

She buried the little shoebox in the yard on a cold October morning when the leaves were a fiery tribute in red and gold. Now, in the chilly March afternoon, Jenny looked with acclimated sadness out the window. Time to buy a new pet. She looked up the closest pet store, shrugged on her red windbreaker jacket, and stepped out into the day.

The pet shop was tucked nearly out of sight in an alley, almost invisible from the street. It was in a good neighborhood, though, with reasonably upscale shops and restaurants lining the sidewalk. After a moment's consideration, Jenny decided that a large collection of animals might be unwelcome next to a French eatery and an expensive lingerie store. Giggling slightly at the thought, she walked cheerfully down the little side street and up to the door.

Bright red letters spelled out "Dave's Pets" across the façade, a neon "OPEN!" sign hung in the window – a curious accessory for a pet store! She pushed the door open and slid inside, a cheerful jingle of bells announcing her arrival. Stacks of glass terrariums lined the walls, a few mesh cages stood off to one side, the usual shelved and racks occupied the center floor space, and an ornate hanging bird cage hung from the ceiling. She smiled and walked quietly between the shelves toward the service counter at the back.

There was nobody at the counter, so she rang the little bell and waited, turning as she did to peer into one of the many little terrariums. The snake or lizard or mouse was nowhere to be seen, probably burrowed under the wood chips or hiding in his little log. She moved to the next cage. Still, no little animal could be seen. Frowning slightly, she stepped back to observe the entire shelf. Not a single creature stirred within the little glass houses. Jenny jogged a quick circuit of the store. No fish swam in the water-filled tanks, no birds chirped in the free-standing mesh cage with the little tree... It was completely devoid of life. Some pet shop! Maybe, she thought, returning to the counter and ringing the little bell again, they just moved in.

She waited another full minute before a faint scratching caught her attention, she turned to look. There, behind the counter and raised up on a shelf, was a single illuminated terrarium. A small white rat stood on his hind legs, little paws pressed against the glass, observing her with shiny red eyes. She smiled, reassured to see another living thing inside the barren pet store. The rat, though, was not so calm. He scrabbled against the glass with his tiny claws, long pink tail thrashing in the wood shavings behind him. Those beady red eyes never left her own.

The frown returned to Jenny's face. She looked back at the empty cages, then to the unmanned counter. Abruptly coming to a decision, she moved slowly behind the counter, looking through the open door marked "EMPLOYEES ONLY." All that lay beyond was a small, bare, white-painted room, dimly lit by a ceiling-mounted fluorescent bulb. Her heart leapt suddenly with irrational fear. The little pet shop had gone from merely confusing to eerily incongruous. She stepped quickly back out of the little room, preparing to hastily leave the creepy place, but stopped. She looked back at the white rat in his cage, still watching her every move.

"Come on, little guy. You're coming with me."

New friend peeking safely out of her windbreaker pocket, Jenny moved purposefully toward the exit, only to find the steel security grates lowered and padlocked in place. The neon "OPEN!"

sign had gone dark, unplugged at the base. She couldn't have tripped a security system, some *person* had locked her in! Did they see her take the rat? Maybe, but who? And it still didn't explain the empty store... She withdrew the white rat from her pocket and held him up to her nose.

"This is really weird, little guy. What am I gonna do?"

The rodent stared blankly back, his rapid heartbeat thumping against her palm. He turned to nuzzle at her thumb. Jenny giggled despite her predicament, pleased by his affectionate gesture. Her laughter turned quickly into a cry of pain, however, when the rat bit her, sharp white teeth burying themselves in her fleshy thumbtip.

Jenny jerked, instinctively throwing the little rodent away from her as she brought her wounded digit to her mouth. She was immediately fearful that the animal had been hurt, and knelt to find him, sucking the oozing blood from her thumb as she searched. She would have to go to the hospital for a shot now... Unlikely that a pet store rat was carrying anything dangerous, but still. Better safe than sorry. But odd... No sign of the white rat. He must have scurried off to hide. Having had enough of this place, Jenny directed her attention to the metal bars across the door, studying the padlock and hinges.

Her inspection was complicated by the throbbing pain in her thumb. The bleeding had stopped but the pain was increasing, a steady, itching pulse that spread from the fingertip all the way to her palm. Maybe the little jerk was carrying some disease... She struggled to focus on the problem at hand, but the bite was a constant distraction. She felt dizzy and vaguely nauseous, stiflingly warm despite the cool air. Fever couldn't set in this rapidly, could it? Jenny fumbled helplessly with the steel-shackle padlock, she had to find a doctor, had to get *out*!

She stopped, staring at her hands. Something seemed... off. Her fingernails! Usually kept closely manicured, they were poking out an easy inch over her fingertips! And the color – Bright white, and drawn to a razor-sharp point. She brought them up before her eyes for a closer look, but her movement was interrupted by an obstacle. Her nose was protruding an easy five inches from her face. She could actually see it, the same soft pink as her hands, quivering there in front of her eyes, bridged by a fuzzy white cone to her face. Her snout wiggled slightly, delivering hitherto-undetected scents to her belabored brain. Jenny touched it with trembling hands, felt the long whiskers now sprouting from the end, stroked the soft white fur that seemed to be spreading... It tickled across her cheeks and forehead, made soft rustling sounds against the sleeves of her windbreaker. She shrugged quickly out of the jacket, removing the garment just in time to see the silky hair sprout in waves up her arms and over her shoulders, leaving only her hands bare. She ran her pink palms over her soft, furry forearms, shivered at the cool, velvety touch.

A disquieting tugging sensation brought her hands darting back up, cupping her ears as they peaked and rounded, enlarged and slid up to the top of her head. Claw-tipped fingers tremblingly explored them, big and round. Her heart pounded faster as recognition settled upon her: *Rat's ears*. As if in conformation, a sharp pull at the base of her spine preceded an unbelievable sensation. Her new limb snaked coldly down the left leg of her sweatpants, the rustling sound

confirming that the white fur had spread across her lower half, too. She tugged down the waistband and twisted around to see the rosy pink tail that now hung swishing from her behind.

Her grey running shoes felt tight, constricting her toes. Jenny sighed inwardly as she bent to remove them, knowing what she would see. The same pink tones and sharp white nails now marked her feet, the toes elongated, big ones moved into the sidelong prehensile rat hand-foot configuration. She flexed her feet, marveling at their nimble dexterity. A painful itch in her mouth denoted the growth of the requisite elongated buck teeth; they protruded cutely above her lower lip.

Jenny stood, pantsless and unshod, on the cold tile floor. Every muscle tensed as she waited. For a moment, nothing happened – she dared hope that it was over, but a loud gurgle in the pit of her stomach dashed the dream. Her tank top and panties cut into her flesh, tightening suddenly as her entire body seemed to swell, she frantically cut them off with a deft action of one sharp claw lest they constrict her completely. Nausea returned with spiteful vengeance, causing her to double over and clutch her stomach. Reeling, she sat heavily down on the tile.

Her trim runner's physique was dissolving beneath her fingers, a layer of soft, plush fat filling out her frame. Curves developed with startling speed where once she was defined by lean muscle, her hips plumped out in a generous swell, her cheeks filled out into round, protruding globes. The floor became a more comfortable seat, at any rate... The definition in her arms and legs faded, replaced with soft, feminine smoothness. Her nipples hardened, poking out from her furry chest before rising atop her bulging breasts. They wobbled steadily outward, bouncing heavily with her every panicked breath. When she almost feared they would grow forever, her heaving bosoms quivered to a jiggling halt. Fit and thin, her a-cup bust had never even required a bra, but now she was easily encroaching on d-cup territory.

She looked herself over from her seated position. Dexterous pink hand-paws and feet, soft white fur and rosy pink tail, long pointed muzzle, buck teeth and rounded ears... Curvy and plump like a well-fed pet, and with boobs the size of cantaloupes. She glanced numbly over at her reflection in a glass terrarium. A cuddly white rat-girl stared back.

Soft footsteps behind her proved insufficient to bring Jenny back to lucidity. Strong hands appeared on her shoulders, slipping a braided leather collar around her neck. She snapped back to her senses, scrabbled to her pink rat feet... And found herself staring up at a tall, blue eyed man. She would have gasped in surprise, but all she could manage was a soft "squeak!" He smiled and took her gently by the hand.

"Hello, Jenny. My name is Dave, and this is where I keep my pets. I do hope you'll be happy here."

Jenny could only stare, a nervous rodent energy had settled in her brain. She felt exposed and frightened, wanted only a place to curl up and sleep, for a strong hand to provide for her. Dave's smiling eyes promised all that and more, and she followed him meekly into the back room.