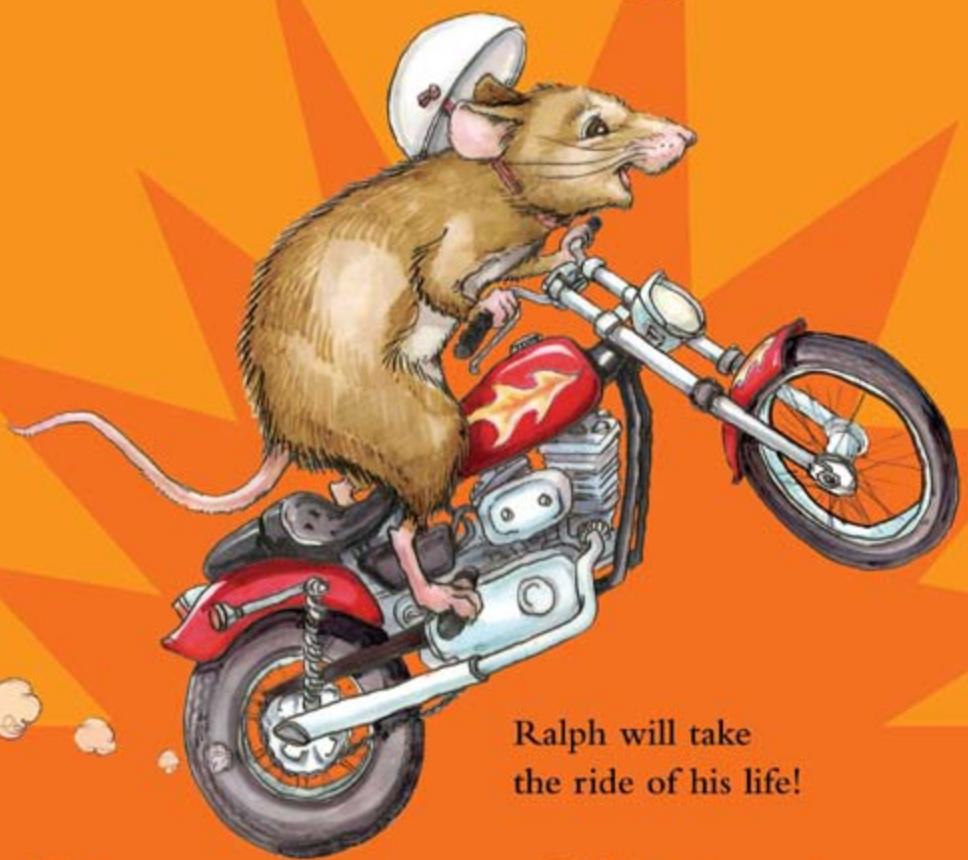


The Mouse and the MOTORCYCLE



Ralph will take
the ride of his life!

Beverly Cleary

Beverly Cleary

*THE MOUSE
AND THE
MOTORCYCLE*

ILLUSTRATED BY
Tracy Dockray

 HarperCollins e-books

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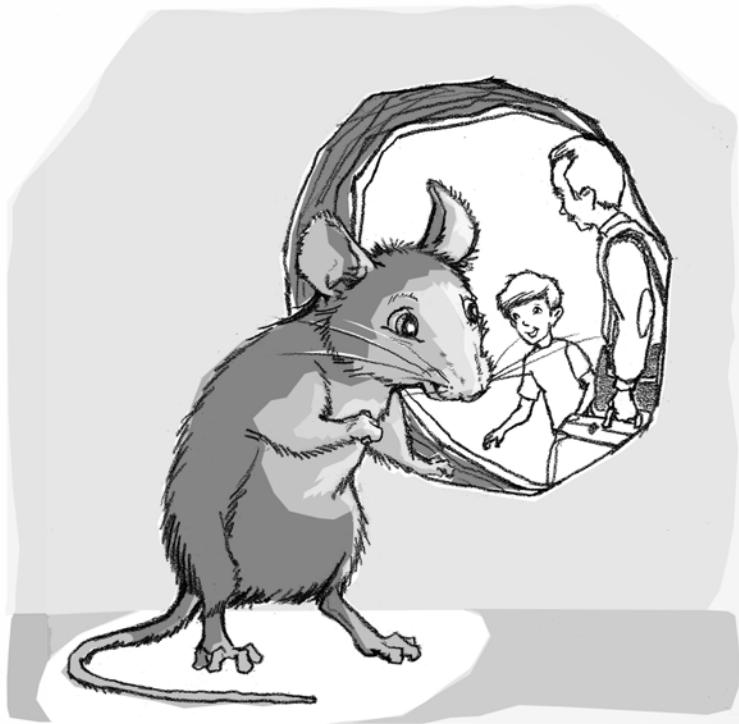
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THE NEW GUESTS

Keith, the boy in the rumpled shorts and shirt, did not know he was being watched as he entered Room 215 of the Mountain View Inn. Neither did his mother and father, who both looked hot and tired. They had come from Ohio and for five days had driven across plains and deserts and over mountains to the old hotel in the California foothills twenty-five miles from Highway 40.



The fourth person entering Room 215 may have known he was being watched, but he did not care. He was Matt, sixty if he was a day, who at the moment was the bellboy. Matt also replaced worn-out lightbulbs, renewed washers in leaky faucets, carried trays for people who telephoned room service to order food sent to their rooms, and sometimes prevented children from hitting

one another with croquet mallets on the lawn behind the hotel.

Now Matt's right shoulder sagged with the weight of one of the bags he was carrying. "Here you are, Mr. Gridley. Rooms 215 and 216," he said, setting the smaller of the bags on a luggage rack at the foot of the double bed before he opened a door into the next room. "I expect you and Mrs. Gridley will want Room 216. It is a corner room with twin beds and a private bath." He carried the heavy bag into the next room, where he could be heard opening windows. Outside a chipmunk chattered in a pine tree and a chickadee whistled *fee-bee-bee*.

The boy's mother looked critically around Room 215 and whispered, "I think we should drive back to the main highway. There must be a motel with a *Vacancy* sign someplace. We didn't look long enough."

"Not another mile," answered the father.

“I’m not driving another mile on a California highway on a holiday weekend. Did you see the way that truck almost forced us off the road?”

“Dad, did you see those two fellows on motorcycles—” began the boy and stopped, realizing he should not interrupt an argument.

“But this place is so *old*,” protested the boy’s mother. “And we have only three weeks for our whole trip. We had planned to spend the Fourth of July weekend in San Francisco and we wanted to show Keith as much of the United States as we could.”

“San Francisco will have to wait, and this is part of the United States. Besides, this used to be a very fashionable hotel,” said Mr. Gridley. “People came from miles around.”

“Fifty years ago,” said Mrs. Gridley. “And they came by horse and buggy.”

The bellboy returned to Room 215. “The