



12 Peace Breaks Out

Early in the morning, Ty, DeeLee and A.J. raced downstairs and played Crazy Eights. Later, they ran outside and kicked a football around the yard.

The Thomases were having breakfast with Beau when the phone rang. Mr Thomas talked for a few minutes, mostly saying, ‘Uh-huh, that’s fine.’ When he hung up, he told Mrs Thomas, ‘We’re going to have a visitor. But don’t tell Anthony James.’

Oooh, a mystery. I like mysteries because they’re fun to solve. Then again, I don’t like mysteries because I

don’t like not knowing what’s going on. So I waited and waited.

A few hours later, the doorbell rang. The visitor turned out to be Garth Tugwell and his father! ‘I really appreciate this,’ Mr Tugwell told the Thomases. ‘It was Mrs Brisbane’s idea. Since Garth can’t have Humphrey at our house right now, she suggested that he could help A.J. take care of him over here.’

Sounds like Mrs Brisbane. As if I’m any trouble to take care of.

But Garth had been crying because he couldn’t have me. So maybe – *maybe* – she was trying to be nice. After Mr Tugwell left, Mr Thomas called in A.J.

A.J. ran into the room and practically backed out again when he saw Garth. ‘We have a guest,’ said Mr Thomas. ‘Shake hands, Anthony. Garth is here to help you take care of Humphrey.’ A.J. and Garth reluctantly shook

hands.

‘How come?’ asked A.J.

Garth shrugged his shoulders. ‘Mrs Brisbane said to.’

‘Well, come on. We’ll clean his cage and get it over with,’ said A.J.

The boys didn’t talk much while they cleaned my cage. But they started giggling when they cleaned up my potty corner. (I don’t know why that makes everybody giggle.)

After they stopped giggling, they started talking and kidding around.

They decided to let me out of the cage, so they took a set of old building blocks from DeeLee’s room and built me a huge maze. Oh, I love mazes!

When we were all tired of that game, A.J. offered to teach Garth to play Crazy Eights and then Ty and DeeLee joined them in a game of Go Fish.

Nobody mentioned the TV.

Nobody shot any rubber bands.

Later in the afternoon, the kids were all outside playing football. I was fast asleep until Mrs Thomas came into the den with a broom and started sweeping. A minute later, Mr Thomas entered.

‘What are you doing, hon?’

‘What does it look like? I’m sweeping. You know, all the snacking we do in here makes a real mess on the floor,’ she said.

‘Beau’s asleep?’ her husband asked.

‘Uh-huh.’

Mr Thomas walked over to his wife and took the broom away from her.

‘Then you sit down and rest for a while, hon. I’ll sweep. Go on, don’t argue.’

Mrs Thomas smiled and thanked him and sat down on the couch. Mr Thomas swept all around the outside of the room.

Even behind the TV. Uh-oh.

When he got there, he stopped

sweeping and leaned down.

‘Well, I’ll be,’ he muttered.

‘What’s wrong?’ asked Mrs Thomas.

‘The TV is unplugged,’ he said. ‘It’s unplugged!’ He came out from behind the TV, plug in hand and a very puzzled look on his face. ‘But it couldn’t have just come unplugged while we were sitting there watching. I mean, a plug doesn’t just fall out,’ he said.

‘Plug it in. See if it works,’ his wife told him.

Well, you guessed it. The TV came on as bright and loud as ever.

‘I don’t get it,’ Mr Thomas muttered.

‘But at least we don’t have to pay to get it fixed.’

Mrs Thomas stared at the screen for a few seconds, then glanced out of the window at the kids playing happily outside.

‘Charlie, what do you say we keep it unplugged for a couple more days?’

she asked. ‘We just won’t tell the kids.’

Mr Thomas grinned. Then he bent down and unplugged the TV.

‘Couldn’t hurt,’ he said.

He put down the broom and sat on the couch near his wife and the two of them just sat there in the den, giggling like – well, like Stop-Giggling-Gail!

Suddenly, Mr Thomas looked over at me.

‘You don’t mind a little peace and quiet, do you, Humphrey?’

‘NO-NO-NO!’ I squeaked. And I promptly fell asleep.



Things were a lot better when A.J., Garth and I returned to Room 26. No rubber bands flew through the air. Garth didn’t trip anybody or make fun of anybody. That meant Gail didn’t get in trouble for giggling. Heidi didn’t get in trouble for

speaking out without raising her hand because she wasn't trying to tell Mrs Brisbane what Garth had done. But the best change was with Sayeh, who *did* raise her hand. Every single day.

One day, she raised her hand to volunteer to stay in during break to clean the blackboard. Miranda raised her hand, too. Mrs Brisbane chose them both.

'Girls, I think I can trust you to stay here while I take this report down to the headmaster's office,' Mrs Brisbane told them.

Of course she could trust them. Once the girls were alone, they began to talk.

'I really liked your singing,' Miranda told Sayeh.

'Thanks.'

'My mum and I are going to a musical version of *Cinderella* over at the college this weekend,' Miranda

continued. 'We have an extra ticket. Would you like to come with us? My mum will pick you up.'

Sayeh quickly turned to face Miranda. 'Oh, yes. I have not been to a play before.'

Miranda grinned. 'Good! I'll have my mum call your mum.'

Suddenly, Sayeh's face fell. 'Oh, better not. She's so busy. Ummm. Give me your number and I'll have my father call your mother.' Sayeh watched Miranda's reaction carefully. So did I.

'Cool.'

That was it. Miranda jotted down her number. Sayeh looked greatly relieved.

I knew that Miranda's mother didn't care how well Sayeh's mother spoke English. Maybe now Sayeh would figure that out, too.

Another great thing that happened was that Mrs Brisbane started

reading a book out loud to the class. Sometimes, I doze right through these sessions. But this time, she picked out a really good book. When she announced that it was about a mouse, Gail giggled.

‘What did she say?’ Art whispered to Richie.

‘Pay-Attention-Art,’ Mrs Brisbane said. ‘It’s about a mouse.’

Several of the boys groaned.

‘Baby stuff,’ one of them muttered.

‘We’ll see,’ Mrs Brisbane told them.

She started to read and, oh, what a tale it was! All about mice no bigger than I am who were great warriors. I was longing to put on some armour myself by the time she stopped reading.

‘Continued tomorrow,’ she announced as she stuck a bookmark in place and closed the book.

Tomorrow! That woman truly has a mean streak. She’s proved it again

and again. I would have sneaked out of my cage at night to finish the book, but she’s so mean, she stuck it in her desk drawer – the one she locks with a key. Grrrr!

The weekend came around quickly, though, and I went home with Richie.

I’m still not quite sure how many people actually live at the Rinaldis’ house because there were always so many people coming and going: aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, neighbours. One meal seemed to flow right into the next and Richie’s mum was *very generous* with treats. I’ll tell you one thing: you could never be lonely or hungry at the Rinaldis’ house.

On Sunday afternoon, guess who showed up? Remember Richie’s uncle? That’s right: Aldo Amato! This time, my buddy Aldo was not lonely because he brought along his girlfriend, Maria, to meet the family.

She was a very nice lady who wore her long hair piled up high on her head. She was dressed in bright red from head to toe: red earrings, red sweater, red skirt and red shoes. I think red is a very happy colour. I think Maria is a very happy person, especially when she's with Aldo. All the Rinaldis made a big fuss over Maria and praised the bread and cake she'd brought from the bakery where she worked.

After all the commotion of their arrival died down, I heard Aldo tell Maria, 'Now there's someone really important I want you to meet.'

And he introduced her to ME-ME-ME!

'Believe it or not, Humphrey is one of my best friends,' he told her. 'And he was the very first friend I told about you.'

'Then I am honoured to meet you, Humphrey,' Maria said, smiling

down at me.

'The pleasure is all mine!' I squeaked.

'See? He likes you,' said Aldo.

And indeed, I did.



The world seemed like a pretty nice place for a handsome young hamster like me, I can tell you. I was sitting on top of the world when I returned to Room 26 on Monday. But I just about toppled off when Mrs Brisbane made an alarming announcement.

'Class, as you know, this will be a short week, due to Thanksgiving,' she said. 'And that means Humphrey will need a home for four days instead of two. Now, who wants to volunteer?'

You won't believe what I'm going to say. *Not one hand went up.* I actually fell off my wheel.

Mrs Brisbane was surprised, too. 'No one?' she asked. 'Heidi, didn't you want to take Humphrey home?'

'Oh, yes. But we're going to my

grandma's house for Thanksgiving,' she explained.

'Art, didn't you ask for Humphrey last week?' Mrs Brisbane asked.

'Yes, but we're having all my relatives for Thanksgiving and Mum says it wouldn't be a good time,' Art explained.

And so it went on. Every single classmate had big plans for Thanksgiving. Plans that didn't include having an extra hamster around.

I was WORRIED-WORRIED-WORRIED. I didn't want to spend four days alone in Room 26. I worried all day Monday. I worried all day Tuesday. I worried even more all day Wednesday.

At the end of the day, Headmaster Morales stopped by to give Mrs Brisbane an envelope. I think it was her pay-check, because she was especially glad to see him.

'I have a huge favour to ask,' she said.

'Sure, Sue. What is it?' asked Headmaster Morales. He was wearing a tie with little turkeys all over it.

'Could you possibly take Humphrey for the weekend?'

I had my paws crossed that he'd say yes. But Headmaster Morales didn't even smile.

'Oh, Sue, I'd love to, but we're going out of town for the holiday,' he told her. 'Another time, I'd love to.'

Another time wouldn't matter. I needed a place to go now.

After the headmaster left, Mrs Brisbane sighed and began gathering up her papers.

Then she turned to me.

'Well, Humphrey, it looks like you're going home with me for Thanksgiving,' she said grimly.

My fate was sealed. I was going to the home of the woman who had once

vowed to get rid of me – for four whole days! And, frankly, I was worried I'd never come back!

TIP TWELVE

If you must leave your hamster with a caretaker, make sure that it is someone you know and trust.

***Guide to the Care and Feeding of
Hamsters***

Dr Harvey H. Hammer