Once in a small pet shop in Hoboken, New Jersey, there lived three hamsters together in one cage. Two of the hamsters were brothers Jim and Joe. Both were gentle black hamsters who loved to run on the big wheel in their cage. But the third was a greedy, obese golden hamster named Jeb. Every day at three p.m., the sweaty teenager, who worked part-time at the store, would drop three crackers into the cage. Within seconds of the stale saltines entering the rusty, warped cage, Jeb would stuff two of the salty morsels into his puffy cheeks.

In response to Jeb’s actions, everyday the brothers would cry out, “Jeb, Jeb, Jeb! Why are you so greedy?”

“Because I am the alpha hamster,” Jeb would brutishly respond, cracker flakes coating his whiskers and the hay he was laying on.

Day in and out it was the same story. However, just when the brothers thought they could take no more, a miracle happened. The zoned out teenager dropped something extra with their stale crackers: a naked mole rat that glared at the gorging Jeb.

“Who are you?” Joe asked in amazement, staring at the mole rat’s wrinkly, bright pink body.

“That is not important. What is important is why I’m here,” The mysterious figure replied. “As you can see I have no fur, and it’s quite cold this time of year. In order for my fur to grow, I must grant three wishes to the first creature that speaks to me,” the pink figure continued in a stark tone.

Jeb looked up at the rat, trying to speak, but could not form any words through the crusty crackers in his mouth and cheeks.

“So then you’ll grant me wishes,” Joe said happily.

“Yes. Now, what would you like?” The wrinkled rodent replied.

“Well, first, I would like to make sure that Jeb never tastes the salty delights of a saltine ever again -- or any food for that matter,” Joe declared with malice in his voice.

The mole rat wrinkled his stubby nose.

“Your wish shall be granted,” he responded coldly, as his gaze turned to the gluttonous rodent. The mole rat narrowed his beady eyes and blew sharply at him.

Jeb suddenly felt a strong pain in his stomach and started to vomit up all of the crackers on the golden hay that covered the cage floor. When he tried to shove the half-digested crumbs back into his cheeks, he found that his mouth repelled anything other than air. He sat back, his face looking strangely deflated.

Smiling contently, Joe turned to the mysterious mole rat and said, “For my second wish, I want me and Jim to be fed organic clover leaves with our saltines for the rest of our lives.”

“A marvelous choice,” the mole rat solemnly approved with a nod of his head and a snap of his heels. “And what would you like for your final wish?” he asked in a dull tone.

“I think I’ll wait on that one,” Joe replied simply.

Three weeks passed, and while the brothers enjoyed their clover leaves and the mole rat found shelter from the cold in the brothers’ hut, poor Jeb grew skinnier and skinnier. Joe thought this would make him happy, but as he watched, he found himself growing sadder and sadder. However, it wasn’t until he heard Jim, one day, mutter, “Poor Jeb,” that Joe realized he had gone too far.

Feeling pity for the now emaciated Jeb, Joe called on the mole rat for the last time, saying, “For my final wish, I would like you to reverse my first wish and give Jeb back the ability to eat.”

“Done!” The mole rat said cheerfully, wiggling his pink stubby tail and turning twice in a circle.

The next morning the brothers awoke to find Jeb munching on only one of the saltines and the mole rat covered in a full coat of fur. Jim hugged his brother happily and Joe realized he had done the right thing. The mole rat looked at him, his eyes sparkling beneath his luscious grey locks.

“I hope you see the lesson in all this, young Joe. Just because you have power over those you don’t like doesn’t mean you should use it unconscientiously,” the inciteful rodent preached.

“And I learned not to hoard the food,” piped up Jeb, spitting the contents of one of his cheeks at the brothers’ feet. “I’ve learned it’s good to share.”