

# MR BINKS

Gail Oswald

Mr Binks yawned as he slowly woke up. He stretched his ageing bones and sighed contentedly. It seemed that he was to spend the last years of his life in the comparative luxury of Mrs Jenkins' house.

His luck had changed last week when he bumped into Mrs Jenkins in the town centre where he'd been sleeping rough for the last two years. He was almost starving as people don't seem to throw away as much food as they used to. She had seemed a kindly lady as she sat talking to him. He turned on his old charm and, before he knew it, she had offered him a place in her home provided he behaved himself and kept himself clean. What a stroke of luck with winter round the corner! For surely he couldn't have survived another long period of sub zero temperatures.

He heard her coming down the stairs and jumped off the sofa which was his bed until she could get hold of something more suitable. It would never do for her to catch him still in bed!

He peeped through the curtains. Another fine morning, he mused. He'd be able to go out visiting the neighbours again this morning. They'd all seemed very pleased to meet him when he went out and introduced himself.

"Good morning, Mr Binks!" Mrs Jenkins bustled in and drew back the curtains. "Up already, are you? You are an early riser! Come along and I'll get you something to eat."

He was halfway through his breakfast when Mrs Jenkins' fourteen year old son, John, bounded into the kitchen.

"Hi, Mr Binks!" he said affectionately. "You're up early this morning! By the way, Mum, I've just remembered that I've agreed to look after Paul Jones' mouse for a few days as he's going away with his parents. You don't mind, do you?"

"Yes, I do mind, John," she replied sternly. Mr Binks stopped eating and looked at her. He'd never heard her angry before. "You know I hate mice!"

"It'll be OK, Mum. It's got its own cage and I'll look after it. See you later." And with that, he was gone.

"Oh, who'd have kids?" grumbled Mrs Jenkins.

Mr Binks waited all day for John to come home with the mouse. It would be very interesting to see the little creature playing in its cage as the Jenkins' had no pets of their own.

Memories from his youth came flooding back to him and he could remember playing in the cellar of a big old house with his brothers and sisters. There were lots of mice in those days. But that was a lifetime ago.

The day really dragged as he waited for the Jenkins' little visitor. He carried out all his usual visits as, after all, everyone would've been disappointed if he hadn't turned up but his heart wasn't really in it.

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At long last, it was half past four and he went out into the front garden to wait for John. He soon arrived, carefully carrying a cage.

"Hi, Binks!" he called excitedly. "Look what I've got! Paul's mouse. It's called Gerald after Paul's Dad. I hope Mum won't be too mad."

Mr Binks looked into the cage and there was a lovely little white mouse with bright red eyes and a long pink tail. Its nose twitched at him inquisitively. I really could come to quite that little fellow, he thought.

The cage was placed on the sideboard in the sitting room and the little mouse spent hours running around inside. It made a nest in some straw and when the lights were put out, it curled up and went to sleep.

At the crack of dawn, the mouse was up again, its tiny claws making little scratching sounds on the bottom of the cage. It soon disturbed Mr Binks who creakily got out of bed and sat on the chair to watch the little creature playing.

John also got up early that morning and came in to clean the cage and give the mouse its breakfast whilst Mr Binks kept Mrs Jenkins company in the kitchen.

At lunchtime, it started to rain so Mr Binks settled down in front of the fire in the sitting room for an afternoon nap. He was dreaming pleasant dreams about his little mousy friend when he was rudely awakened by a terrific scream from the kitchen. It was Mrs Jenkins! She must be in terrible trouble, he thought.

He rushed out to the kitchen to help.

"Help, Mr Binks!" she screamed, "Help! That horrible mouse has escaped!"

He quickly surveyed the scene. Mrs Jenkins was balanced on the kitchen table and there, underneath, was the little mouse, casually nibbling some crumbs on the floor.

Mr Binks rushed forward and the little mouse, seeing him coming, ran under the vegetable rack to get out of the way. Mr Binks followed, but being somewhat larger, he managed to overturn the rubbish bin spilling its contents all over the floor.

The mouse took refuge behind the cooker and then decided that it might be safer behind the central heating boiler. Mrs Jenkins screamed again as Mr Binks pursued it knocking over the kitchen stool on his way. His spirits dropped as he thought the little mouse had beaten him this time. The boiler was very close to the wall and there was no way he could reach behind it.

But suddenly he realised he had won after all as he spotted an inch of the mouse's tail sticking out from its hiding place.

He let out a loud yowl as he stretched out one claw and pulled the mouse out by its tail. What a lovely meal he was going to have!