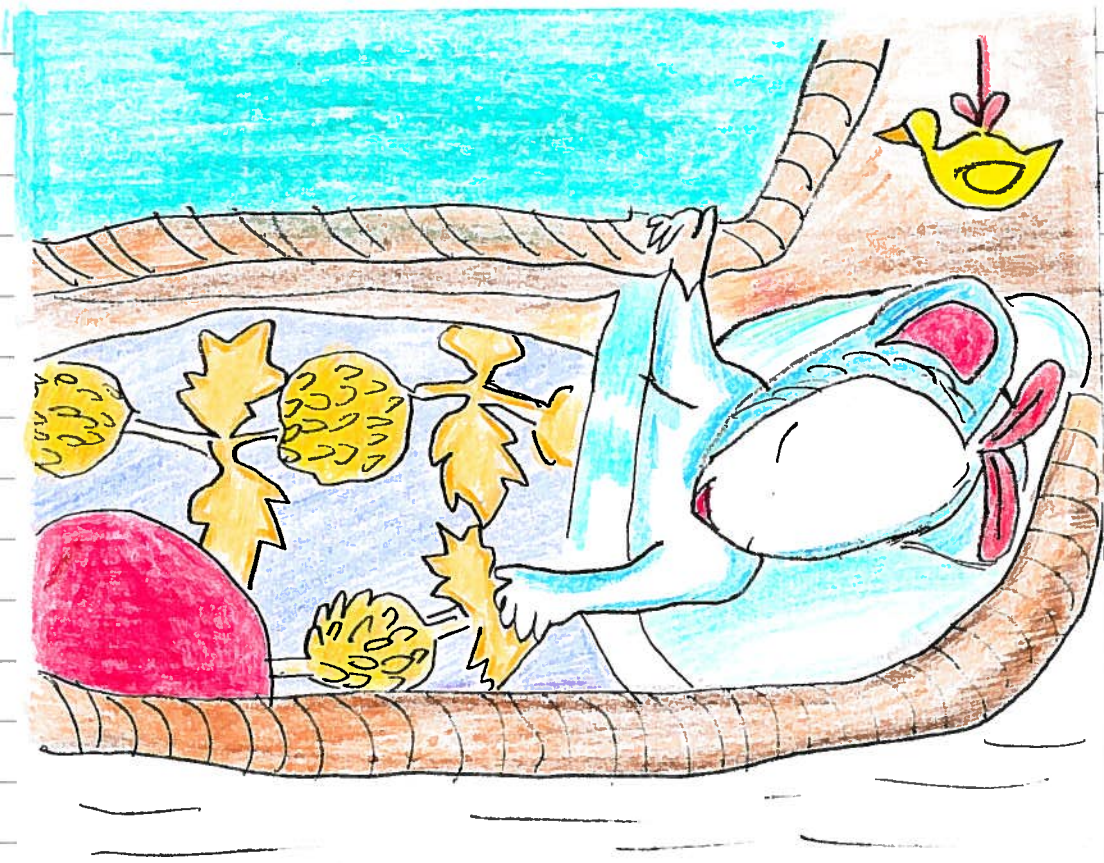


# Chrysanthemum



by  
Kevin  
Henkes





The day she was born was the happiest day in her parents' lives.

"She's perfect" says her mother

"Absolutely" says her father

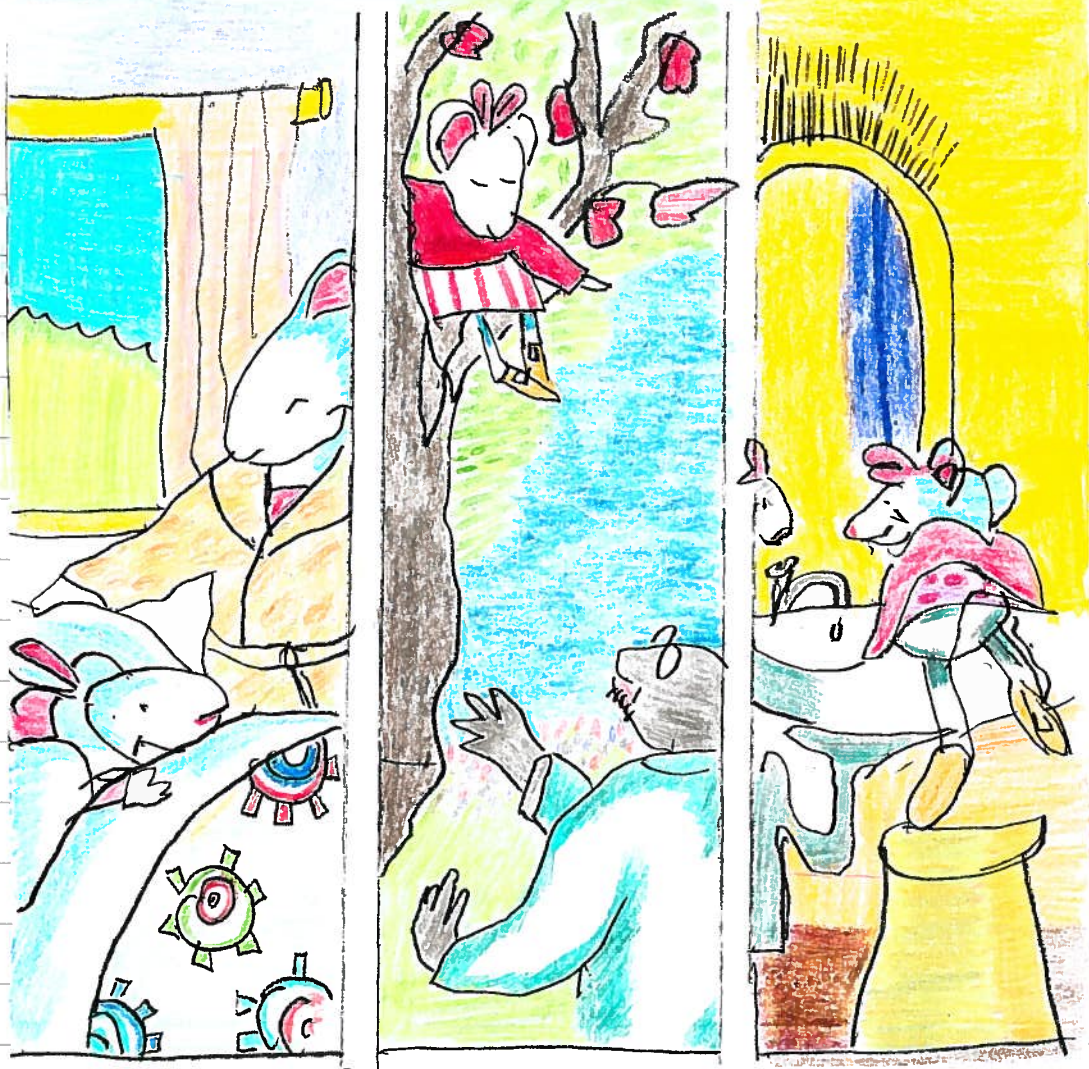
She is absolutely perfect

"Her name must be everything she is", says her mother

"Her name must be absolutely perfect" says her father.

And it is.

Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum.



Chrysanthemum grows and grows and grows and she loves her name

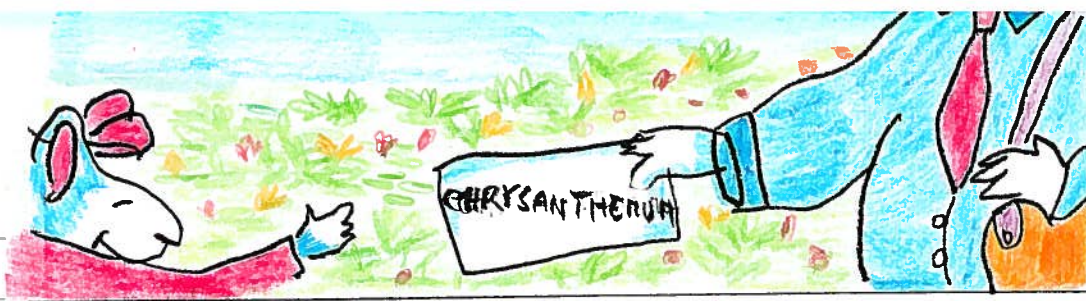
She loves the way it sounds when her mother wakes her up.

She likes the way it sounds when her father calls her for dinner

And she loves the way it sounds when she whispers it to herself in the

bathroom mirror.

Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum.

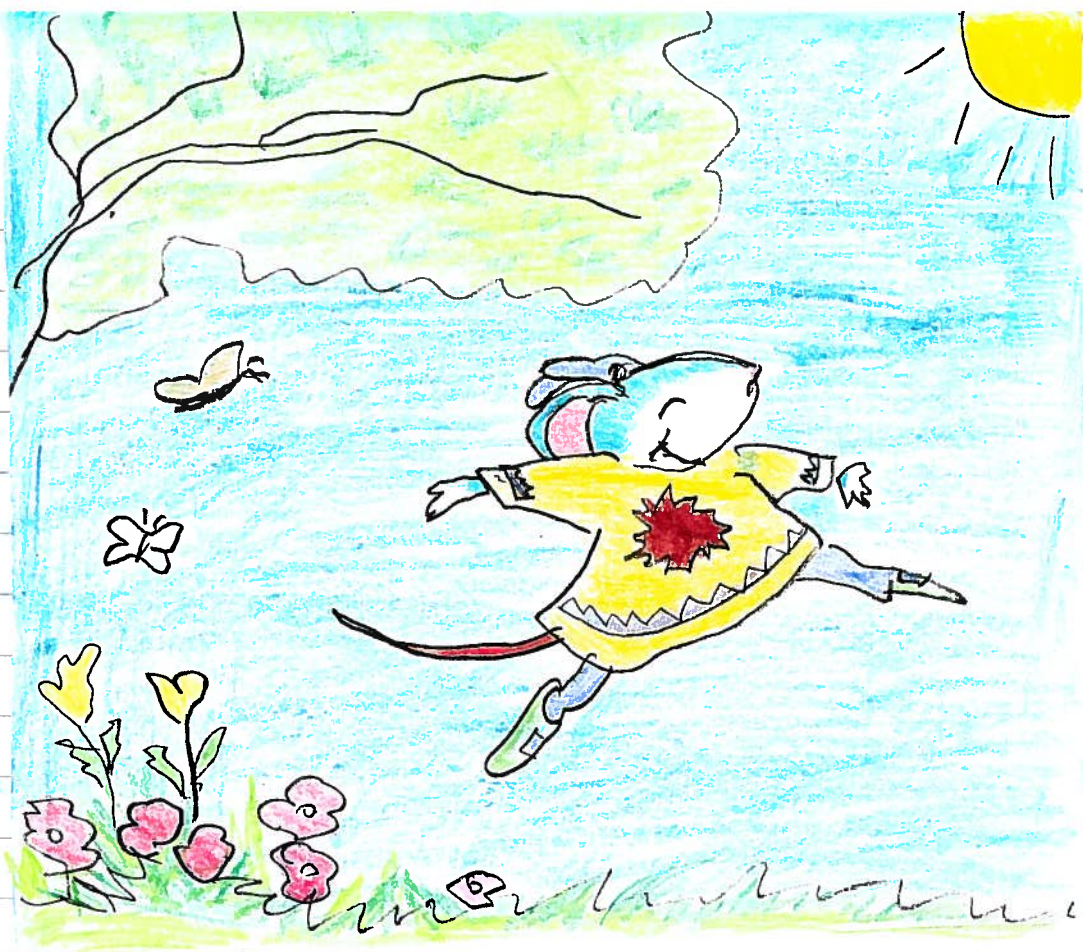


Chrysanthemum loves the way her name looks when it is written with ink on an envelope.

She loves the way it looks when it is written with icing on her birthday cake.

And she loves the way it looks when she writes it herself with her fat orange crayon.

Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum.



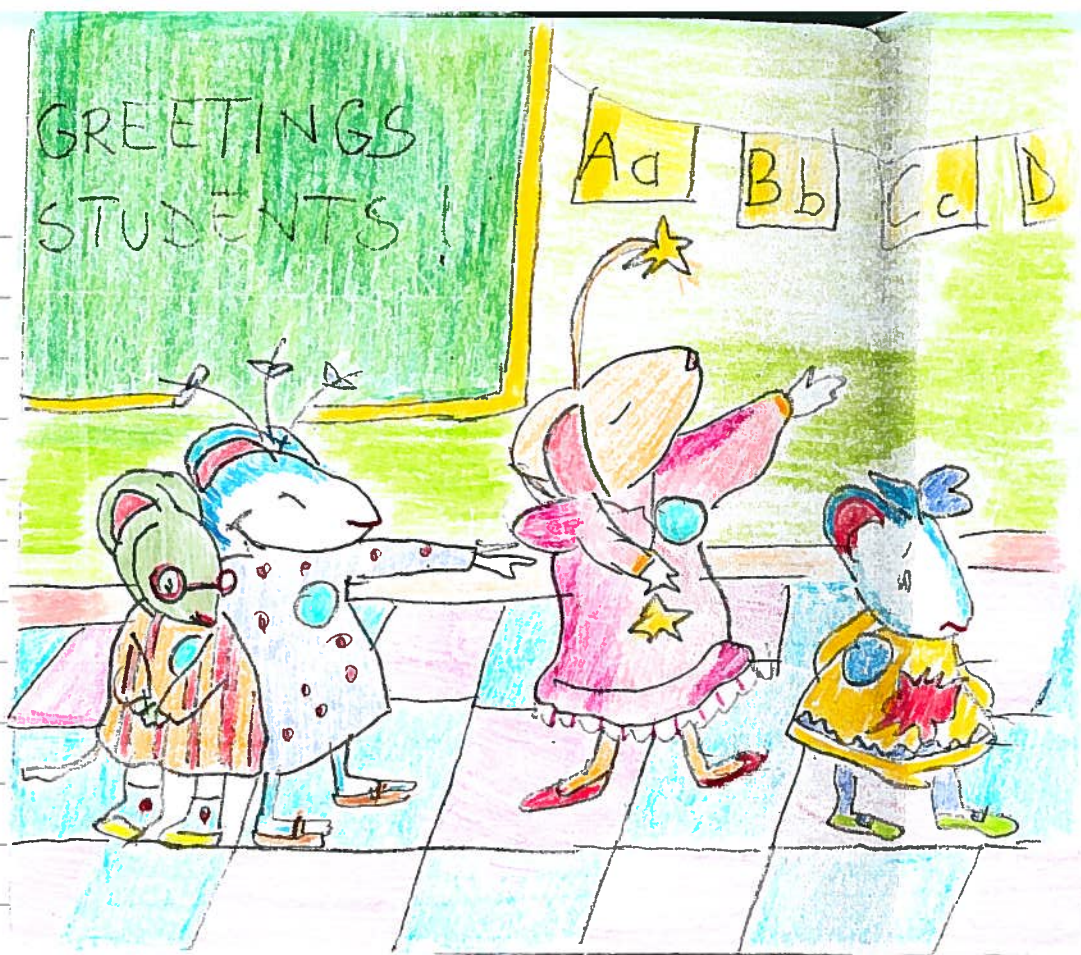
Chrysanthemum thinks her name is absolutely perfect.

And then she starts school.

On her first day, Chrysanthemum wears her sunniest dress and her brightest smile.

She runs all the way.

"Hooray!" says Chrysanthemum "School!"



But when Mrs Chud takes roll call everyone giggles upon hearing Chrysanthemum's name.

"It's so long" says Jo

"It scarcely fits on your name tag" says Rita pointing.

"I'm named after my grandmother" says Victoria "You're named, after a flower!"

Chrysanthemum winks.

She does not think her name is absolutely perfect.

She thinks it is absolutely dreadful.



The rest of the day is not better.

During naptime Victoria raises her hand and informs Mrs Chud that *Chrysanthemum*'s name is spelled with thirteen letters.

That's exactly half as many letters as there are in the entire alphabet, Victoria explains.

"Thank you for sharing that with us, Victoria" says Mrs Chud.

"Now put your head down."

"If I had a name like yours, I'd change it," Victoria says.



"Welcome home" says her mother.

"Welcome home" says her father.

"School is no place for me", says Chrysanthemum.

"My name is too long. It scarcely fits on my name tag  
and I'm named after a flower!"

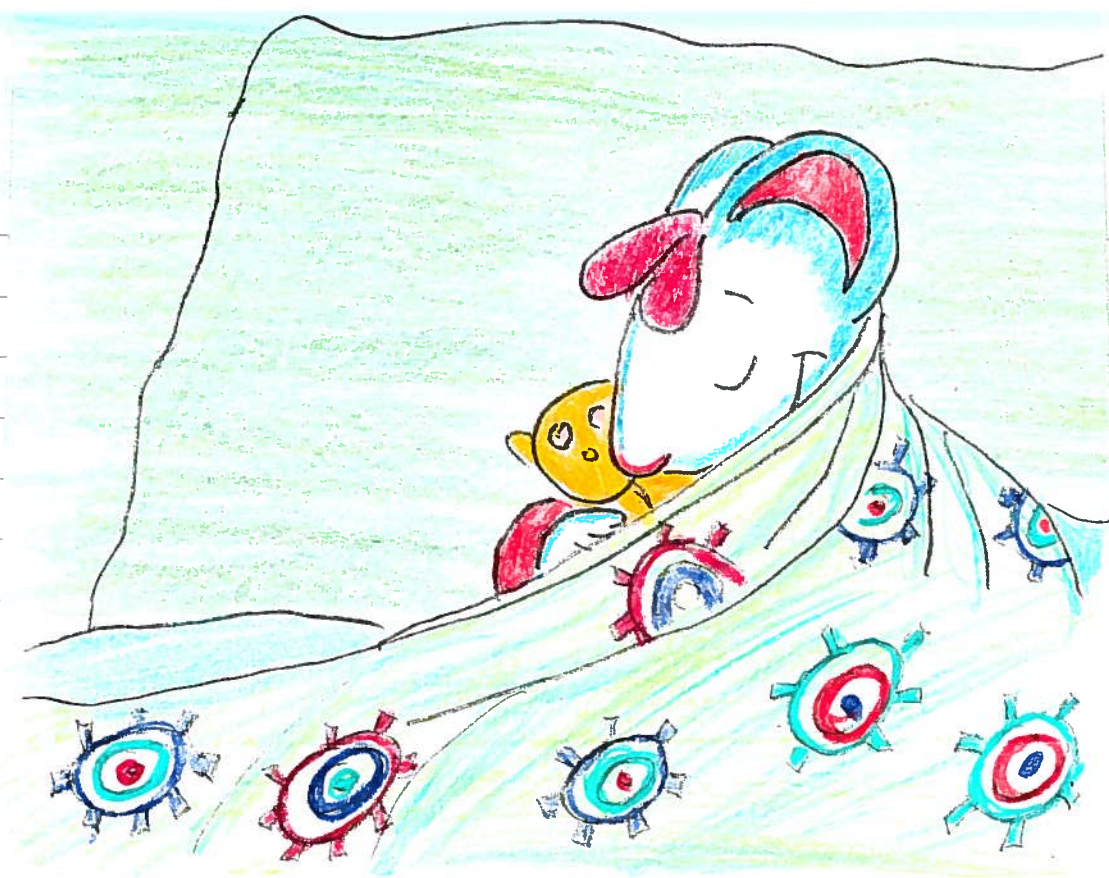
"Oh, pish" says her mother.

"Your name is beautiful."

"It is everything you are" says her mother.

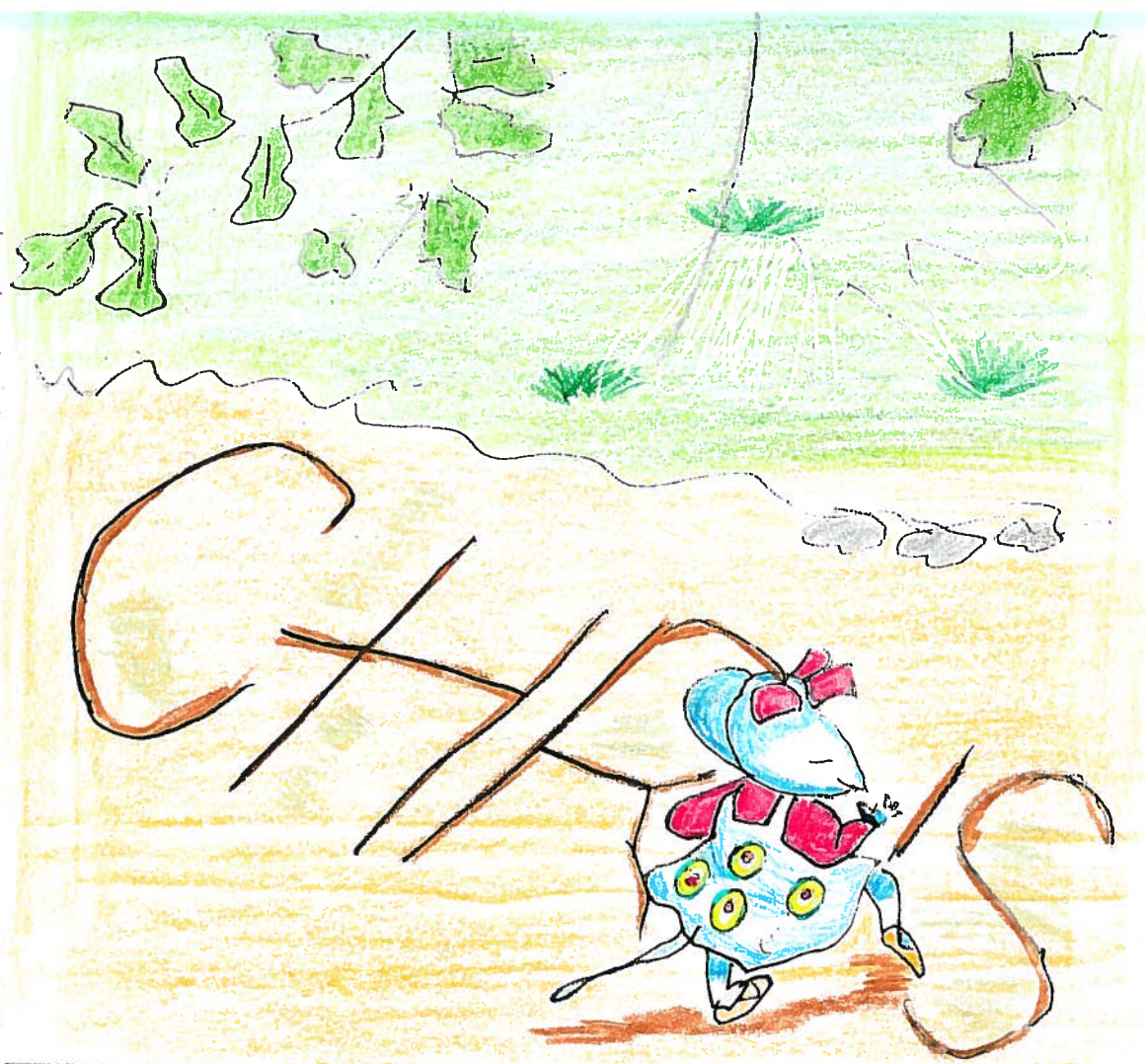
"Absolutely perfect" says her father.





Chrysanthemum feels much better after her favourite dinner (macaroni and cheese with Ketchup) and an evening filled with hugs and kisses and Breheeri.

That night she dreams that her name is Jane. It is a pleasant dream.



The next morning Chrysanthemum wears her most comfortable jumper.

She walks to school as slowly as she can.

She drags her feet in the dirt.

Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, she writes.



"She even looks like a flower" says Victoria as Chrysanthemum enters the playground.

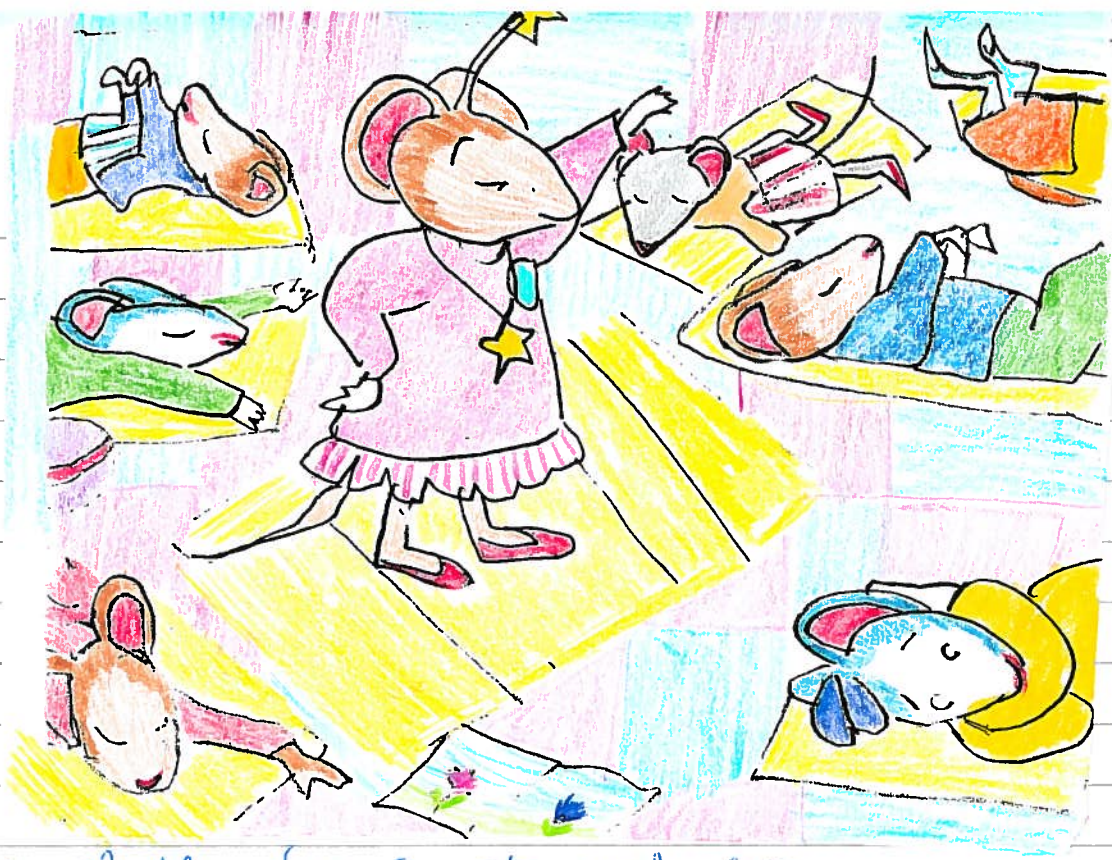
"Let's pick her" says Rita.

"Let's smell her" says Jo.

Chrysanthemum tilts

She does not think her name is absolutely perfect.

She thinks it is absolutely dreadful.



The rest of the day is not much better.

During naptime Victoria raises her hand and says, "a Chrysanthemum is a flower: it lives in the garden with worms and other dirty things."

"Thank you for sharing that with us, Victoria" says Mrs Chud

"Now put your head down."



"Welcome home" says her mother.

"Welcome home" says her father.

"School is no place for me" says Chrysanthemum.

"They say I even look like a flower. They pretend to pick me and smell me."

"Oh, push" says her mother. "They're just jealous."

"Who wouldn't be jealous of a name like yours?"

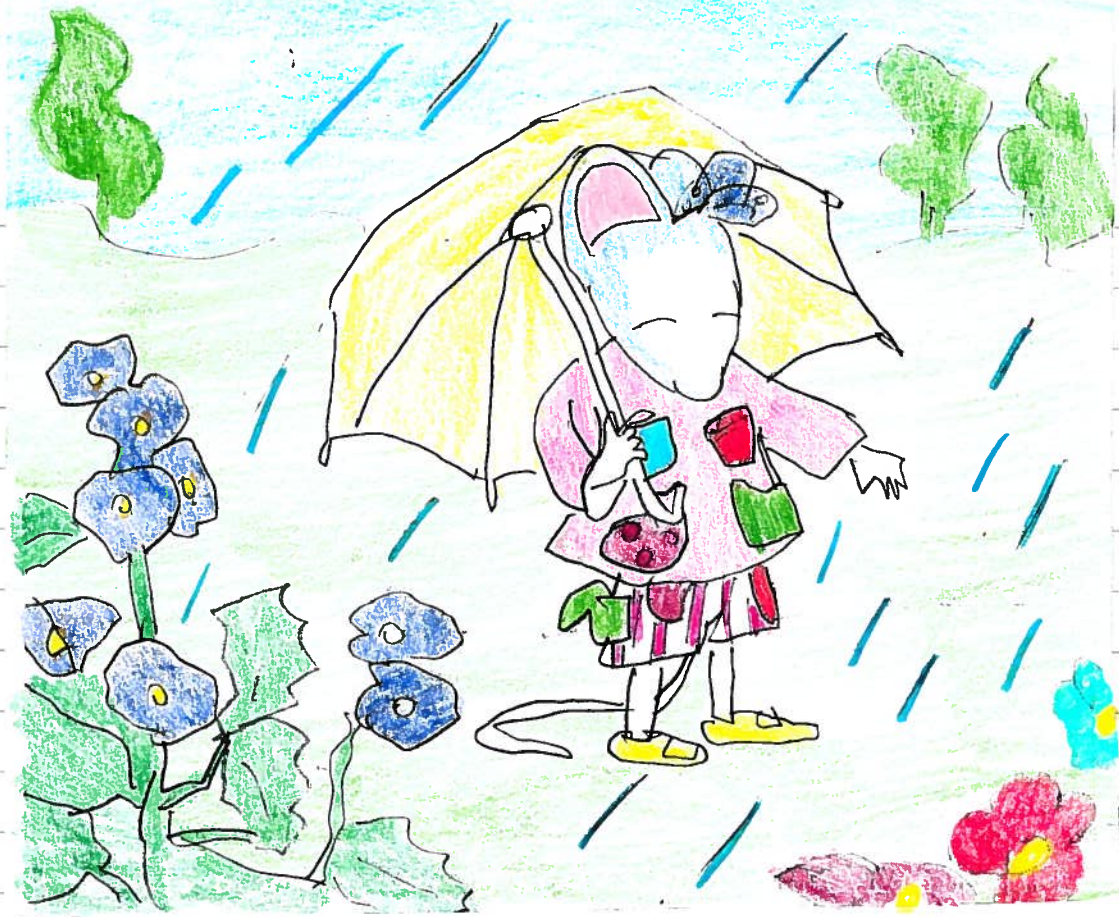
"After all it's absolutely perfect" says her father.



That night Chrysanthemum dreams that she is really a Chrysanthemum.

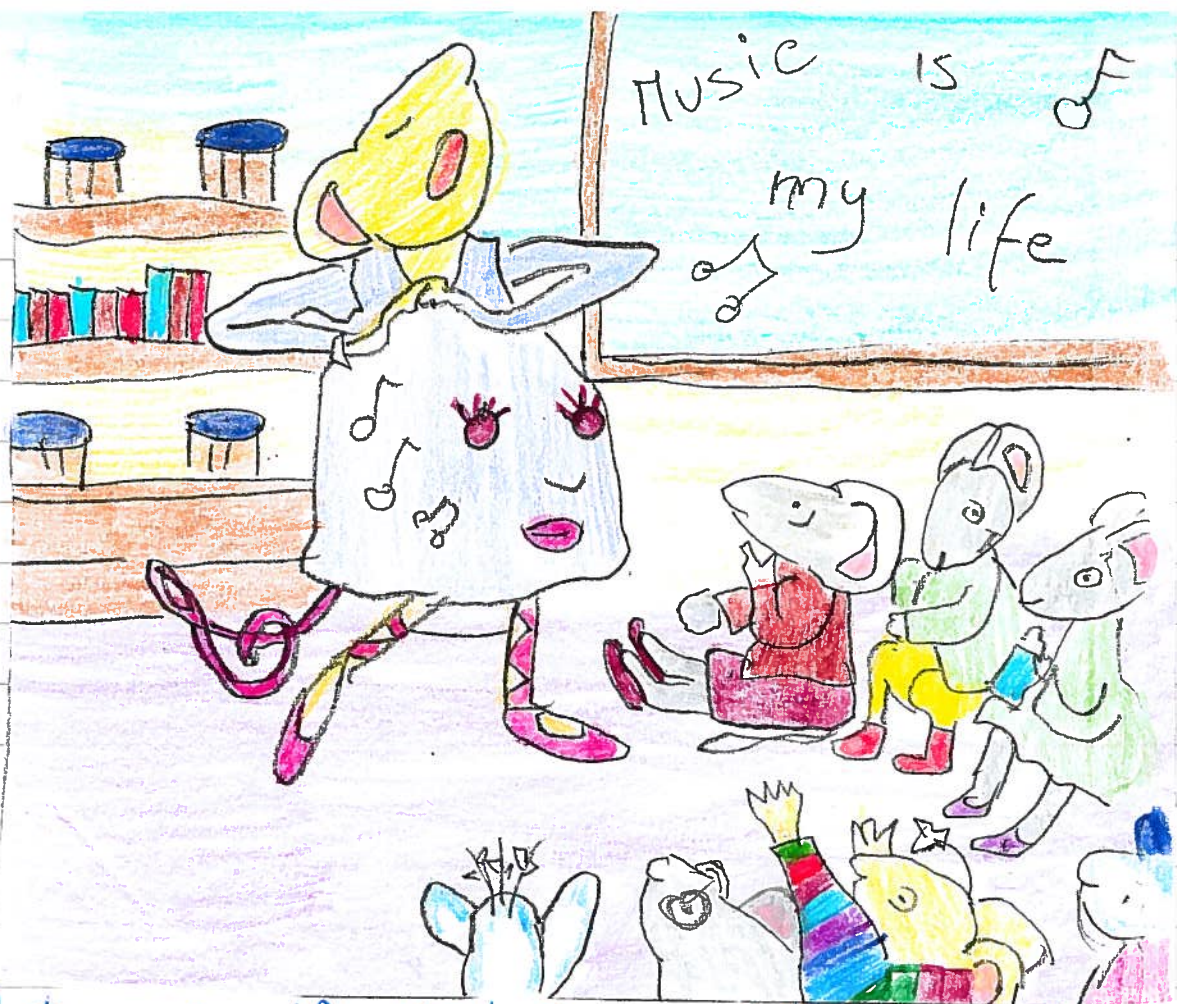
Victoria picks her and plucks leaves and petals one by one until there is ~~nothing~~ left but a scrawny stem.

It is the worst nightmare of Chrysanthemum's life.



Chrysanthemum wears her outfit with seven pockets  
the next morning.

She load the pockets with her good-luck charms.  
Chrysanthemum takes the longest route possible to  
school.



That morning the students are introduced to Mrs

Twinkle, the music teacher.

Her voice is like something out a dream.

The students are speechless.

Mrs Twinkle assigns role for the class musicale.

Victoria is the Fairy Queen, Rita the Butterleft Princess,

To the Pixie messenger and Chrysanthemum is daisy.





"Chrysanthemum's a daisy! Chrysanthemum's a daisy!"

Jo, Rita and Victoria chortle

Chrysanthemum *wilts*

She does not think her name is absolutely perfect.

She thinks it's absolutely dreadful.

"What's so rumours!" asks Mrs Twinkle.

"Chrysanthemum" is the answer.

"Her name is too long" says Jo.

"It scarcely fits on her name tag" says Rita.

"I'm named after my grand mother", says Victoria.

"She's named after a flower!"

"My name is long. It would scarcely fit on my name tag and I'm named after a flower too!"

"says Mrs Trinkle

"You are?" says Victoria

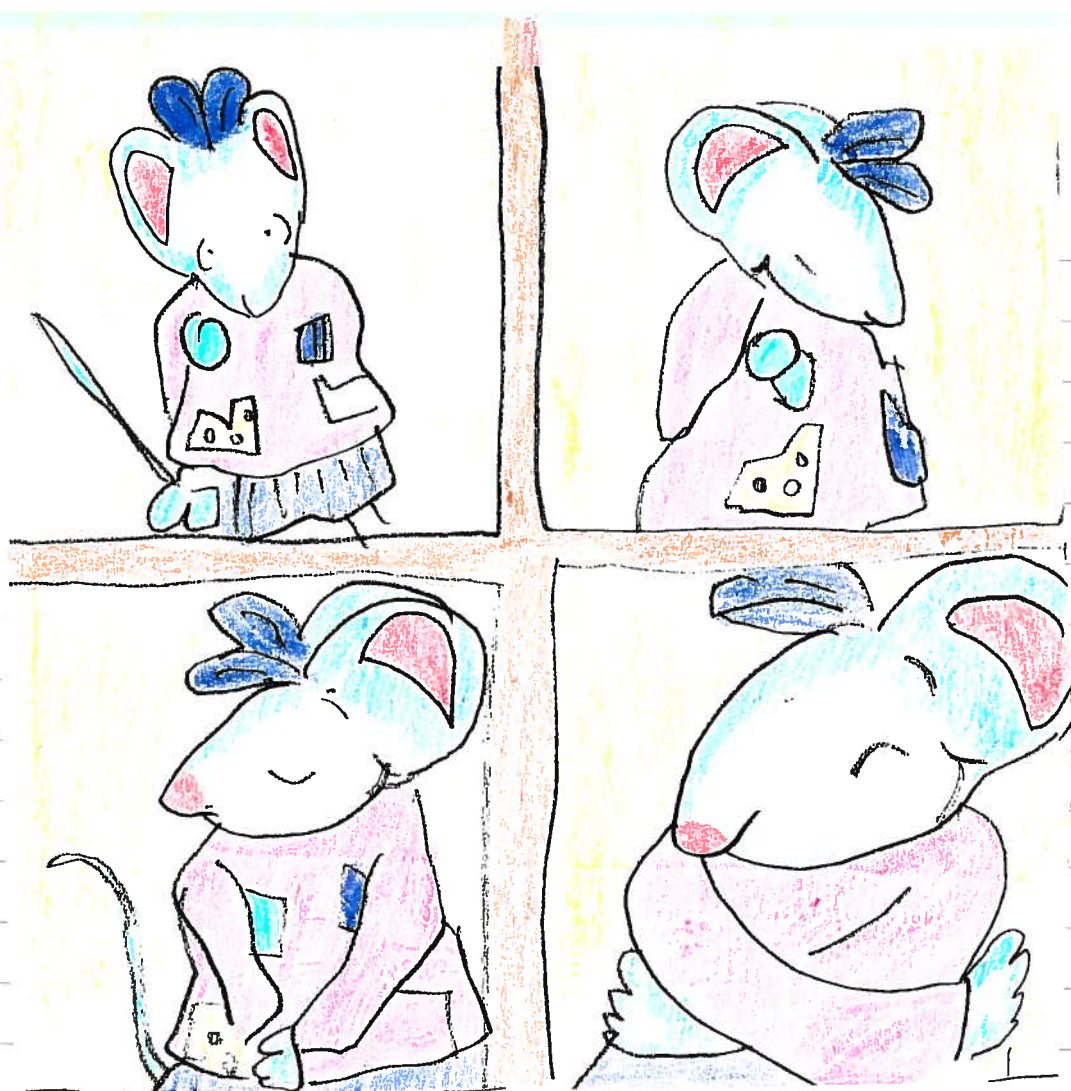
"Yes", says Mrs Trinkle.

"My name is Delphinium.

Delphinium Trinkle.

And if my baby is a girl, I'm considering

Chrysanthemum as a name. I think it's absolutely perfect".



Chrysanthemum scarcely believes her ears.

She blushes

She beams

She blooms

Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum, Chrysanthemum

Jo, Rita and Victoria look at Chrysanthemum

"Call me Morigold" says Jo

"I'm Carmation" says Rita

"My name is Lily of the Valley" says Victoria

Cyanthemum doesn't think her name is absolutely  
perfect

She knows it.



The class musicale is a success.

Mrs Trinkle gives birth to a baby girl.

And, of course, she names her *Pyssanthemum*.