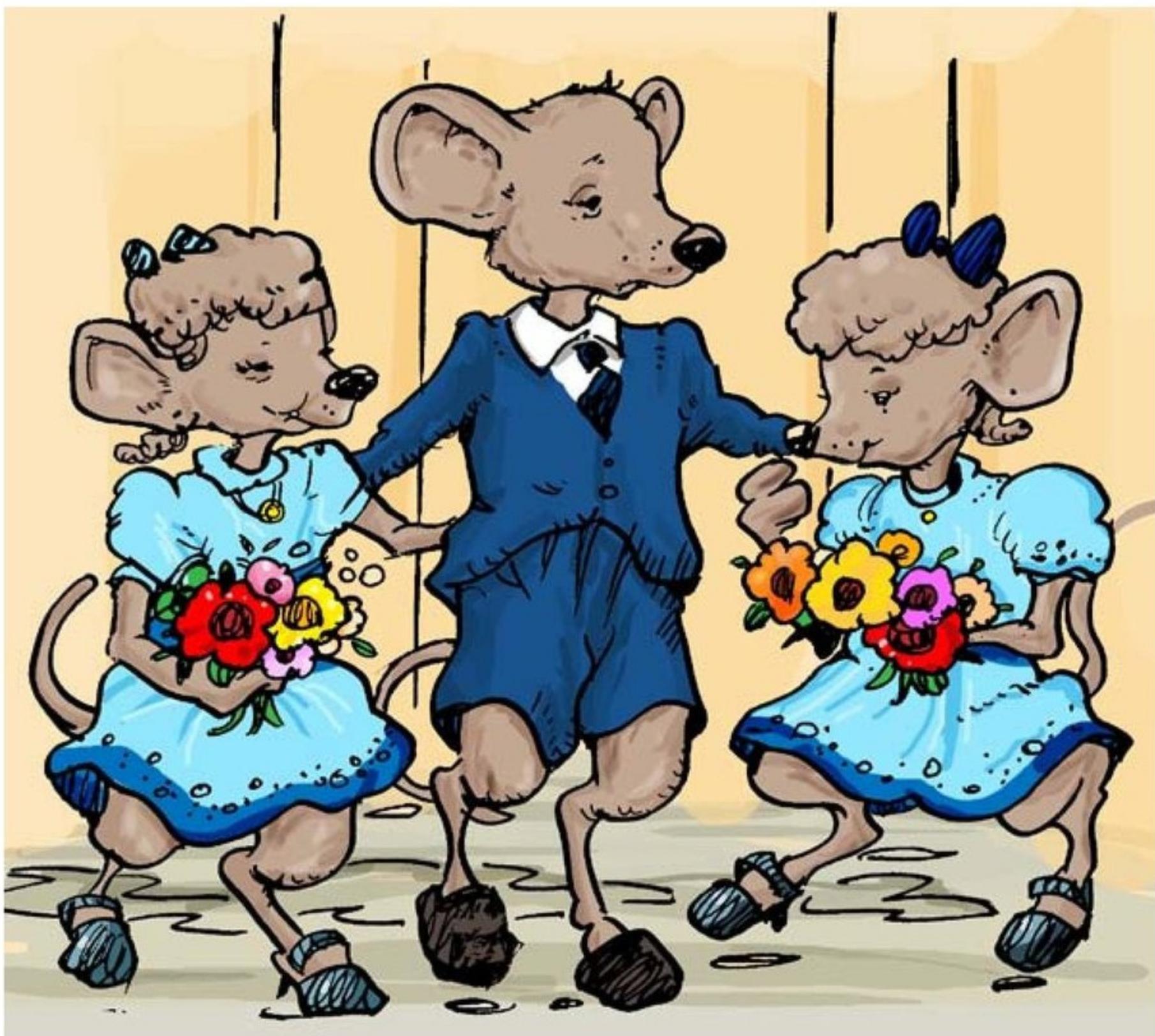
“Didn’t I ever tell you that you must not get gel on the bottoms of patent leather shoes?” Father confronted Morty in a whisper.

There is one thing about Morty—HE ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH.

“Yes, you mentioned it, but I wanted to see what would happen.”

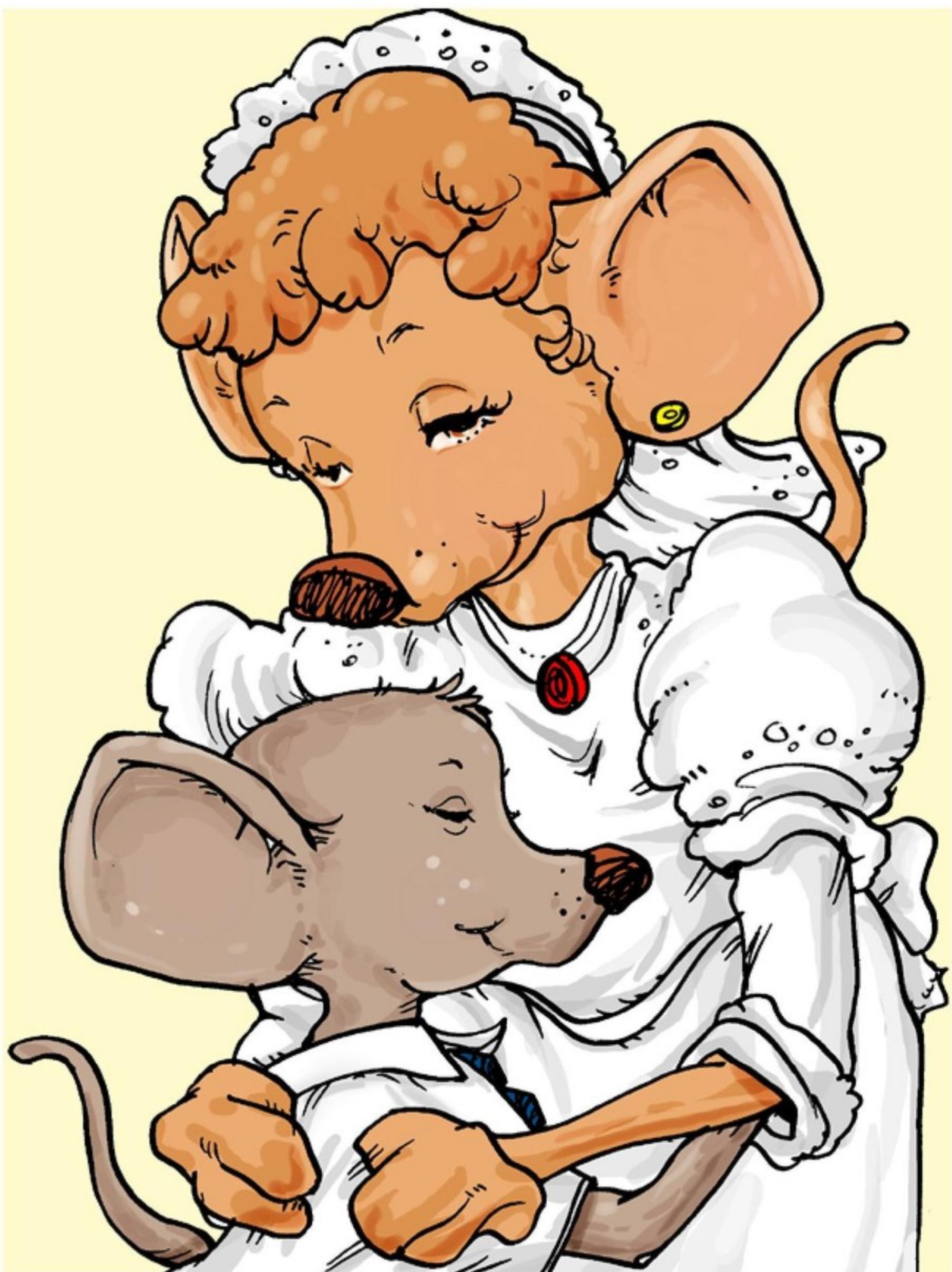
Making a fast decision to save the moment, Father informed Morty in a firm but whispered voice, “Your decision has earned you the new role of escort.” Morty stepped into the aisle and allowed a sister to take hold of each arm, which they held tightly to keep from slipping. Father grabbed one of the flower buds and tucked it into Morty’s lapel. “There will be no **shenanigans**, Mr. Mouse,” he said sternly. “Don’t forget to smile and stand VERY STILL during the **ceremony**.”

Morty now knew this had been a really bad idea. He could tell he had hurt his sisters’ feelings by causing them to slip and nearly fall. He could also tell Father was **disappointed**.



Morty became more uncomfortable the farther up the aisle he walked. The guests giggled when they saw Morty walking the flower mice down the **aisle**. The ceremony seemed to last a lifetime, and Morty could feel drops of sweat trickling down his back as people stared at him. He tried to stand so still that not even his whiskers or ears twitched, but it was difficult. His sisters' paws were warm on his arms and their flowers' scents were tickling his nose.

Aunt Maggie found Morty after the ceremony and gave him a warm hug. "I noticed that I had an extra flower mouse in my wedding. I had no idea that you wanted to be a flower mouse. Why didn't you just ask?"



“Aunt Maggie,” Morty said, trying to think of a way to explain quietly so that only she would hear. “I made a bad choice and put petroleum gel on the bottoms of my sisters’ shoes, and they couldn’t walk without falling. I love you, and we all wanted this to be your special day, so I walked with them to help them keep their balance. I am so sorry. I know it wasn’t the way you wanted it.” Morty turned to see his sisters’ ears perked up—they had been listening. “I am sorry to both of you, too,” he added quietly.

Morty’s aunt seemed to glow as she broke into a big smile. “Well, it worked out just fine,” she said, hugging Morty again. “I am the only bride I know that had a flower boy along with two flower girls.”

One of Morty’s little sisters spoke up, “It was kind of nice to have him up there. It was a long time to stand, and it helped to have Morty to hold onto.”

Father had joined the conversation and was the last to speak. Putting a paw on his son's head, he said, "Morty, I have never seen you stand so still and be so quiet for so long." Perhaps enduring that very uncomfortable situation was enough of a punishment." Morty sighed with relief.



Then his father added, “I never, ever want you putting gel on the bottom of shoes ever again.” Morty nodded and realized that he would never experience the thrill of mock ice-skating with Ben and Fred on Mother’s shiny kitchen floor.

Morty also realized that there was something even worse than spending a sunny Saturday at a wedding and missing your best friend’s skate-park party. That’s spending a sunny Saturday at a wedding, missing your best friend’s skate-park party, and being a perfectly mannered flower mouse with everyone staring at you for the entire ceremony.



Glossary

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| aisle (<i>n.</i>) | a walkway between rows of seats (p. 15) |
| balance (<i>n.</i>) | a state of being steady (p. 11) |
| ceremony (<i>n.</i>) | a formal event that takes place on a special occasion (p. 14) |
| chamois (<i>n.</i>) | the soft leather of a goat antelope; often used for cleaning or polishing (p. 5) |
| disappointed (<i>adj.</i>) | to feel sad or let down because someone or something has not fulfilled your hopes or expectations (p. 14) |
| methodically (<i>adv.</i>) | in a regular, orderly, or systematic way (p. 4) |
| mock (<i>adj.</i>) | made to like something else; fake (p. 7) |
| shenanigans (<i>n.</i>) | mischief, tricks, or pranks (p. 14) |

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 Fancy-Pants Wedding

Level S Leveled Book

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A Morty Mouse Story

Written by Kathy Hoggan

Illustrated by Joel Snyder

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