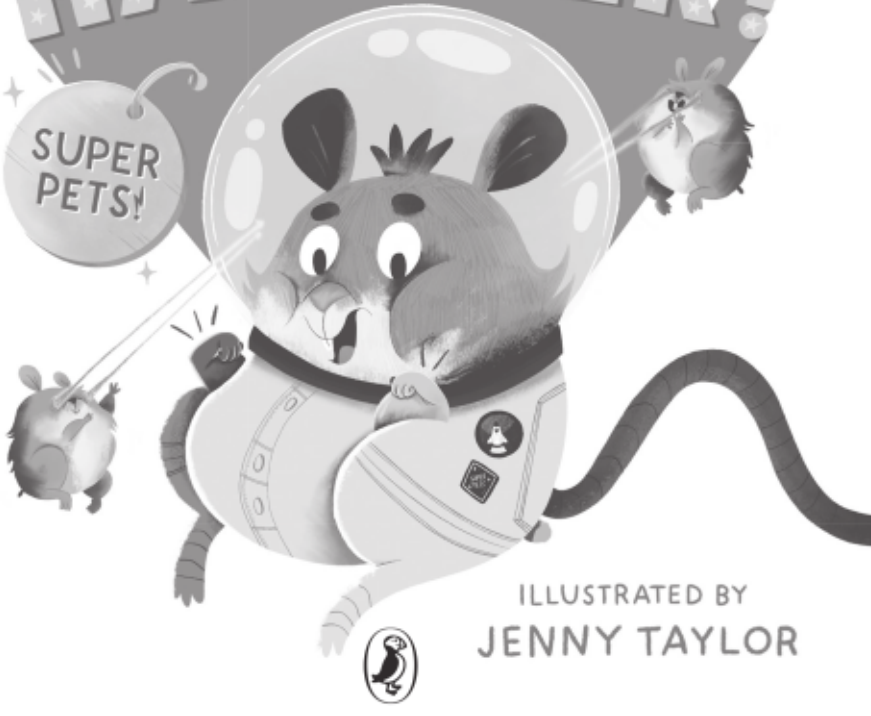
RACHEL MORRISROE

THE FANTASTIC INTERGALACTIC HAMSTER!



ILLUSTRATED BY
JENNY TAYLOR

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For Emma, and the
brilliant Bellis Ferreiras,
a family of superheroes.
Love always, R.M. xx



Dear Children of the World

Rebecca Refractor here with a quick update before we go on our next Superpets' mission. You might remember me – I'm the kid who heads up Superpets Headquarters. I LOVE animals, saving the world and also have a soft spot for Midget Gem sweets – if you like any of these things, chances are you and I will be great friends.



The last time we saw you, Sparkletta Collector was causing our newest recruit, Dottie (aka Supersausage, the incredible flying, talking sausage dog), and her owner Harry a real headache. But don't worry, that supervillain was no match for the Superpets!

Since then, we have been mega-busy stopping supervillain activity around the world. Agent Trotalot, our ninja Shetland pony, foiled a wicked plan by the Pudding Plotter to turn the Eiffel Tower into a Trifle Tower. When Plant

Enchantress cast a spell on all of the apple trees in Newcastle to make them lob their fruit at passers-by, The Shell of Shock was there to capture her in a trail of sticky slime. And of course, The Whisperer, the famous Frowning Street cat, is still in post using her special mind-entering powers to keep the UK Prime Minister from doing anything daft (well, mostly).

But, I'm sorry to say I have some bad news. You see, the hamsters who head up our Supervillain Surveillance have picked up news of a TERRIBLE THREAT of an IMMINENT ALIEN INVASION. And so, once again, I need a Superpet and a special kid to help me save Earth from destruction. The good news is, I have just the duo for the job . . .

Are you ready for our next big adventure? Buckle up, it's going to be a fluff-tastic ride!

Love and Midget Gems,

Rebecca Refractor xx







1

Hercules

My secret peanut phone is ringing. I whip it out of my cheek pouch and answer it pronto.

'Yes, Boss?'

'Threat level ten,' comes the voice. 'We need to bring you in. Is your human . . . ready?'

I grit my teeth. 'I believe so, Boss. His training is going excellently.'

'Stand by for further instructions. Over and out.'

I pop my phone back into my cheek and get on with some star jumps. It's important to stay in top physical condition at all times!

That was The Boss, Rebecca Refractor. Sounds like there's a mission on the horizon for me and about time too! I've been training and training and training and now here comes my chance to prove that I might be small, but I am also **MIGHTY!** You see, I might not be the only hamster in the Superpets, but I am the only one with SUPER-STRENGTH!

BEHOLD MY MUSCLES! I am the finest hamster specimen on the planet. I can lift a lorry with one paw and twirl it like a football. (No, it's OK . . . you don't need to cheer . . . Well, OK, maybe a little applause . . . or a bow would be fine too.)

People have always underestimated me. 'Oh!' they cry. *'Look at the little snookums!*

It *is soooo cute and soooo tiny.*'

And then come the comments about my tail.



'It's so stubby!'

'It looks like a baby worm!'

'Has it been chopped off?'

'Is it even a tail at all?'

That's when I feel myself getting **MAJOR TAIL RAGE** and I have to stop myself from giving them a hard nip and screaming in their silly faces, '**YES, OF COURSE IT'S A TAIL, YOU** NINCOMPOOP! What do you think it is, a turnip?'

But, as an important Superpet, I have my image to think about and must control my anger. Which is why I do the yoga breathing exercises that Rebecca taught me to help stay calm. *In through the nose, and out through the mouth . . .*

Stubby tail, MY SPOTTY BOTTOM! *In through the nose and out through the mouth . . .*

Phew. Let's move on. Super-strength has always been my thing. I started out with some other hamsters running on the wheels at Superpets HQ, which power everything in that place – from the lighting and the computers to the gizmos and gadgets! But Rebecca spotted my potential quickly and gave me Superpet status within a couple of weeks. I was so strong I was generating enough electricity to light up an entire town with a gentle jog. Did I mention my brilliant leg muscles? The other slowcoach hamsters weren't getting a look in and Rebecca must have felt sorry for them and sent me out to look for a kid.

Rebecca says a Superpet must work alongside an owner as a dynamic duo . . . yady, yady, **YADA!** The only exceptions are the wild Superpets like Agent Nibblebottom the Squirrel because, apparently, it would raise suspicions if a child had a squirrel as a pet. I told her I was

special and strong enough on my own and didn't need a kid – I mean . . . **WILL YOU LOOK AT ME?** – but The Boss said no kid equals no missions. Urgh. For months, I had no luck finding a child. Each time I'd get taken home from the pet shop, something would go wrong.

The first boy who adopted me dressed me in a bonnet and tried to feed me milk from a bottle. I admit that it wasn't so bad, but when he named me Pretty Prince Fuzzy Butt, I knew I needed to get outta there.

Then, a few months ago, Rebecca called me to say that she had found a boy that she thought was going to be a perfect fit for me. She'd heard that Jack's dads had said he could have a pet to help him settle into his new home. All I had to do was wiggle my wonderful butt at the right time. Rebecca knows this tushy never fails! Obviously, when Jack came into the pet shop he picked me. I mean, who wouldn't?

And as kids go, I suppose Jack seems like a good one, so I've decided to keep him. Hilariously, Jack actually thinks that I am HIS pet. Ridiculous, right? Maybe it's different for other Superpets like that daft sausage dog, Dottie – she is CLUELESS and needs a human to tell her what to do. But me – I am **MAGNIFICENT.**

I have trained Jack to bring me extra peanuts for maximum muscle building. The jelly-bean stash that Jack's parents keep topped up in the kitchen is just the thing for training a human child. If there is one thing I know about children, it's that they will do anything for a sugary treat. Jack takes the treats from downstairs and sometime later, he comes up and tops up my food bowl. It's too easy. It's like stealing candy from a baby. Or in this case, peanuts from a kid!

Even Jack's name choice for me was pretty

excellent. *Hercules.* Listen, try it out . . .

'Help, help, the train is about to fall off the track! Who can we call? **HERCULES!'**

*** Cheering and applause ***



Works nicely, doesn't it?

One of Jack's dads is a mechanic and Jack helps him fix cars sometimes, which means if I'm going to have to babysit him on missions, at least he's got a skill that might come in handy.

The Boss told me not to tell Jack about my super-skills for now. And after my bad luck with other kids, I want to be sure that Jack

really is the right choice too. But keeping my Superpet training a secret is hard work. I have to do it when Jack and his parents are out at school and work. And, believe me, it's hard to lift heavy weights in a two-bedroom house!

Here is my daily fitness routine:

800 Cage curls

1000 Bookcase bicycles

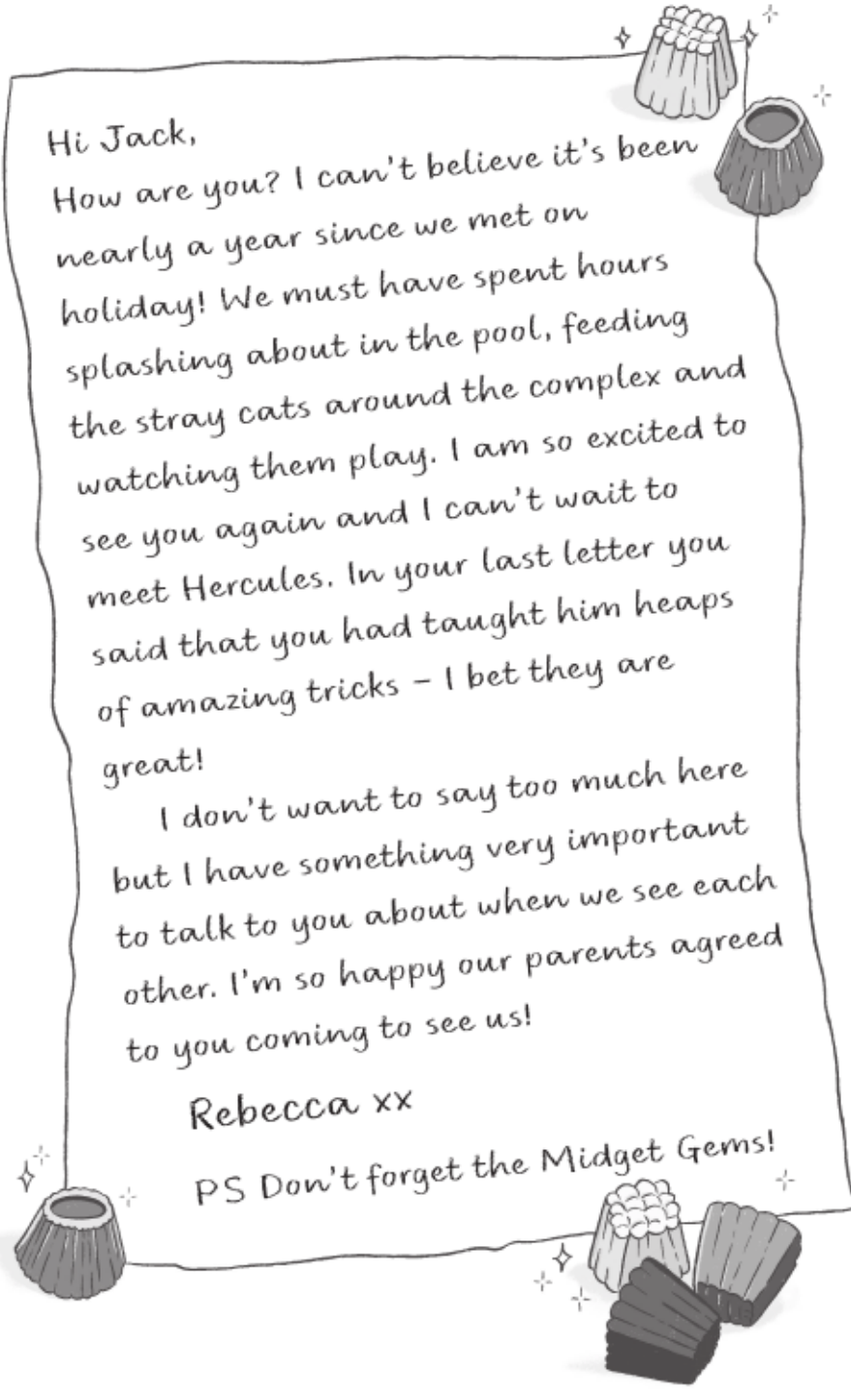
500 Piano presses

600 Sofa squats



Repeat five times or until Jack comes back from school.

Talking of Jack, I can hear the rattle of keys in the door. He must be home, which is great news because my food bowl is empty. Watch how well I've trained him – he'll go get his treat from the kitchen and then head up to give me a snack. Just call me the Kid Whisperer! And it's about time too – because saving the world on no dinner? Nope, not going to happen.



Hi Jack,

How are you? I can't believe it's been nearly a year since we met on holiday! We must have spent hours splashing about in the pool, feeding the stray cats around the complex and watching them play. I am so excited to see you again and I can't wait to meet Hercules. In your last letter you said that you had taught him heaps of amazing tricks – I bet they are great!

I don't want to say too much here but I have something very important to talk to you about when we see each other. I'm so happy our parents agreed to you coming to see us!

Rebecca xx

PS Don't forget the Midget Gems!