



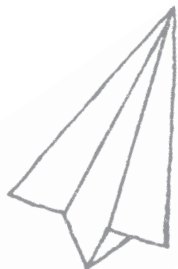
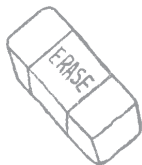
CLASS PETS

#3: Fuzzy
Freaks
Out



Bruce
Hale

Scholastic Inc.



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10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-1-338-14524-3

18 19 20 21 22

Printed in the U.S.A. 40

First printing 2018

Book design by Baily Crawford

CHAPTER 1



Bad News from a Mouse

Something about this spooky-sweet October set Fuzzy the guinea pig's whiskers a quiver. It wasn't just the cool weather. It wasn't just the tang of wood smoke in the air, the Halloween decorations, or even the pumpkin seed snacks that class 5-B's teacher, Miss Wills, always slipped him.

No, this time it was something more. Because this October would be different from the rest.

For as long as he'd been a classroom pet, Fuzzy had always loved the kids' Halloween costumes. On that one magical day each year, his familiar boys and girls

transformed into something strange and new. Pirates and princesses, superheroes and skeletons.

Then they always marched off to join the other students in the school-wide costume parade, leaving Fuzzy behind.

Until this year.

This year he would see *all* the students in *all* their outfits. Fuzzy had had the brainstorm this afternoon as Miss Wills was telling the class about life in the thirteen colonies. (He wasn't much of a History Rodent, so that left lots of time to think during social studies.) And now he was scampering through the crawl space on his way to the Class Pets clubhouse, eager to share his idea with his fellow pets.

Fuzzy had been trying for weeks to plan a follow-up to his last adventure, their museum field trip. And now he finally had it.

Purring to himself, he dodged around ducts and struts in the dusty ceiling. Fuzzy just knew the other pets would flip for his idea.

As he approached the ramp leading down into the space above Room 2-B's closet that served as their clubhouse, voices rose to greet him. The other pets were

already there—and arguing about something, from the sound of it.

“You can’t be a princess,” said Cinnabun the rabbit.

“Why not?” squawked Sassafras.

“That’s *my* costume,” said Cinnabun. “And everyone knows a bunny princess makes much more sense than a parrot princess.”

“Parakeet,” said the bird.

Fuzzy trotted down the ramp. “Hey, you guys!”

“Sorry, *parakeet*,” said the flop-eared rabbit, as if he hadn’t spoken. “But parrot, parakeet, or panda, you’ll just have to think of something else.”

“But—” Sassafras began.

“I’ve just had the greatest idea!” said Fuzzy.

Batting her big brown eyes at Sassafras, Cinnabun crooned, “Sister, you wouldn’t want to cause me costume distress now, would you?”

Sassafras grumbled, but she backed down pretty quickly. The pets generally did. Whether by charm or force of personality, the club’s rabbit president usually got her way.

Ever since Cinnabun had hatched the idea of the pets holding their own costume contest, she’d been a

one-track bunny. Fuzzy liked costumes as much as the next rodent. But enough was enough.

He sighed. “Doesn’t anyone want to hear my plan?”

“I’m all ears, Fuzzy,” said Marta the tortoise. She frowned. “Or I would be, if they weren’t just holes in my head.”

Fuzzy crossed to where she sat, nibbling on a fruit chew. “I finally came up with our next adventure.”

“About time,” said Igor the green iguana. “I was starting to think you were the club’s director of dullness.”

Fuzzy tamped down a surge of irritation. Somehow the iguana always managed to get under his skin. “You know how each Halloween the students hold their big costume parade, and we have to stay behind in our classrooms?”

Cinnabun glanced up from admiring her tiara. “Y’all have a costume parade here?” As the newest class pet, she had only been at Leo Gumpus Elementary for a month or so. “Do tell.”

“It’s amazing.” Fuzzy grinned. “All the kids dress up and march around the auditorium to music—at least, that’s what Geronimo told me.” Geronimo the rat was the club’s former president, now retired to a farm.

“All the kids in costume?” The rabbit was starry-eyed. “Music and glamour?”

Igor snorted. “But it doesn’t matter, ’cause we never get to see it.”

Fuzzy raised a finger. “Not this time. This time we’ll be right there with them, watching it all.”

Marta furrowed her brow. “But how will we sneak out?”

“Leave that to me,” said Fuzzy. “I’ll work out the details. What I want to know is, is everyone up for it?”

“Count me in,” said Sassafras, preening. “It’s the biggest show in school.”

Cinnabun hopped up onto the presidential podium (actually a fat copy of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*). She thumped her gavel on the book.

“Brothers and sisters, we have a motion before us. Brother Fuzzy proposes a Halloween field trip to watch the school’s costume parade. All in favor?”

Fuzzy’s paws tingled. This was it. Unless something went wildly wrong, he would finally get to witness the magical sight of all those students dressed up in their disguises. His mouth curved in a broad smile.

And then something went wildly wrong.

“Help, help!” squeaked a piercing voice from above.

As Fuzzy turned to look, Mistletoe the mouse came tearing down the ramp. Her eyes were wild, her fur stood on end, and she looked as discombobulated as a ferret on a freeway.

“What’s wrong, dear?” asked Marta.

“I just—” Mistletoe began. But she was running so fast, she tripped over her own feet, smacked her head on the ramp, and rolled hibbity-jibbity down to the bottom like a dun-colored mouseball.

Whump!

Fuzzy rushed to his friend’s side. “Are you all right?”

“You mean, aside from having a lousy sense of balance?” said Igor, popping a pawful of spicy peas into his mouth.

Fuzzy shot him a dirty look.

Holding her head, Mistletoe sat up, woozy. “Whazza?”

Cinnabun touched her arm. “Steady now, sweet girl. You took an awful spill.”

“What was I . . . ?” the mouse mumbled. Suddenly, her eyes bugged out. “A ghost!” she squeaked.

“Where?” Fuzzy flinched, checking behind him.

“Room 4-B.” Mistletoe rose to her knees. “There’s . . . there’s a ghost in 4-B!”

Cinnabun and Sassafras exchanged a glance. Igor rolled his eyes.

“Riiight,” said the iguana. “And I’m the grand pooh-bah of Pittsburgh.”

The mouse stood, swaying. Fuzzy steadied her.

“But it’s true,” she said.

“I think I’d know if I was a pooh-bah,” said Igor.

“No, the ghost!” panted Mistletoe.

Patting her shoulder, Cinnabun said, “You bonked your head kind of hard there, sugar.”

The mouse’s eyes went from one pet to another. “No, really, truly, there *is* a ghost. I heard it. I saw it.”

Sassafras groomed her wing feathers. “Probably just Mr. Darius, cleaning up.”

A deep voice rumbled from the corner. “Nah, I saw the D-Man leaving early today.” It was Luther the rosy boa, who had been taking a brief afterschool nap before all the commotion.

“You believe me, don’t you, Luther?” asked Mistletoe.

The snake yawned. “I believe that there are more



things in heaven and earth than you can find in a schoolbook, Little Bit. But no, I don't believe in ghosts."

"There you go," said Igor, returning to his snack.

Mistletoe slumped.

"I believe you saw . . . something," said Fuzzy carefully. He knew that his mouse friend was highly excitable, but he'd never known her to lie before.

She clasped his paw. "Thank you. But what are we going to do about it?"

"Do?" asked Fuzzy. It had never occurred to him that you did anything about ghosts, other than trying to avoid them.

"Well, yes," said Mistletoe. "We can't just let a phantom hang out in our school."

"Why not?" said Igor. "Leo Gumpus needs more school spirit."

Fuzzy rolled his eyes.

The mouse frowned. "But what if it scares the kids? What if they get . . ." She gulped. "Ghost touched?"

A chill danced across Fuzzy's shoulders. "Ghost touched?"

Cinnabun tried a laugh. It sounded hollow. "Why, fiddlesticks! I don't believe there's any such thing."

Nodding earnestly, Mistletoe said, “I heard if a ghost touches you, you start turning into one yourself.”

Igor snorted. “Ridiculous.” But doubt flickered in his eyes.

Fuzzy cleared his throat. “Before we get all freaked out about this, maybe someone should go and check out Room 4-B? You know, just to make sure?”

“Um,” said Mistletoe.

“Who wants to volunteer?” asked Fuzzy.

He looked at Cinnabun, who looked at Sassafras, who looked at Luther, who looked at Igor, who looked at Mistletoe, who looked at Fuzzy. The mouse would’ve looked at Marta, but the tortoise had retreated into her shell.

“Really?” said Fuzzy. “You guys don’t believe in ghosts, but none of you is willing to go check it out?”

“Busy day,” said Igor.

“Important stuff to do,” said Sassafras.

Cinnabun smoothed down her chest fur, avoiding Fuzzy’s gaze. “All things considered, y’all, this sounds like a job for the Class Pets Club’s director of adventure. Who’s with me?”