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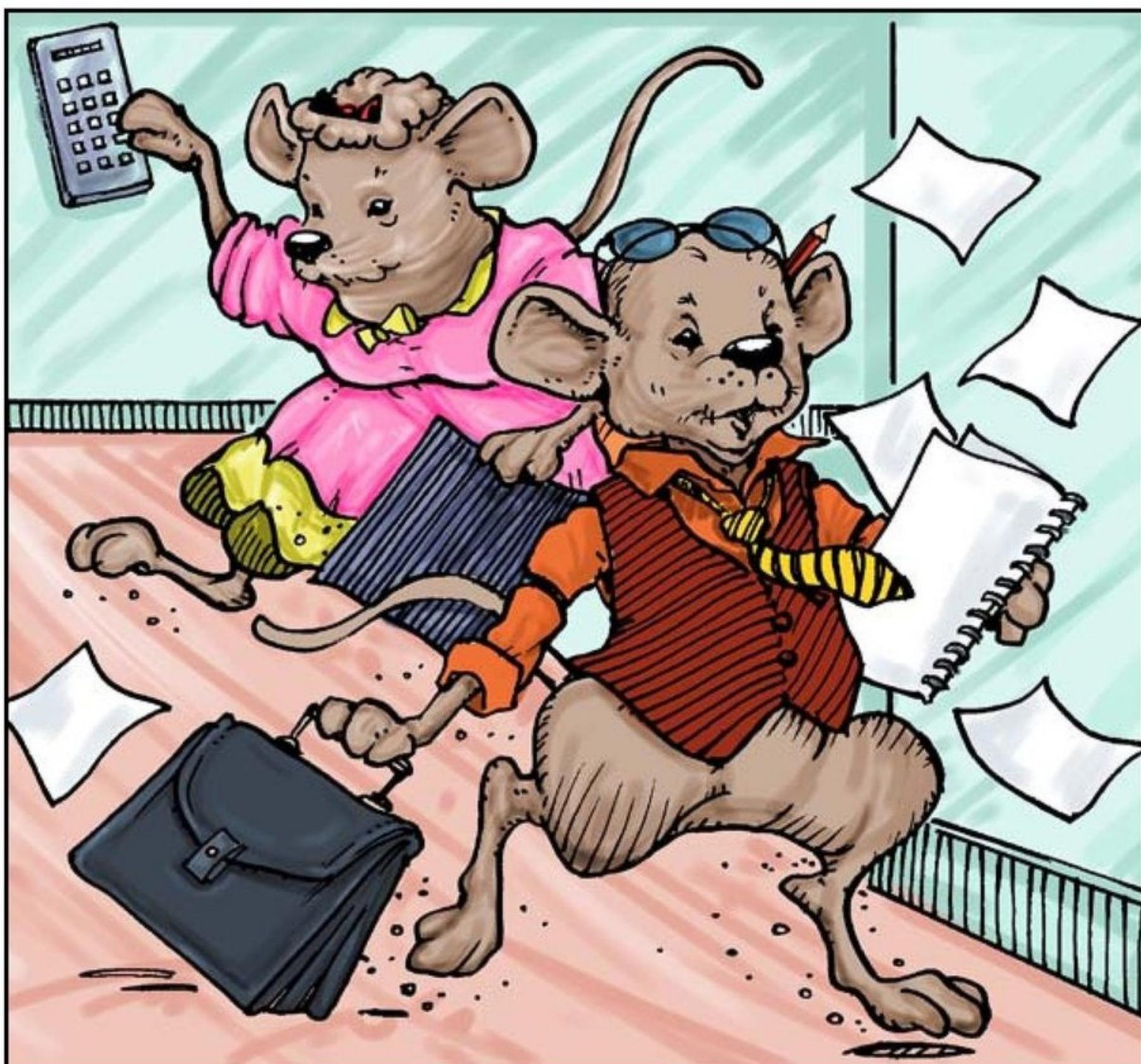
Morty and the Suitcase Caper



Written by Kathy Hoggan
Illustrated by Joel Snyder



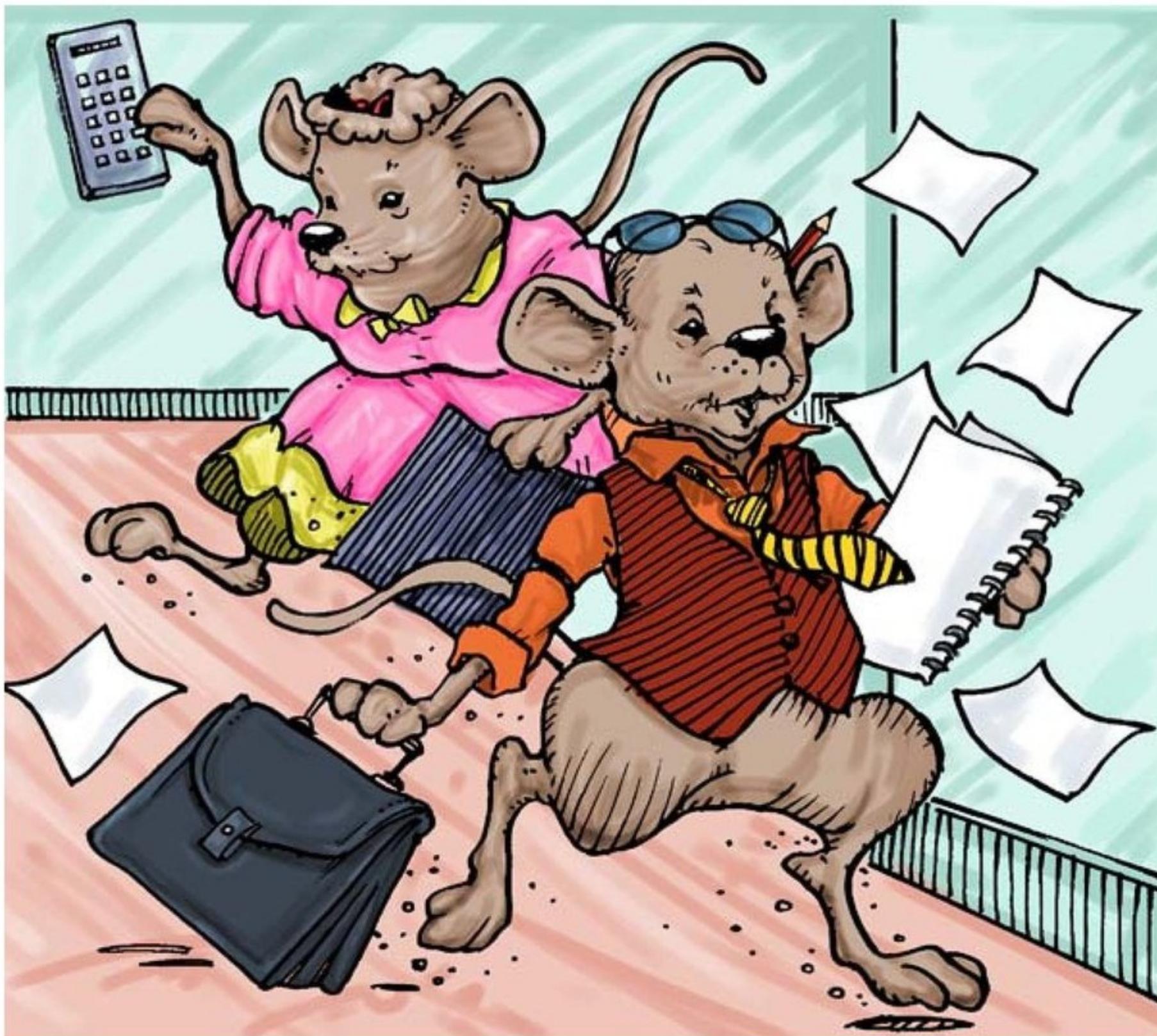
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Mother scurried about in a panicked pace while Father wrote down the hotel phone number. Morty's brothers and sisters played Mouse Marbles while they waited somewhat impatiently. Morty sat in his room with his face in his paws, staring at his inline skates, which would not fit into his suitcase.





Father had a three-day business meeting in Mousieapolis, and Mother was going along to keep him company. Morty and his brothers and sisters were being exiled to Grandma and Grandpa's farm for a whole week. Of course, Morty loved his grandparents, and when he was younger, going to their house seemed like the most fun on earth. Now, in third grade, it amazed him that a mouse could drive three hours and end up in the middle of nowhere, where time moved as slow as a tortoise.

Morty knew the whole first day would speed by like a hare with new adventures. They would play hide-and-seek in the cornfields. Grandpa might take them fishing at the creek, and Grandma would have warm cheese crisp cookies and cold milk waiting when they got back to the house. They would catch fireflies as the day turned to night.



Grandma would fix dinner—nothing she made ever came from a box. Yummy aromas would seep out of the house as something delicious simmered on the stove. But after everyone's tummy was full, there would be nothing left to do, making the rest of the week feel like a lifetime in prison.

Grandma and Grandpa lived far from town. The nearest neighbor with children was too far away to play with, and worse yet, their old television did not pick up even the really old Mega Mouse cartoons. Grandma tried. She would pull out dusty chapter books, telling Morty, "These were your dad's favorites when he was your age." Sometimes she would give Morty quarters to help her snap beans or shuck peas. But mostly Morty would count the hours until he could leave the farm.

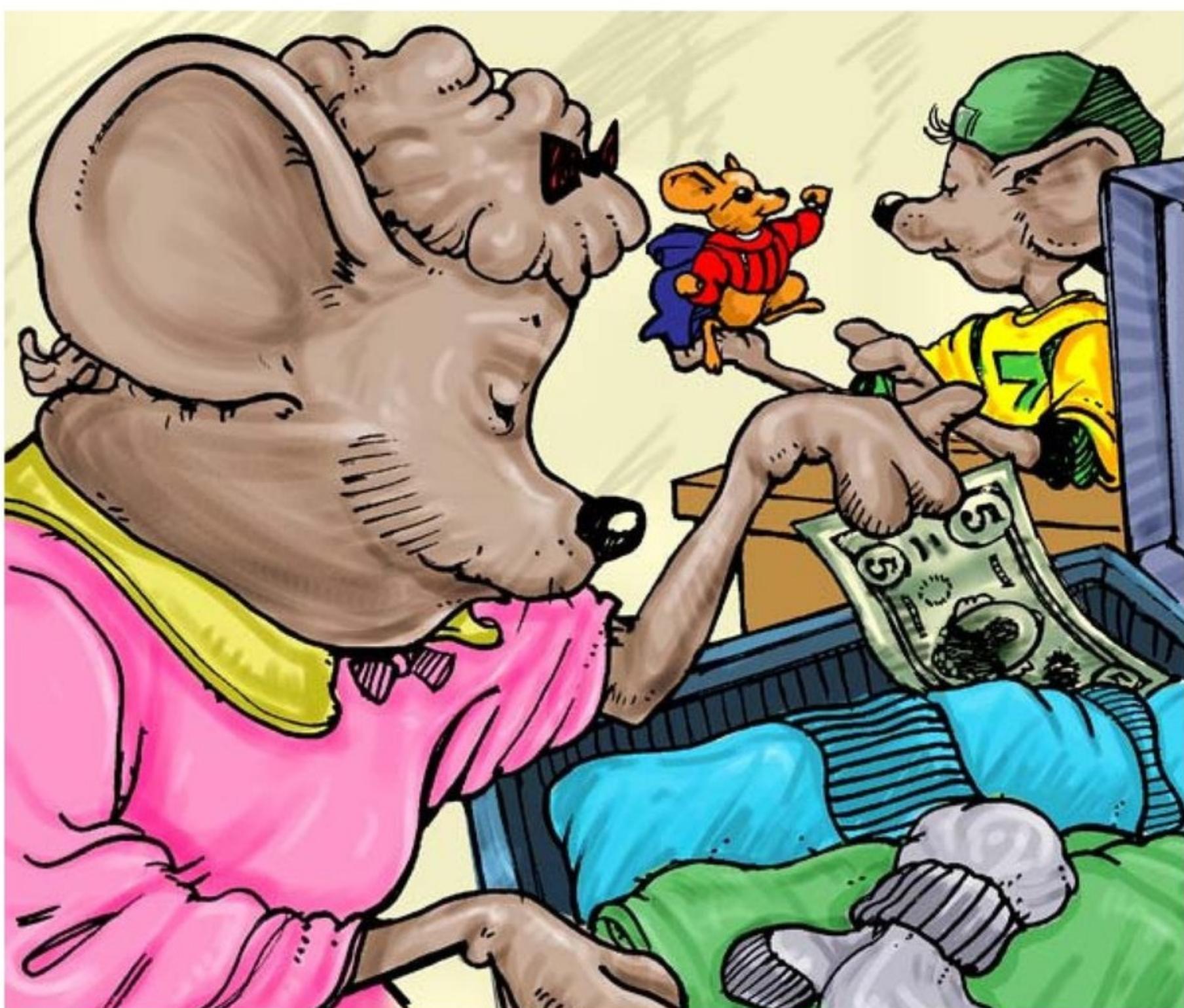
Every couple of days, Grandpa drove into town to pick up the mail and a few groceries. Morty loved to ride along just to see what movie was showing that week or if there were any mice his age hanging around. "A whole week of that?" Morty grumbled to himself.



"Morty, are you talking to someone? Did you pack your pajamas?" Mother asked as she walked toward the open suitcase on his bed.

"Uh-huh," Morty said. He planned to sleep in his favorite Mega Mouse T-shirt and matching boxers.

Mother had a puzzled look on her face, but she quickly moved away from Morty's suitcase, in which she had tucked five dollars. "I need you to help me carry down the younger mice's suitcases, so hurry and finish up, please."



Morty knew the trip routine. Mother packed a tidy little suitcase for each of his six younger brothers and sisters. She neatly folded their clothes, including just what they needed. Each mouse picked one stuffed friend or a favorite blanket for sleeping away from home. Mother also tucked in five dollars so they could get a special treat when they went to town with Grandpa Mouse. Morty no longer needed a stuffed friend or a blanket, but he liked the five dollars, even if he could not find much of what he liked at the tiny store Grandma and Grandpa shopped at.



Then Morty had a very mischievous idea. Perhaps there was a way he could bring his inline skates.

Morty jumped up and scampered to his bedroom door, he looked left and right down the hall, and he listened for Mother. With no sight of her or a whiff of her Forever Grey perfume, Morty shoved half the clothes from his suitcase under his bed. He grabbed his Mega Mouse action figures and one inline skate and stuffed them into his suitcase. As he shoved the toys in, Morty realized he needed even more room and took another pile of clothes out. After throwing the clean, folded clothes to the bottom of his closet, Morty tried to cram the other inline skate into his suitcase. No luck.



"I'll start carrying suitcases down to the mouse minivan," Morty yelled as he grabbed his little sister's suitcase from down the hall and tiptoed back to his room. Quietly unlatching the clasps, he thought about what else he could bring. *I'd like to have my comic books, too.*



Morty took all his little sister's clothes out of her suitcase and stuffed them under his bed. He hurriedly stuffed the other inline skate, the comic books, and enough snappy blocks to build a monster mouse mansion into his sister's suitcase. Morty had to sit on top of the second suitcase to get it to latch.



As he lugged the loaded suitcases to the mouse minivan, Morty told himself to remember to unload his and his sister's suitcases when they arrived at the farm. Someone else might notice how much heavier they were than the other suitcases.

It was no problem once they were at the farm three hours later. Father and Mother were in a hurry to catch their plane, and they barely took time to kiss their mice goodbye before they drove away. Morty had set the suitcases on the porch when he heard his brother calling him to the barn.

"There are new calves and little chicks and . . ." Skidding around the corner Morty was hit with the permeating smell of fresh hay and manure.



Just as Morty hoped, the first day was packed with adventures and discovery. After the last bite of cheesy potpie, Morty almost fell asleep at the table. The fresh country air combined with running, fishing, jumping, and eating too much added up to sagging eyelids on every little mouse, not just Morty.



"Let's get these sleepy little mice into bed," Grandpa said as he helped Morty's little sister up the stairs. Grabbing her suitcase in the hall, he added, "What all did you bring, sweetie? Did you bring your tricycle? This is a heavy little suitcase."

Although he was only half awake, Morty heard Grandpa's words and knew he was going to be in big trouble. His little sister started crying really loudly once Grandpa got her upstairs.

Morty's sister had no pajamas, no clothes, and—most heartbreaking to her—no sleepy blanket. She couldn't be soothed. Hearing her cry made Morty's stomach drop. Morty felt like a criminal, like he really belonged in prison.

Morty had no way out. It was his inline skate, his Mega Mouse comic books, and his snappy blocks in his sister's suitcase.

Now, there's one thing about Morty: HE ALWAYS TELLS THE TRUTH.

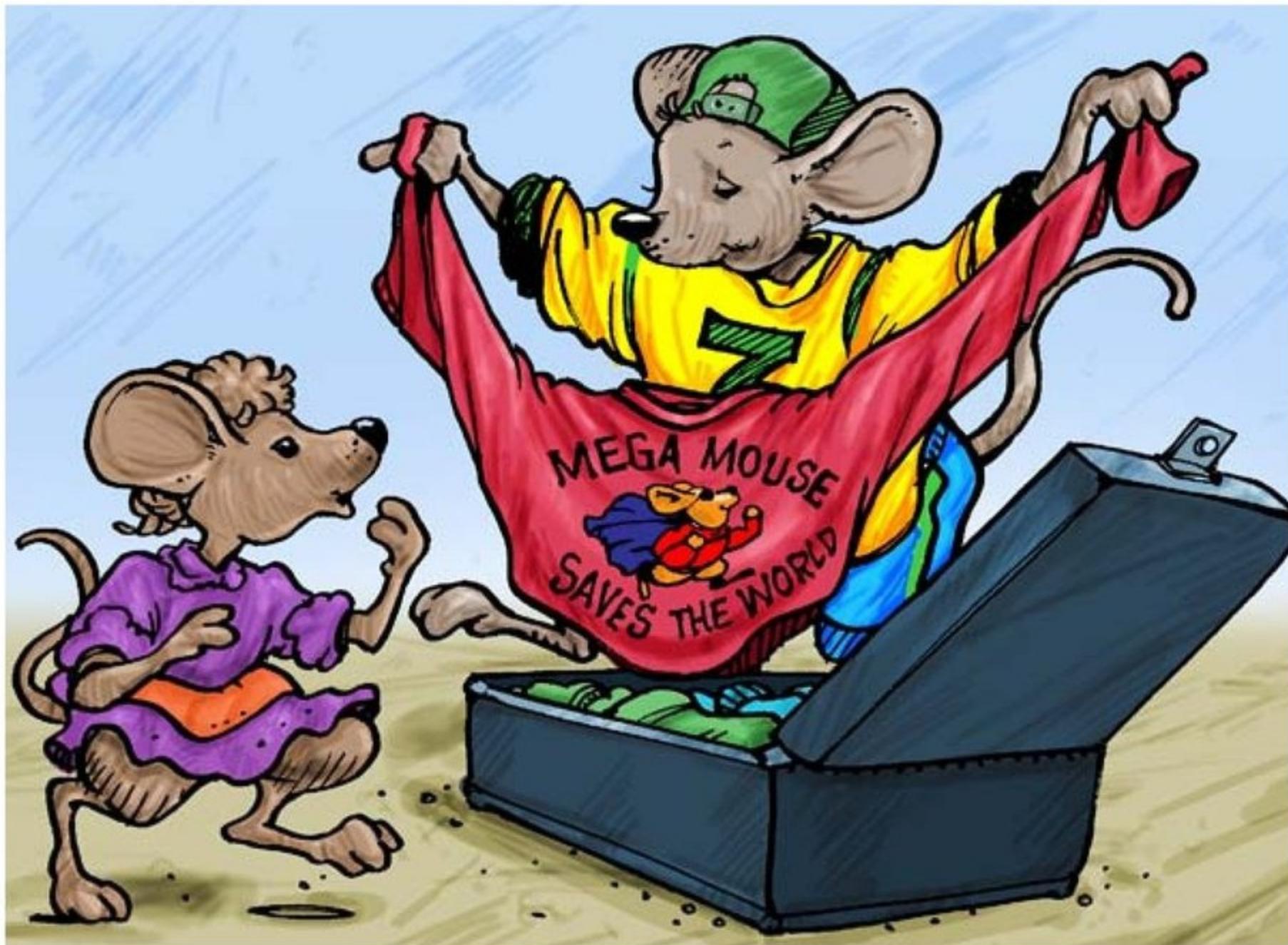


Morty's little sister's belongings were under his bed, three hours away in Mousetown. It seemed impossible to find a solution that would stop his sister's wailing at this hour. Morty never meant to hurt his baby sister's feelings.

"Grandpa, Grandma, I took out her clothes so I would have more room for my toys," Morty said while trying not to cry, his voice and whiskers quivering. "I didn't think about what it would mean when we got here."

He pulled his crying little sister close, hugging her tightly and then patting her back softly.





"I am so sorry," he whispered. "Would you like to wear my very coolest Mega Mouse T-shirt to bed?"

"You are going to let her wear your 'Mega Mouse Saves the World' T-shirt?" his brother asked, looking at Morty like he had sprouted horns. "You wouldn't even let Mother wash that shirt for weeks, and now you are going to let HER wear it?"

"Yep," Morty replied, "I think it would make the perfect nightgown."

Morty's sister looked at him, puzzled.

"Are you going into town tomorrow?"
Morty asked Grandpa.

"I am planning a little mail and grocery run," Grandpa said. "Would any mice like to ride along?"

"Well," Morty paused and swallowed hard, "mother gave us some spending money, and I would like to use mine to get some new play clothes for my sister. Would we have a minute or two to pick some up?"

"I think we can arrange that," Grandpa agreed. "Perhaps Grandma will join us to help you pick those out."

"Sure, honey." Grandma smiled warmly.



Morty's little sister started to calm down. Morty looked her in the eyes and said quietly, "After we come back from town, I was thinking about teaching you to inline skate. My skates will be a little big, but we can stuff some socks into them."

A small smile spread across Morty's little sister's face. "After all," he added, "you helped bring them to the farm, right?"



Later that night, Morty snuggled in bed with his little sister since she did not have her blanket. He was in his Mega Mouse boxers and an old T-shirt. She looked very cool in his "Mega Mouse Saves the World" T-shirt.

"Morty," she asked sleepily, "tomorrow will you help me make a doll house with your snappy blocks?"

"Sure. I think I know how to make a doll house," Morty said. *It wouldn't be much more difficult than a monster mansion*, he thought.

Morty's little sister gave him a great big hug and then slowly drifted off to sleep while he read to her from his newest *Adventures of Mega Mouse* comic book.



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 Suitcase Caper
Level Q Leveled Book

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A Morty Mouse Story
Written by Kathy Hoggan
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