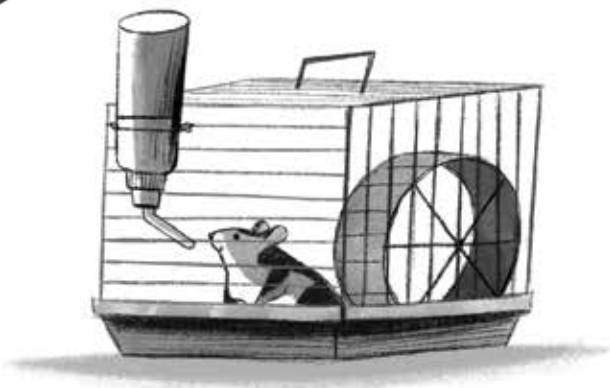


# HARVEY AND THE EXTRAORDINARY

Eliza Martin  
Illustrated by Anna Bron

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In memory of my Papa Richard Fisher,  
for his endless encouragement and  
the gift of an imaginary friend named  
Harvey, and my Papa Al Martin for  
inspiring my wonder of the circus.

—E.M.



To my family.

—A.B.





# Preshow

A hush falls over the crowd as the spotlight swings around to find him. He's standing at the bottom of a ladder. He breathes in and sets his foot on the first rung.

“Ladies and gentlemen! Children of all ages! Feast your eyes upon our next act!”

Step after step, the ladder takes him higher and higher up into the tent—until he can't smell the popcorn anymore and the faces below turn into far-off blurs.

“Heeeeeee's fearless!”

He stops for a moment and squints, looking down at the sea of people below—in spinning technicolor. He

keeps a steady rhythm. One foot, the next. One foot, the next.

“He’s nothing like you’ve ever seen before!”

The tent falls silent as he reaches the top. He hears nothing but his own heartbeat. Shakily, he steps out onto the platform, his knees quivering. A murmur ripples through the crowd, and camera lights flash like tiny explosions through the big top. He moves slowly, arms outstretched, keeping himself balanced as he carefully steps up to the edge. He looks down and sees it, a tiny blue speck just under his toes—the pool of water he’s about to dive into. The crowd oohs and aahs. Their laughter swirls, and he hears Grimaldi the Lion roar from his cage backstage.

He takes a deep breath.

“The one!”

He stops.

A memory hits him so hard that he doubles over with the heartache—the pain in his chest. The crowd gasps, and somewhere a woman screams. Quickly he lurches back upright. The show must go on!

“The only!”

For a second, he stands still and shuts his eyes. Willing the memories to leave. The laughter, the little hand in his. Big green eyes and freckles. He lifts his foot to step again but—not without her. Standing tall, worlds above the crowd, he thinks of the worn school picture. And there she is. His little girl—

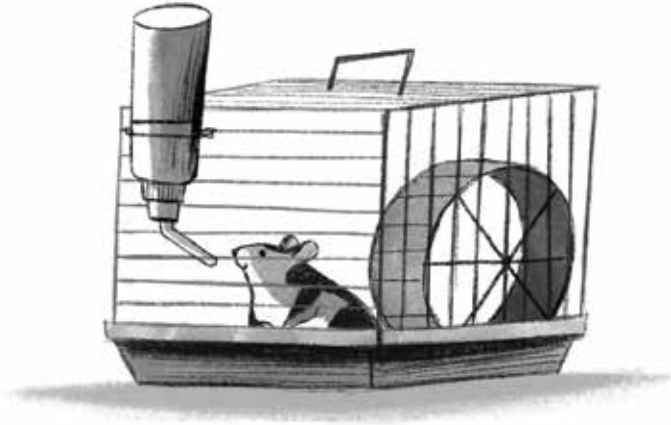
A drumroll splits through the air.

“THE EXTRAORDINARY!”

He jumps.







# Chapter One

There are very few truly extraordinary things in the world. You see, extraordinary is extremely rare. Extraordinary only comes around on a snow day, a cheap-movie Tuesday, or in a carton of cold chocolate milk. Extraordinary is the golden star on your book report, brightly painted toenails, and stained-glass windows in unexpected places. It can only be found in orange the fruit, not the color. It's as special as a blue-raspberry sour candy or the perfect horizontal-striped T-shirt, lovingly worn in and still warm from the dryer. The word *extraordinary* is extraordinary in itself because it ends in a Y, which is the only letter that has a tail. And only the most

extraordinary animals have tails, so that's why it's a very extraordinary letter.

The way I woke up this morning, though? Completely extra-ordinary. The door sounded like it was going to split in half from the force of Dominic's knocking.

"WAAAKE UUUP!" he yelled.

I pulled the pillow over my face, breathing in floral-patterned flannel.

*Extra-ordinary* is a whole other word. Extra-ordinary isn't extraordinary at all—it's much, much worse. I mean, ordinary is okay, but extra-ordinary is extra okay. If you think about it, it's really, really bad. Extra-ordinary is your older brother pounding on your bedroom door like a woodpecker practicing Morse code at exactly seven thirty in the morning on your eleventh birthday.

"MIMIIIIII!"

Mimi, short for Miriam, is an extremely extra-ordinary named given to me by my great-aunt Miriam. Nothing extraordinary has ever been given by a great-aunt. Aside from dusty old names, great-aunts only give doilies, raisin oatmeal cookies you thought were chocolate chip, and fleece pajamas with itchy tags. Very extra-ordinary things indeed.

At least, that's what I've decided. Oh, and did I mention that I'm the chief authority on all things extraordinary because, you see, I invented Extraordinaryism? I'm an expert! That is, I have a long chart taped to my bedroom wall where I write down everything in my life as extra-ordinary, ordinary, or extraordinary. It looks like this:

EXTRA-ORDINARY	ORDINARY	EXTRAORDINARY
Bucket hats	Pumpkins	Ruffley umbrellas
Turnips	Irish dancing	Zebras
Falling asleep in movies	Principal Miller's coffee breath	Hawaiian pizza
Orange (color)	Back crawl	Orange (fruit)
Video games	Mom	Art class
Non-chocolate milk	Dominic	Orange (soda)
Raisins	Putting on sunscreen	Dad
Skateboarding ramps	Cheesecake	Painted toenails
Aunt Daphne's kisses	White chocolate	Turquoise

The truth is, I'm an expert because from the moment I was born, I was extraordinary. Everyone knew. At least, that's what my dad said. And here I was, eleven years later—still extraordinary but much taller, far more freckled, and with a neon-green cast on my right arm. My dad would know a thing or two about being extraordinary because, though I did invent the word Extraordinaryism, it was my dad who inspired it. Extraordinaryism doesn't have a lot of research behind it yet, but it must be at least partially genetic because I take after him. I'm sure he would do a better job of explaining it, too, but he's off being way too famous and extraordinary. By far the most extraordinary thing about me is that my dad is a *renowned* circus performer.

Having a famous dad changes a lot of things. Sometimes it means he won't be there for your birthday—at least not this year. But as a fellow extraordinary person, he knew I would understand.

Extraordinary people are made for something more. That's why they can never stay. That's the first rule of Extraordinaryism.

Maybe on a less extraordinary day the rude knocking would have dampened my spirits, but today was my special day, and nothing would stop me from enjoying it. I leapt out of bed.

After a careful peek into the hall to ensure Dominic had already gone, I threw open my bedroom door. As I reached the top of the stairs, I noticed a small, red paper arrow pointing down to the main floor. I smiled with delight. The best surprises are birthday surprises!

I raced down the stairs, collecting the arrows as I went, my bare feet making the old wooden steps creak. The arrows led me all the way into the bright-yellow kitchen, which was streaming with sunlight and looking, if possible, even more yellow than it normally did. Dominic was already seated at the table, frowning and eating his cereal. Next to him, directly in front of the last paper arrow on the counter, was a small cage. Dominic was shoveling spoonfuls of cereal into his mouth with one hand while the other was crammed into the side of the cage, fingers wagging. I skidded to a stop on a black-and-white tile as my mom turned around from where she was standing at the sink.

“Is that . . . is that the surprise?” I asked.

Mom smiled and pointed to the table.

“Why don’t you go check?”

I ran over and Dominic glumly pushed the cage toward me.

“What is it?” I asked him.

“Dunno. It’s, like, a gerbil or something,” he said, shrugging.

Mom sat down in the chair next to Dominic. “It’s a hamster, Mimi!”

I pushed my face against the white bars of the cage. In the corner was a caramel-colored hamster with dark-brown patches. His little black eyes darted around before settling on me. My breath caught in my throat—he couldn’t be real! I leaned in closer, squinting, just to check if it was a prank. Only when I saw his tiny sides pulsing with nervous breaths could I finally exhale.



“For me? I really get to keep him?”

Mom smiled at me.

“Yes, you do! Happy Birthday, hon! You’ll have to think of a name for him today while you’re at Grandma’s. We can put his cage over there in the window so he can look out while you’re gone.”

Dominic stood and loudly shoved his chair back in place. “Mimi gets everything,” he grumbled.

“You got to wake me up this morning!” I cheerily reminded him, wiggling my eyebrows just long enough that he rolled his eyes in return.

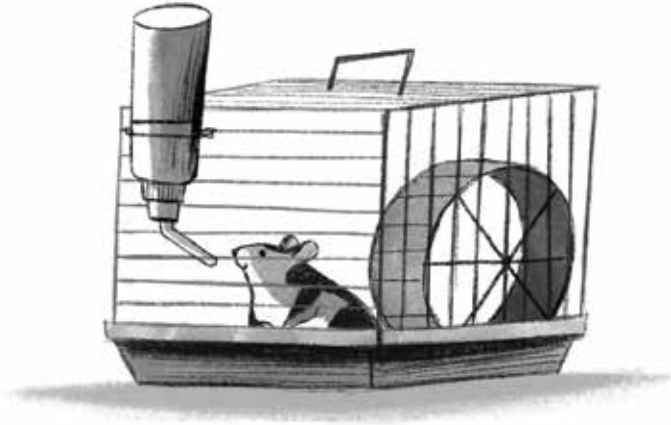
Dominic had been in charge of waking me up every morning since he used my red alarm clock as the timer on the rocket he and his best friend Nigel built in the backyard. Mom decided this was the best way to punish Dominic until he saved enough allowance to buy me a new alarm clock, which I’d decided would be purple. I don’t know if you know any thirteen-year-old boys, but take my word for it—they make terrible personal alarm clocks.

Mom, ignoring my furious eyebrow wiggling, stepped in. “Dominic, you get to see your friends at school, and Mimi doesn’t get to—”



“Whatever,” Dominic said, before stomping out of the room. Mom sighed and looked down at the tiles for a moment then looked up again with a smile.

“Grab your coat. We don’t want to keep Grandma waiting.”



## Chapter Two

My mom played the Beach Boys in the car so I knew her good mood had returned despite Dominic's stomping. She whistled softly through her teeth as we drove.

"Maybe I'll call him Brownie!" I said.

"Sure, honey, that's a good name."

"But too ordinary, don't you think?"

"Well, I suppose there might be other hamsters who are nam—"

"Caramel? What about Caramel?"

"Now that's a nice—"

"Maybe I shouldn't name him after his fur color," I said,

reconsidering. “Don’t judge a book by its cover. That’s what Grandma says!”

“Well, maybe Grandma will have some ideas on what to name him.”

The car wheels crunched to a stop on Grandma’s gravel driveway, and with a quick kiss and another “Happy Birthday” from Mom, I swung open the door and shot through the front garden.

My grandma lives in a giant old house on a shady street lined with huge oak trees. My mom says Grandma has lived here ever since my dad was a little boy. My grandma spends most of her time in the big front room, and that’s where I do my schoolwork and read to her. That’s also where Grandma keeps most of her plants. She has thirty-nine in total in the house. My grandma passed the fifth grade a long time ago, and she can read to herself, too, but I heard her telling Mom that this way I can keep up with my education. Little does Grandma know, I’ve been up to some top-secret extra homework of my own.

“Grandma! You’ll NEVER guess!” I threw my backpack down next to the front door.

“Is that the *eleven*-year-old?”

I heard her voice from the kitchen. She poked her head out into the hall with a big smile.

“Come on in, my Mimi-girl!” She vanished and then reappeared with a bouquet of sunflowers and waved it at me magician-style. “Your presence is commanded at a special birthday brunch! And then after, *yes*, YES, I’m sorry”—she waved away my expression as I opened my mouth to protest—“you need to finish your math booklet.”

The extraordinary prospect of my very own birthday brunch trumped some extra-ordinary unfinished equations, and I skipped around the corner after her. Extraordinary: banana pancakes, whipped cream, and orange juice with pulp. Extra-ordinary: oatmeal-colored math booklets.

For an extremely extraordinary kid, I live a pretty ordinary life. That is, I used to live a pretty ordinary life. I used to go to a pretty ordinary school with old brown bricks and scratchy yellow chairs in the principal’s office, with my extremely ordinary best friend, Patricia. And sure, I live in a pretty ordinary house, with a red front door and a brass knocker. But my pretty ordinary life completely changed almost two months ago. Because sometimes, an extra-ordinary thing needs to happen in an ordinary life for it to become extraordinary.

Extraordinary life or ordinary life, math still had to be done, and today I followed it up with spelling and then reading aloud. Most days followed the same pattern.

We usually took a morning recess before reading but only on days when the weather was nice. Grandma had refused to do yard duty for all of March. After lunch I would sit down to do either a music or art activity depending on the day. Grandma would cancel music on days when she had a headache, and I would have to save recorder practice for later. We took an afternoon recess to water the plants and Grandma would refill the bird feeder and make a cup of tea, and then we would end the afternoon with science or social studies. I preferred social studies, and I could tell Grandma did, too, because sometimes she would nod off during science.

My schoolwork today flew by, which was unexpected considering we were on a particularly dull unit in math, and Thursdays are the most boring days of the week. It's just a fact. It's surprising, too, because Thursday starts with a *T*, and the other day that starts with a *T* is Tuesday—a day that is entirely magical! It just goes to show that birthdays can make any day of the week magical. Especially a birthday that started with the greatest gift ever.

The big cuckoo clock struck three, and I gratefully dropped my pencil onto the table. Three o'clock is Grandma's nap time, and it's exactly one hour until Mom comes to pick me up after getting Dominic from his school. During nap time, I'm allowed to watch TV with subtitles on, so it can be quiet for Grandma to sleep, but recently I've been using the time to work on my secret research project. Grandma doesn't know the reason I only work on my project during her naps, so I've learned to stay in the living room until the snoring starts.

Today, though, I was restless as I sat beside her on the brown leather couch, still stuffed full of birthday brunch and math equations, with my mind racing and my hands drumming on my lap. I couldn't stop thinking about my hamster. I was so excited to have a brand-new best friend.

I had been best friendless for exactly forty-seven days—ever since Patricia betrayed me in the worst possible way. My new best friend options were slim because I didn't see the kids from school anymore, and Grandma sleeps far too much to be a proper best friend to me. Plus, when I told her that, she laughed in her huge bellowing grandma way that makes her earrings jingle, and I don't think I should have a best friend who laughs at me nearly as much as she does. I told her she



could be the first replacement, for when someone calls in sick. She seemed to find that just as funny.

After unsuccessfully trying to scratch under my cast for a few minutes, I stood up and began to softly pad around the room. The carpet cushioned my near tap-dancing feet. Why couldn't I think of a name?

Benjamin? No.

Bernard? Ugh.

Patricia! I smiled with glee at the thought but decided against it. Knowing Patricia, she would be thrilled.

I stopped and stretched, waiting for inspiration to strike.

*Hands to the sky, wiggle your fingers. Hands to the floor. Hands to the sky, wiggle your fingers. Hands to the floor.*

After more unsuccessful scratching and my third stretching rotation, I caught sight of one of the old pictures on the wall across from the couch. And it suddenly came to me: the perfect name! The very best one of all! I couldn't help but grin at my stroke of brilliance. As if by magic, Grandma's first snore rang out. I grabbed my pad of sticky notes off the coffee table, tiptoed up the stairs, and disappeared into the small bedroom on the left.





Sitting at the dinner table that night with Mom and Dominic, I cleared my throat and prepared for my big announcement.

“I want to call him Harvey.”

Mom looked up from her plate in surprise. Dominic turned red and fumbled a piece of lettuce off his fork. “Mimi!”

“What? That’s what I want to call him. That’s his name now.”

Mom looked as if she was about to say something but then forced her mouth into a half smile and pushed her mashed potatoes around her plate. I had to admit part of me was enjoying their reaction.

“Mimi!” Dominic said, louder. “You can’t do that, *dummy*.”

“Dominic . . .” Mom warned.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Because—”

“Dominic!”

“Because that’s *Dad’s* name!”