

Gerbils Escape

(by Mrs Sproulle and Mr Sproulle)

Jack and Jessica couldn't decide what sort of pet to get. Jack wanted a hamster, Jessica wanted a gerbil.

"Gerbils are cuter," said Jessica, "and friendlier. They like sitting on your hand and being cuddled. And they're more intelligent."

Jack didn't look convinced. He still wanted a hamster.

"But gerbils are bigger than hamsters," continued Jessica. "And they don't bite so much!"

So they got two golden gerbils and named them Gerry and Geraldine.

At first the two gerbils seemed happy in their cage, with their exercise wheel and their sand bath and their nuts and seeds and apples.

"Should we get them some popcorn?" asked Sam. "I've heard gerbils like popcorn. Jessica wondered about that but they did and Gerry and Geraldine loved it!"

They were pretty active at night, running around their exercise wheel. It was difficult to get to sleep but the children didn't mind, knowing their gerbils were happy.

Then Gerry and Geraldine started thumping on the bottom of their cage, scratching at the bars. And pooping a lot!

Jack and Jessica really couldn't get any sleep after that so they put the cage outside.

Geraldine and Gerry Gerbil had been getting bored. At first it was nice being picked out of all the other gerbils in the pet store and given a home. The children were friendly, they cuddled them and the food was good, especially the popcorn.

But the cage was getting too small and that exercise wheel just going round and round and round - boring!

They were becoming stressed so they'd started thumping and pounding and even biting - which they didn't usually do. And they pooped a lot!

So they decided to escape. Gerry unlatched the cage with his little paw - gerbils are very clever, you know. They scuttled across the lawn, under the fence and found themselves in a leafy wood.

“Where is this?” asked Geraldine. She assumed Gerry would know since it was his idea to escape.

“Don’t know,” said Gerry. “But it’s bigger than that eensy-weensy cage we were stuck in.”

“Too big,” said Geraldine. She was beginning to have second thoughts.

They explored some more. After all that’s why they had escaped, to explore and have an adventure. They crept under dried leaves, nestled in soft moss and got scratched by prickly bramble. Soon that was getting boring, too.

They chased each other down the forest path and back again. Suddenly in front of them stood a red fox, smacking his lips, looking forward to a gerbil snack.

You’ve never seen a gerbil run so fast! Gerry and Geraldine scuttled back under the fence, across the lawn and arrived, panting, at the back door. Coming from the open window, they heard the voices of their owners.

“Do you think they ran away?” Jessica was asking her father.

“Why?” asked Jack. “Weren’t they happy?”

“Well, perhaps the cage was too small. And they didn’t have enough to do. Gerbils can get bored, you know. Here, I’ve bought you a bigger cage, a bigger wheel and some gerbil toys. Tomorrow we’ll go back to the pet store and buy some more gerbils. Or we could get some hamsters.”

Gerry and Geraldine looked at each other. “We’ll have to be quick,” said Geraldine. “Before they replace us.”

They waited until the milkman brought the milk, the door was opened and they snuck in.

“Look,” said Gerry, snuggling down into the straw. “Aren’t you glad we escaped? At least we got a bigger cage!”