

# Hamster In The House!

By: India Rodriguez

## Chapter #1

“Lacy!”

Ugh. I want to stay and listen to my music and keep drawing. It always seems right after you settle down and get into something, someone calls you! Probably to do a chore or something. I sigh and turn off the music. I probably won't be back for a while. As I walk out of my room and down the hallway of my new house, my mood lifts. Who would've ever expected me, the middle child, to have her own room? Three kids, and we all have our own room. Amazing, for us at least.

“There you are. What are you doing?” Mom questions in a mom voice. She is filing a big stack of papers on the couch.

“Just doodling,” I reply.

“Okay, well you forgot the dishes,” she says, looking towards the stack of dirty dishes by the sink. I sigh. Dishes: they are a never-ending chore. Just when you think they are done, someone brings another to the sink. I am about to frown when I remember this house comes with a working dishwasher!

“K,” I say, walking to the kitchen.

I turn on the water at the sink. I find a perfect temperature between hot and cold. I start rinsing the dishes and stacking them in the dishwasher. They all make a small ‘clink’ as they touch each other. The sink is right below the window to the backyard. I look out there for a little bit. It's a beautiful summer day. The grass is not the happiest, though. You can't always have green grass on the hot summer days. I remember the water is running and get back to work. A glass slips from my hand and I quickly catch it before it falls. Close one.

By the way, my name is Lacy Morales and I am 12. We just moved into an amazing house. I live with my mother and my two sisters. The little one is Bella. She's 5 and my older sister, Rosa, is 15. Until now, all my life I have shared a room. If I could wish for one thing though, it would be a pet. I am a serious animal lover, but no one would know because I have no pets! I know it's a lot to ask, especially right after we move but...

I finish the dishes and then sweep the floor for good measure. I am thinking about getting the mop for even extra, but I decide against it. I want to get back to my drawing, or even better I can finish my book from the library. I only got it yesterday and am halfway through. I read and read, I just get sucked up into books. I don't try to read fast, it just sort of happens. I was going to plop on the couch next to Mom but I think she gets kinda worried when I read books fast. I don't know why, maybe it's a mom thing? I decide to go back to my room. I grab my book off the bookshelf and am reading it before I plop down on my bed. I escape to a different world.

Suddenly, I notice how hot it is. I feel sticky and sweaty. I get off my bed, still reading, and open the window. The light breeze blows my hair, and it feels good. Birds happily chirp and fly. For about the billionth time today I think about having a pet. I know that at least for now, Mom wouldn't go for a dog or a cat. They are too much work, she would complain. My mind turns to my friend Sophia. She loves animals almost as much as I do. She loves talking about pets with me. Perfect! I run inside to ask Mom if she can spend the night. I find Mom at the same spot still filing away.

"Hey, can Sophia come over later?" She continues looking down at the papers. I don't even know if she heard me. I sigh and then try again. "Mom?" I try.

"What?" she asks, just a tad bit irritated.

"Can Sophia spend the night tonight?" I question again.

"Sure, you can call her," she replies, looking at me now. Mom has blonde-brown hair, beautiful and getting long. She has hazel eyes and a few light freckles. She has a very symmetrical face, I notice.

"Thanks, where's your phone?" I say, looking around.

"It's on the counter in the kitchen, I think," she says, looking around. I run to the kitchen and scan the counters. There it is, right next to the toaster. As I find Sophia's contact, I am still thinking about my mom. Then, I wonder about my dad. I have pictures of him. His dark hair, dark brown skin, and his sad brown eyes. I have his nose and his eyes, and my hair is dark brown like his. I realize it's been awhile since I have thought about him. He lives approximately 3,000.2 miles away. I Googled it. I wonder if I am like him. Other than looks, am I really like him?

I find Sofia's mother's contact, then I remember Sofia has a phone. I find her contact instead and I click *call*.

She doesn't answer at first and my heart sinks. I remind myself that I can just call again. But before I call, she calls me. Yes! I answer and we talk about summer so far, flowers, and my new house. She reminds me I have not shown her my house. I smile and ask her if she can come over. Of course she says yes and gets excited. She asks her mom who thankfully says yes. In a matter of 20 minutes we are in the front of her apartment. She runs down her stairs before I can go up to knock on her door. She carries a really cute purple and teal bag on her shoulder. I compliment it and give her a hug. We talk about random things in the backseat. I'm glad she's coming over.

Once we get home I am excited all over again about our house. It is not bragging, we have just never had a house like this. We are used to 2 bedroom houses, especially with just Mom working. Now, we have a four bedroom house. Okay, I will cool it on the 'awesome house' talk.

Sophia is just as excited as I am, especially when I show her the best part - my room. It's small but it's mine. I have my bed, a rug, and a little desk and chair. We talk about having my own room and she is really happy for me. She has always had her own room.

## Chapter #2

Then we start talking about pets. Sophia has a great idea. "Well, let's write down all the options." Sophia says, already grabbing a notebook.

"What about fish?"

"But I don't really like them, they are kinda boring," I reply.

"What about mice? Or rats?" she asks, already writing them down. "Hamsters, gerbils, or birds? Like parakeets or something?" Sophia writes them all down. "Or there are, like, lizards or turtles?!" She excitedly writes them down. I don't really like lizards, but turtles are cool.

As we add some other animals, I put on some music. We narrow down the list. We are left with parakeets, turtles, and hamsters. I remember a few years ago I had a pet hamster, Cheeseballs. He was great: cute, fun, and he always allowed me to cuddle him. It was hilarious when he rolled around in his little ball too.

As if she is reading my mind, Sophia says, "Remember Cheeseballs?"

"Yeah, he was cute. I really liked him," I reply.

"Why did you have to get rid of him again?"

I sigh. "We didn't get rid of him... he died. He got old."

"Oh," says Sophia, not knowing what else to say. Her face lights up and she breaks the silence, "Hamster it is! No question about it, you are getting a hamster!"

I laugh a little. "Good luck trying to convince my mother."

"We'll worry about that later, but for now let's do some research." I smile and grab my laptop. Since I already know how to care for hamsters, I instead look up how much it will cost. Mom got me a hamster a few years ago and she paid for everything. I wonder why she bought me one and won't let me get one now. Well, things were totally different. My father was with us, working. Anyways. Turns out hamsters are very inexpensive: perfect. I have some money saved up that I can use to buy the cage and the hamster and stuff. Perfect, hamsters are perfect. Now getting mom to think so...

## Chapter #3

This is the hard part. I have been thinking about it for a few days now. After Sophia left the next day, I tried to ask Mom. Then I chickened out. We have been in our new house for two weeks, and it would probably be about a month *at least* before she would allow any extra responsibilities. I decide to keep myself busy with chores. In one day, I clean my room, the bathroom, do the dishes, clean out the fridge, and sweep and mop. At dinner, I pick up everyone's dishes and clean them.

I sigh a big sigh when I am done. Mom says “thanks” when I pick up her plate, but that’s it.

Before I go to bed, I come to say goodnight. I secretly do it to give her another chance to thank me. Instead she gives a hug and says goodnight, like nothing! My shoulders slump as I quietly walk to bed. What if she never notices how I try to help? My helping is not just for a hamster, but I want to show her I am responsible. As I lie in bed I wonder if I will ever get a hamster, if it is some sort of fantasy.

Suddenly it hits me. I know the perfect way to ensure that I will get a hamster. It could be a total disaster or it could be perfect. It would have to run smoothly; one small bump in the road and *boom*, destruction. Could it really work? I have never done something like this before. Am I really considering this? Would I get in big trouble? I’m guessing you want to know my plan? Questions run through me. Part of me pointed out all the flaws of my plan. The other part says *Do it, Lacy!* So here it is.

Phase one: Find a trustworthy accomplice that can drive and tell them the plan.

Phase two: Have them drive me to the pet store where I will buy a hamster and its supplies.

Phase three: Hide the hamster in my closet on a shelf. Don’t show anyone.

Phase four: After he has been there for a while, show mom that having a pet will not cause her any stress and I will take care of it.

Phase Five: Party Time!!!

Brilliant, right? I think so too. What about if mom finds out before, or if my accomplice can’t keep a secret. Is it wrong? I think about when I got my fish. The school was done with their science unit with the fish, so they were giving them to students. I had been asking mom for a fish and she said no. I brought the fish from school home. Mom actually thought they were pretty cool. Would it be the same with a hamster? Who could know?

I have always been a relatively good kid. I hardly got in trouble at school. I have never really deliberately disobeyed Mom (well, maybe a couple times, but if you knew the stories you would see why). If someone had told me this plan I would probably say they're crazy and that they will get in trouble. Am I really considering this? If I don’t do this would I ever have a pet? I go against my better judgment and say yes, I will do this plan. *Geronimo...*

## Chapter #4

### Phase one: Find an Accomplice

Actually, a lot of my friends are older than me and can drive. I don't know whether I should tell them the plan or not. If I don't they could mention something about it to Mom. If I do they could say that is a bad idea, or worse, tell Mom. I sigh. Am I really doing this? This is the hardest part, if I could just get through it... Wait! How could I have not remembered this?! We live right down the street from the pet store! Yes! I will wait for the perfect time to walk there; the house would have to be empty.

I wish I could stay in my room and plan forever, but chores await. I remember it's Monday when Mom is leaving for work when I get up. She gives me a quick hug and grabs her coffee.

"Call me when Rosa gets home, she should be getting here soon, love you," she says, and leaves. I do a quick clean up of the living room and kitchen. I put a couple dishes in the dishwasher. Right before I am about to sweep, Rosa gets home. She has been with her friends for the weekend. She opened the front door and is waving to her friends as they drive away.

"Hey, what's up," she asks opening the fridge. She grabs an apple.

"Not much, just cleaning." I start to sweep "How was your weekend?"

"It was fun. Hey, want to hear a funny story?" Rosa starts talking about how one of her friends did something; apparently it was hilarious. Although I do not really get it, I laugh and nod like I do get it. Rosa always gets irritated when I don't get her stories.

"Where's Bella?" she asks when she finishes her story. She looks around. I look at the clock. "It's only 8:15, she is still sleeping." Rosa nods and takes her half eaten apple to the living room and turns on the T.V. I finish sweeping.

At around 9:00, Bella comes marching out of her room. She has dressed herself in purple with pink polka dots leggings, a gold long sleeve, and a bright green vest. I giggle and give her a hug.

"How did you sleep, sweetie?" I ask.

"Great!"

"Are you hungry, you want some cheerios?"

"Yum!"

She sits herself at the dining room table and hungrily waits for her cheerios.

"What do you want to do today?"

"Ummm... take a walk and draw a picture."

I giggle at her precise answer. I hand her a bowl of cheerios.

"What do we say?"

"Thank you," she answers, already putting a bite in her mouth.

We ended up taking a walk to the library, having art time, then having peanut butter and jelly for lunch. I read her a story and put her down for a nap. After nap time, it's chore time. Finally, Mom gets home.

As usual I ask her about her day. Today she has some extra news. Bella was invited to stay with her best friend Emily on Thursday. If Rosa had something to do, I would be alone! Like the Universe is on my side, Rosa says, "I forgot, Grandpa wants me to help him at a job." Our Grandpa is a carpenter and since Rosa has been wanting to earn money, he invites her to jobs.

"What about you Lacy? Do you have anything on Thursday?" Mom asks kinda sarcastically.

"Well let me check my planner, oh yeah, nothing," I reply laughing.

"I could see when Sophia could come over." As soon as the words come out of my mouth, I regret them. I shouldn't drag Sophia into my plan, but she *is* my best friend. Mom is already talking to her mom, and it is set.

Later, I rewrite my plan.

Phase one: Have Sophia over

Phase two: Walk to the pet store

Phase three: Hide hamster in closet

Phase four: Show mom having a pet is fine

Phase five: Move hamster out of closet and party!

I count my money I have been saving for a long time. \$73.85; that has to be enough.

I can't wait for Thursday.

## Chapter #5

It's Thursday and Rosa is already off with Grandpa and Bella is with Emily. Sophia will be dropped off at noon. I look at the clock: 11:27. I turn on my favorite show, *My Life with Animals*. It's about a lady who raises abandoned wild animals. I try to not think about the plan too much, knowing I would probably convince myself not to do it. This episode of *My Life with Animals* is about a wolf pup named Shadow whom she raises. He is adorable, but she has to release him to the wild when he grows up. The episode is just finishing when there is a knock at the door. Sophia.

I fill her in on the plan and instead of saying *I don't think this is a good idea* or *I'm not sure about this*, she says,

"That is an awesome idea! I love it!" I text Mom that we are going for a walk, and we set out to the pet store. Half-way out the door Sophia remembers we need a bag for all the stuff.

"What would I do without you?" I run back inside and grab a teal canvas bag. I can't wipe the smile off my face; I am getting a hamster!

We start walking and Sophia is just as excited as me. I realized I haven't even thought about a girl or a boy hamster or a name. Sophia says a boy, and I agree. Now the fun part: names.

"Henry, Jack, George, Broody," are names Sophia comes up with.

"Bruno, Jake, Luke, Pumpkin," are what I come up with.

We decide on either Jack or Pumpkin, depending on the hamster.

We finally get to the pet store. I pull out the list of supplies we need and my wallet from the bag. We pick out a blue cage, bedding, a little ball, and food. We get to hamsters and I can hardly contain my excitement. *Finally*. There are a bunch of little golden hamsters. I leave Sophia to stare and talk in a high-pitched voice to them, as I go to ask the lady at the register to get a hamster. It hasn't occurred to me you might need an adult. I don't think so, but what if you do? I ask her any way.

"Of course, kiddo," she says in a cheery voice as she walks to the hamsters.

"Which one?" she asks once we get there, with the same cheery voice.

"Well we want a boy, so whichever one is a boy I guess?" Sophia answers.

"We have to take them to the back to um... check but I'll just take two and see if one of them is a boy," she says with a smile. She carefully grabs two tiny hamsters and we walk with her to the back. "You picked a perfect time to get one of these cute little guys. We just got new babies yesterday."

"Awesome! I am so excited!" I reply with a smile.

We leave her to go inside to the 'Employees Only' doors. In about 2 minutes she is back. "Looks like this little guy will be going home with you!" she says happily, showing me the baby boy in her left hand. Although I am even happier.

We go to the checkout to pay for everything. The total is \$63.75, perfect.

She puts the hamster in a little box and I set the supplies in the bag. We practically run home, but not too fast as to upset the baby. Sophia throws the door open and we run to my room. I almost forget to text mom we are home; she always gets super irritated when I don't. Since he will be mine, I let Sophia play with him while I set up the cage. Before I put him in the cage, we let him run around. I am so happy I could die; I can't believe he is mine! I have one! I do a happy squeal and dance around.

"His name is Captain Jack, Pumpkin, Morales. And he is perfect," I tell Sophia.

"I can't believe this! You actually have one!" Sophia says. We decide to let Jack rest in his cage for a while. I set the blue cage in a shelf in my closet.

"I hate to break the fun but, what if someone goes in your closet? Or you're gone and someone hears him? Or..." Her voice trails off, and I can tell she's worried.

"Well, I guess we'll just have to play by ear," I say shrugging. I am worried too.

## Chapter #6

Phase 3: Keep it a secret.

3 days have gone by. So far everything is fine. The only reason someone would come into my room is to talk to me. Since Jack is nocturnal, he doesn't make any noise during the day. When he makes noise at night, it is muffled because of the closet, so I only hear it. I have definitely been happier these couple of days. I have done all my chores without being asked and I listen to Mom without back talk. I have even gotten along better with Rosa.

At night, I play with Jack. I put him in his little exercise ball and take him on my bed. He rolls around. Last night, Rosa came in because she thought I took her iPod charger. I was sitting up so I put Jack behind me and grabbed a book. She searched my room and was about to open the closet. Jack's cage! I remembered her charger in the living room.

"Actually, I saw it next to the couch in the living room, I think," I said. She let go of the closet door handle and left my room. I started breathing again. I put a little stool in front of the door so if someone didn't knock, I would a heads up.

Now, I put Jack in my lap. I look into his little face; *perfect* he is.

Today, I have to go clean the chicken coop for my grandma across the street. Rosa and Bella are going to stay home, though. I am really worried. I check on Jack and feed him. I put him in the far corner of my closet, and I realize I need to clean his cage soon, because it is starting to stink. I spray some Febreze to cover up the smell until I can clean his cage. He is sleeping still, and I cover up the corner with clothes so if someone were to open the closet they couldn't see him. I sigh. That's all I can do. I leave the room and walk over to my grandma's.

After cleaning the chicken coop, my grandma asks me to stay the night. There is no other reason to say no except for Jack. I haven't left him alone for a night before. I say yes so no one suspects anything. I go grab some extra clothes from my room and check on Jack one last time. This is going to be hard.

At my grandma's, we make hotdogs for dinner. She asks about the progress on moving into our house and I am tempted to tell her about the hamster. I feel a pang of guilt. I am not lying, but I am withholding information. I decide after another week, I will tell Mom.

I try to enjoy the rest of my time but if I am not feeling guilty then I am worrying if someone finds Jack. We have sundaes for dessert and watch a movie afterwards. It's really fun, I just wish I had the fun. On top of that, she gives me \$5 dollars for cleaning the chicken coop. I say no, I don't deserve it, that I liked cleaning the coop, but she persists. I will use it to buy stuff for Jack, not for myself. I am completely relieved when I come home and find out that no one found out about Jack. I fill his food dish and switch the bedding to new. Where should I put the

old bedding? Mom might find it and wonder where it came from. I put it in the garbage and then take the garbage out. Great. It smells way better.

When I get back to my room I find something... "No!" I yell, but not loud enough for anyone else to hear. Jack had chewed up my favorite shirt! How am I going to explain that? I sigh and take the shirt off the hanger. I stuff it the corner of my closet. I place Jack's cage further away from my clothes. Someone knocks. I quickly close the closet and open the door. It's Bella. She is holding up *Candy Land*.

"Play?" she asks. I follow her to the living room and we open the game box. We play five rounds of it before I get sick of it. I look at the clock: 5 minutes until Mom gets home. I do a few dishes really quick. When I go out to the living room, Bella is gone. I call her name. No reply. I go check her room: nothing. Rosa's room: Rosa is alone, drawing and listening to music. Mom's room: nothing. I gulp. She is in my room. I quickly open the door and there is Bella, on my bed.

"Bella! What are you in my room? Did you see..." I stop.

"See what? See what?" asks Bella.

"Um, nothing sweetie".

The front door opens. "Mommy!" Bella cries and runs to the front door. I sigh and leave my room, shutting the door. Bella never says anything about Jack so I think I am in the clear. It's quiet during dinner. Mom breaks the silence. "There was a mouse in the office today."

"Gross! Did they catch it?" asks Rosa.

"No, but they put up traps and my coworker accidentally set one off." Mom replies.

"Oh no! Did she hurt herself?"

"Her shoe took the blow," Mom says.

"Are mousies orange?" Bella asks. I look up from my plate.

"Um, sometimes I guess. Why?" asks mom, with a raised brow.

"Lacy has an orange mousie in her closet," say Bella. My heart beats wildly and I can't breathe.

"Lacy, what is she talking about" Mom asks.

"Um... " I start, not knowing how to finish.

## Chapter #7

Phase four: I need a new plan

"I show you!" Bella says, getting off her chair and running to her room. Rosa follows her, then Mom, giving me a, *what is going on*, look. I reluctantly follow them to explain. When I get to my room, Bella has set Jack's blue cage in the middle of the floor.

"That's not a mouse, Bella, it's a hamster!" Rosa exclaims. Bella looks a little disappointed she got it wrong.

"I um... I got a hamster," I start.

"You didn't feel the need to tell about this?" Mom asks, irritated.

"I just really wanted one and thought if I asked you would have said 'no'. So I got one to show you that it barely makes a difference and that I can care for him. Jack is really sweet and he is perfect and I really want to keep him." Mom makes her, *I don't know what to think of this*, face.

"Rosa, take Bella and go finish dinner. We'll be right there." Mom sits on my bed.

"Lacy, I am not mad at you for having the hamster. I know you are responsible enough to have one. I am mad that you didn't talk to me about it. Now, since we are admitting things, I probably would have said no, which is a mistake. But not telling me about this and keeping it secret is not good, even though it is just a hamster. Keeping things from me is something I never want you to do."

"I was going to tell you, I just hadn't yet. But I am sorry, I wanted to, but it's just hard to talk sometimes, you are always busy."

"I know I am busy, and I am sorry, I am trying, but that should never keep you from talking to me," Mom replies.

"I will never do it again," I promise.

"And you are grounded for two weeks for keeping this a secret, got it?"

I nod. "Got it."

"Now that we have that out of the way, can I see him?" Mom asks. My face lights up.

"Sure!" I say, and take him out of his cage. "Jack, this is Mom."

"Pleasure to meet you," Mom says, giggling. We sit around him for a little bit. He climbs all around Mom's lap. She doesn't even get mad when he poops on her. I giggle a little. Rosa and Bella come in to see him too. We all sit around in a circle and laugh as Jack scurries from one person to the next. It feels good be all together and laughing. I didn't need a hamster to be happy, although I definitely want to keep him. I just need Mom and my family happy and together. I get an, *it's going to be alright*, feeling. I might have a happily ever after all!

*The End*