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THE NEWS OF TODAY

Turtle Thieves Moreton Bay Observant G

Brisbane, Australia

A group of turtle thieves thanks to the help of a Flinders. The thieves l bay and selling them The police had been i months but had been changed when a fami reported that their gu strangely. The family become agitated wh engine nearby.

Curious about their investigate further a suspicious engine r They immediately investigation.

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The police arrest smuggling ring including theft a warned that they protected wildl anyone caught The rescued tur where they wil



Flinders the reluctant hero

by Jim & Jayne Dobbin

Recommended for ages 6-10

Flinders the reluctant hero

In part one of the 'Flinders' series we follow the adventures of a small but clever guinea pig named Flinders as he finally gets his own human.

Twelve-year-old Sandy is no ordinary human either. She and her family are sailing around the world, in a lifestyle that's terrifying for a guinea pig who's afraid of water.

While Sandy gets her school lessons on the boat, Flinders learns to read by studying the newspapers that line the floor of his home. When Flinders reads about turtle thieves operating in their bay and then witnesses their illegal activity, he must somehow alert Sandy to the thieves' whereabouts before it's too late.

Join Flinders on his exciting nautical adventure as he learns the importance of communication, quick thinking and standing up for what is right.

Full of heart and adventure, Flinders the reluctant hero is a delightful tale for readers of all ages.



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FLINDERS

THE RELUCTANT HERO



JIM & JAYNE DOBBIN

flindersbooks.com

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A VERY SPECIAL GUINEA PIG

Have you ever thought you were special?

Special had always lived with his mum in the back room of Lilley's Pet Emporium. They shared a large cage at the back, under the high windows that showed them when it was day and night. Special had his own bed, but most nights, he would snuggle up next to his mum, because she seemed to like it. He liked it too.

Every morning when the light had seeped in through the windows, their human friend Maggie came in. She would put her bag down and sit to talk to them. They liked Maggie, and not only because she always gave them food. She often sat and spoke to them in a lovely gentle voice while scratching their chins. Sometimes

she talked about the weather or some drama with the animals in the pet store. Other times she would describe what she did on her weekend off.

After their morning chat, Maggie would stand up, and Special knew that it was time. His mum would lick his forehead. Sometimes she did this to smooth down his standing-up hair, but sometimes she did it anyway.

Maggie would then gently pick Special up and say, “Today might be the day,” and take him to his own cage in the pet shop.

“Go off and have some great adventures – and remember you will always be special,” Special’s mother would say, as if it was the last time.

His cage was near the door. His full name was printed on it in big red letters: Special Half-Price.

All sorts of humans would walk past him all day, although very few actually looked at him. Most were heading to the puppy section at the back of the shop. There was always a crowd at the puppy section, laughing and pointing at some cute little thing they did. Special had seen many puppies come in and out through the door. They left cradled in the arms of smiling humans, on their way to a new life.

Mum said the pet shop was a way for pets to find humans to take them on adventures. She had once

explained to Special that one day he would leave the pet shop with a friendly human who would look after him. She had said that a long time ago when he was very little.

His mum had once lived in a big house on a farm with a human called Daisy. Mum often told Special bedtime stories about life on the farm to help him to sleep. He sometimes dreamt about walks in the bush, vast spaces and skies so big you could see all the stars in the universe. Mum told him that one day he would get his own stories.

When he was in the pet shop, he spent most of the time eating and looking. Fish swam in circles in gurgling blue tanks along one whole side wall. Humans sometimes went to the wall and pointed at a fish. Then one of the other humans dressed like Maggie in cream shorts and green shirt with the shop logo on its pocket would scoop it out and put it in a plastic bag full of water. But *everyone* visited the puppies – even the people who walked out with a fish.

Some days Special watched the humans with the puppies, and other days he would look at the fish. Sometimes he would look at the humans going past and wonder about where they lived and what they did during the day.

But his favourite thing to do was to look at the large map on the wall over the benches. It showed the origins of all the animals in the pet shop. His mum had told him about the map. It was a picture of the whole world but made small so you could see it all.

She told him that the world was so big you could never travel around it, even if you walked all day every day. And even if you could walk that far, you couldn't walk around the world because guinea pigs could only live on the brown bits. Most of the world, she said, was blue bits. Blue bits were water – like the fish tanks, but enormous. They were full of fish that were far, far bigger than the fish he looked at every day. Some were bigger than the whole pet shop. Special thought that was the scariest thing he had ever heard of.

Every afternoon, Maggie would turn the sign on the door to closed and say, “Maybe tomorrow, eh?” and take him back to his mum.

It wasn't bad. He had his routine, and mum and Maggie. Perhaps he didn't need his own adventures.

###

One day, when Special was eating a piece of lettuce, a *BANG!* rattled the side of his cage. He jumped and looked up. A small human was laughing at him. Special felt wet feet and looked down. He had landed in his

water dish. In spite of himself, he chuckled.

The human banged the cage again and then opened the door at the top. Maggie was the only one allowed to open his door, so Special didn't like this at all. Then a smelly hand reached inside his cage and tried to pick him up. Special wanted this even less. He moved to a different corner each time the smelly hand swiped at him.

The human started squealing at him and banging the cage with his other hand. He yelled, "Piggy, piggy!" and snorted.

Then the hand grabbed his leg. Special kicked out repeatedly until it let go, which made the human more determined.

The human squealed, "Dad, Dad – I want this one!"

A worried-looking older human came up to the cage. The small one kept banging on the cage and grabbing at poor Special.

"Dad, Dad – I want this one. Rocket will be able to chase him up and down the yard. We can have dog-versus-pig races!"

Special curled himself into the smallest ball he could. He was shaking, and his mind was a blur. He didn't want to be chased. He didn't want to race. He didn't want to be anywhere near this horrible human.

Then a quieter voice spoke. It was soft but firm, like his mum's sometimes when he tried climbing to the top of the cage. "Sorry, I've already bought this one."

Special opened one eye to see who the voice belonged to. It was another small human, but this one had tousled, long blonde hair and a glowing brown face with friendly eyes. A kind smile matched her voice. He liked her instantly.

Maggie hurried over. "What's going on here?"

"This boy was banging on the cage and frightening the guinea pig I bought." The small human with the soft voice smiled and winked at Maggie.

"Of course, er yes, you did buy it ... er, before," said Maggie, smiling. She then turned sternly to the other, horrible human. "Sorry, he's no longer for sale."

The horrible small human stared at the soft-voiced one. "You did not!" He turned to an older human who was hovering nearby and screeched, "Dad, I want this one! Get this one, or I will never speak to you again!"

The worried older human looked at the owner of the soft voice. "Perhaps I could buy him off you for an extra ten?"

"Sorry, I have my heart set on having this guinea pig. I've always wanted one," Soft Voice said, crossing her arms. Special wanted to cheer. This human was on his side.

The dad turned to the horrible one and shrugged. “Sorry, Brodie, there’s nothing I can do.”

Brodie kicked the table and stormed off towards the puppies. “Then I want the most expensive puppy in the place – no, *two!*”

Then he was gone, with the old one following meekly behind him.

Maggie turned to Soft Voice. “So, do you want him, or were you only saving him from a life of misery?”

“Well, I did come here for a kitten – but he does look like he could do with some fresh sea air.”

Special didn’t know whether he should be upset, but he knew he liked this human. If she thought he needed sea air, he probably did. Then he wondered what sea air was.

Maggie said, “He is a darling sort. Look at him scratching his nose.”

Special blushed at the kind words and scratched his nose again to hide his embarrassment.

The rest was like a whirlwind. Maggie reached into the cage and pulled him out, and then handed him to Soft Voice. Soft Voice smelt like the coconuts in his feed, and she held him so lightly he felt as if he was floating on air.

“I’m going to call you Flinders, after Matthew

Flinders. I'm learning about him in my lessons," she said, holding him up to her face. "He mapped parts of the Australian coastline hundreds of years ago in a small sailboat."

Special – er, Flinders – was so happy his heart could burst. Maggie took him from Soft Voice and placed him into a blue box. In it was a blanket from the back room that Maggie must have retrieved. It smelt like his mum, and, as happy as he was to be going with Soft Voice, he felt the pang of not seeing his mum again. But she had always told him they would always be together in their hearts and memories. She also said that the purpose of life was to welcome change because of all the lessons it gives you. He still felt sad.

That was until they went outside. Wow! The blinding brightness, the loud sounds! His senses went into overload.

Soft Voice strapped his cage onto a strange contraption with two small wheels – one in front, one behind – and a narrow platform between them for her to stand on. She checked that the cage was secure by wobbling it a few times. Then, standing with one foot on the platform, she pushed off from the ground with the other, and they shot off at a terrifying speed. He closed his eyes. But after a while, he opened one, then

the other. It was exhilarating! The wind blew the fur around his eyes, and the only thing that wasn't blurred was the sky way above.

They zooped and swooped down hills and up paths lined with trees that broke up the enormous blue sky. White birds far bigger than the ones in the pet shop fought over food scraps on the path. Humans strolled with other humans or dogs. Each time they appeared in front of Flinders, he thought they would crash. But each time, at the last minute, Soft Voice swerved, and they would go scooting by.

Then Soft Voice climbed off the contraption and walked alongside it. They walked down a ramp towards a bunch of poles piercing the sky. As they approached, he saw that the poles were coming from the top of big white machines. Closer still, he saw that the white machines were sitting on water, bobbing up and down.

Flinders froze. Guinea pigs can't go on the blue bits. They can only go on the brown bits!

Was this the end of his adventure – when it had only just begun?

EMPORIUM



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