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TO THE RESCUE!

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CHAPTER 1

“Wheeeee!” shrieked India at the top of her voice. “This is fun, Sydney. What a great idea!”

The mice were speeding around the wet washbasins in a ladies’ toilet at London airport. They had squeezed out some slippery liquid soap and rubbed it over their paws so that they could glide along like skaters. There was Sydney, wearing small, round glasses and a denim jacket; India, who was tall and sporting a navy-blue tracksuit; then Rio, who was wearing a football shirt with his name on the back; and not forgetting Florence, who was the youngest and smallest and was dressed up in her pink fairy outfit.

“Watch me!” cried Rio as he slid down into one basin and up the other side, bumping straight into Florence, who was spinning in front of the mirror.

“Uff!” they both gasped as they fell down in a heap.

Suddenly, they heard footsteps and voices in the corridor outside.

“Quick – someone’s coming!” shouted Sydney, who was in charge, being the eldest. “Hide!”

Just in time, the mice squeezed through a vent in the wall. They peeked through the gaps to see two women enter the toilets, dressed in overalls and pushing a cart loaded with mops, brooms, cloths and cleaning sprays.

“Goodness me, Doris,” said one, “it looks like there’s been a flood. Children messing about again, no doubt.”

“They just don’t know how to behave these days, Hilda,” said the other woman as she started to wipe the basins. “If I get my hands on them... Now, we must make sure to leave those *stickies* that Mr Clamp gave us today.”

“Yes. Don’t want to annoy the boss.”

The mice hunkered down in the dark metal air duct and waited until the cleaning ladies were gone. Dusty cobwebs made them cough and sneeze, and India shuddered at the spiders and dead flies. When the door closed behind the women, Sydney beckoned his brother and sisters to climb back out of the vent.

“Come on, you guys. We’d better make sure we’ve covered our tracks or Mum will freak out in case they find us and then we’d have to find a new home.”

“We don’t want that,” said Rio. “I love living in the airport.”

His siblings nodded in agreement. The airport was a busy place, with so much to see and do. There was the radar aerial you could climb on that would whizz you round like a roundabout and give you an amazing view over the whole airport. The conveyer belts for the luggage reclaim were also great for a ride and the X-ray machines at security made for an interesting family photo. They loved going to the viewing platform nearby to watch the aeroplanes taxiing, taking off and landing. It was so exciting there with the roar of the engines, the smell of the fuel and the constant comings and goings of all the people and vehicles. Even at home, in lost property cupboard number three, there was plenty to do, rummaging about the many strange objects.

Yes, life in the airport was fun. Still, the mice were stuck there, and they often wished they could have

adventures beyond the terminal – in the great big world beyond. Plus, the airport wasn't the safest place to live, what with airport manager Mr Clamp and his mission to wipe out rodents...

The mice were just checking for any remaining soapy paw prints on the sink when they were interrupted by a loud squeak from the ground.

“Help!”

It was Florence. Her four paws were completely stuck to a sheet of cardboard that was lying on the shiny floor.



“Help! I can't move!”

The other mice leapt down. They pushed. They pulled. They poked. But no matter how hard they tried, they just couldn't free their sister. In fact, she just became more and more stuck.

“I haven't seen one of these before,” said Sydney. “It must be a new kind of trap.”

“*Stickies*,” Doris said.

“They must have laid sticky traps,” said Rio.

India looked frightened. “What are we going to do now?”

“Dad,” said Sydney. “Rio, go and get Dad.”

Off Rio scampered.

Moments later, the mice heard footsteps approaching the door.

“Quick, back behind the vent!” Sydney grabbed India and off they went.

“What about me!” squeaked Florence in alarm.

But Sydney had no time to reassure his sister. For there was Hilda, gazing down at the frightened and trapped little mouse.

“Well, what have we got here then? Looks like we’ve finally caught something. Not a rat, though,” Hilda said, poking Florence in the ribs. “Still alive too. The pest controller can soon change that. Dear me, Mr Clamp won’t be pleased to hear that there are rats *and* mice around here. Ah well. At least there’ll be one less rodent once the pest controller finishes with *you*, little mouse.”

Hilda pulled Florence off the cardboard. The mouse squealed with pain as some of her fur was pulled off. The cleaning lady withdrew a small box from her pocket, placed the mouse inside and then walked out.

All Sydney and India could do was watch in horror as their sister disappeared. To the pest controller. To be exterminated.