



Elena Petrasova

**Black
Rabbit**

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Аннотация

What happens when a little black rabbit takes his first steps into a vast and unfamiliar world?

Yikes has no idea how many unexpected encounters, true friends, and real dangers await him. Along the way, he will learn whom he can trust, discover what it means to have a family, and eventually come face to face with his greatest fear.

The Black Rabbit is a warm, funny, and exciting story about friendship, family, courage, and growing up. A story about a little rabbit who discovers that true courage is not the absence of fear, but finding the strength to protect those you love even when you are afraid.

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BLACK RABBIT

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BLACK RABBIT

This book is about a little black rabbit and another rabbit Toni, their friends and enemies, about complex and important things as well as sad and joyful things. In short, this book is about everything that makes up the life of any rabbit. This book is dedicated to all the little ones who don't have mom. And it's also dedicated to all the little ones who do.

Chapter One



(This book will have many chapters, some of which will be fun and some sad. Anyway, please don't get upset, as you must remember that even after reading the saddest chapter, you can peek at the end of the story where it clearly says that everything will be fine—for you and for the rabbit! Now, chapter one—quite sad, but a bit funny.)

The little black rabbit was born in a warm burrow with his brothers and sisters. He was named after the special color of his fur, which he was very happy with. They called him Yikes. (Yes, yes, don't be surprised. His mother named him Yikes! The thing is, that when she was picking a burrow with Aunt Raya—who, by the way, was a wise rabbit and the oldest in the family—they stumbled upon a very pretty (according to mother rabbit) black cloth with five little tails and a hole in the middle. Mother rabbit liked the cloth so much that she wanted to take it with her. But Aunt Raya, sniffing it, suddenly exclaimed “YIKES!” and quickly hopped away. The young mother rabbit thought that the cloth was called Yikes and started chasing Aunt Raya, not daring to ask why they hadn't taken the cloth with them. She trusted Aunt Raya's taste completely and certainly didn't want to show that she didn't know what a Yikes was.)

But “Yikes” stuck in her mind, and when the little rabbit of unusual color was born, she decided that such a baby should have an unusual name. So, the mother named her little black-eared one Yikes.

(Of course, dear, you understand that many different rabbits are born all around the world: yellow ones, red ones, and black ones... Oh! Yellow ones probably aren't born. Unless you paint a newborn white rabbit with yellow paint! It's doubtful he'd like that.... Yes, and red ones aren't born either. But there are grey, brown, white, and black ones. Our little one was black. But mother rabbit, being a first-time mom, thought that all rabbits should be grey and white, like her. She thought that maybe the reason her baby was black was because she ate too many blackberries. She didn't know that in the forest with Aunt Raya, they had found an ordinary leather glove, not a Yikes. So, it turns out that the baby's name should have been "Glove." But what happened, happened; let's not judge the young mother rabbit too harshly, as this chapter is a little sad because of her.)

Our rabbits grew up, and the mother began to go further away to eat in other meadows. One day, she didn't come home. The little rabbits were left all alone.

(Now comes the saddest part, so please, get ready.)

The little rabbits waited for their mother, but she didn't come. Our little ones were all alone. They were scared and, huddling together, waited for what would happen next. Yikes kept his eyes on the entrance to the burrow, hoping that his mother would come back. Unfortunately, dear, that didn't happen. When our little black-tail realized this, he became so sad that, although he was the bravest of the little rabbits, he began to cry. He kept looking at the burrow entrance, still hoping, hoping, hoping.

Finally, Yikes understood that something had to be done, or he and his brothers and sisters would perish alone.

Yikes carefully crawled out of the burrow and sniffed around. He had never experienced so many emotions in his small life. He was both scared and curious at the same time. The little rabbit rolled off the ledge and found himself in a wide meadow, surrounded by something beautiful and fragrant. It was, as you can guess, clover. The pink flowers tickled Yikes's nose, and he began munching happily. Then he brought some back to the burrow so that his weak brothers and sisters could also eat.

When the little rabbits regained their strength, they crawled out of the burrow and tumbled down onto the meadow where soft, juicy grass grew—plenty of it for all of them. They ate until they looked like colorful pom-poms. Some of them couldn't even cross their paws because their big bellies wouldn't let them. So they lay there, soft fluffy balls, until Aunt Raya hopped over.

Aunt Raya seemed to know everything about mother rabbit. She hugged and petted the little ones for a long time. Yikes watched from behind a blueberry bush and was happy for his brothers and sisters.

“Oh, you little ones, oh, you poor things. Now everything will be fine! Everything will be all right!” Aunt Raya crooned. The kind aunt rabbit kissed and hugged the little ones for a long time, then asked, “Well, is everyone here?”

The little rabbits answered, “Everyone!” and rushed after Aunt Raya into the burrow.

How about me? What about me? Thought Yikes. They forgot about me! And his little black ears drooped sadly. Yikes looked at the forest, which seemed to beckon him with its unknown and exciting things, and back at the door of his own home, which was starting to close, letting the last little rabbit inside. At that moment, Yikes realized that there are days when one has to make very grown-up decisions. If I go home, I'll live with Aunt Raya, but if I go into the forest, I can see what grows behind those trees, and what's hidden behind those hills, and find out what that sound is—that continuous babble behind the rock.

The little one thought about this as the sun began to set. No one came out to search for him, and the red rays of the sunset flickered so beautifully from the forest that Yikes turned around and headed the opposite direction from home, into the mysterious forest, where many adventures, dangers, and joyful surprises awaited him.

(Are you curious, little one, about what happened to Yikes? If yes, then let's read chapter two. In it you'll find out how Yikes got hurt on his way (and how that helped him a lot), and how he found a new home. It will be the shortest chapter, so I think we have time.)

Chapter Two

As you remember, Yikes was left alone in the big forest. At first, he wandered along different paths and hills, then ate some grass and thought about how wonderful this world is. He even thought a little about his brothers and sisters, who, he thought, had chosen wrong. Poor rabbits, he thought they stayed with Aunt Raya, when they could have been here with me, enjoying these tasty treats.

That's what Yikes thought, until he heard: "Hooo! Hooo!" The little rabbit froze and listened. Suddenly he heard again: "Hooo! Hooo!" And only then did he realize that everything around him had become creepy and gloomy. Instead of the bright green trees, there were now strange, scary shapes, and the sky had turned yellow and grey, like the color of old moss. The little one felt very uncomfortable. Yikes stayed still and peered around with his black eyes wide open. He barely breathed. Even the suspicious "hooo-hooo" was silent. He sat there for a moment longer, but then there was so much spit in his mouth that he had to swallow it. It made a rather strange loud sound. (Try doing that, and you'll understand what I mean.)

At that very second, something fell off the branch of a tall tree. Yikes was so scared that he ran around, not knowing where to go. (Ask the person who is reading this book to you stretch the "O"

sound in the word “so” to show you how badly the little rabbit was frightened.) He was just terrified and didn’t understand what was happening! And, you have probably guessed, the little rabbit was in deadly danger.

Fortunately, in his panic, Yikes tripped and tumbled into a deep hole, hurting himself badly. How can you be hurt badly and still be fortunate, you ask? Well, here’s how! By some miracle, he managed to escape from that huge, merciless owl that had been watching him from the branch of a mighty oak. The rabbit found himself at the very bottom of a pit, and now the owl couldn’t get to him. At that moment, Yikes thought that he should have stayed at Aunt Raya’s house. But it was too late. At least now he had his own burrow—it was dark and cramped, but it was his own.

Shuddering from fear for a long time, he listened carefully. Yikes didn’t even notice that his little eyes closed. He suddenly found himself back home. His brothers and sisters were playing nearby, and in the very center of their little burrow lay Mama, so warm and so dear.

(What a nice dream, right? Sleep well, Yikes. Tomorrow will be a new day. How wonderful that you’re okay.)

Chapter Three



When he woke up, the little rabbit didn't remember where he was. (This happens when you sleep in a new place.) Yikes opened his eyes and felt so lonely that he began to cry. Poor Yikes! There was no one to comfort him. He wanted so much to hug Mama or snuggle up to his brothers and sisters, that his tears just started flowing. (You know, little one, there's nothing wrong with feeling sad and crying. Even grown-ups sometimes cry when they're lonely. What more to say about little rabbits?)

"Don't interrupt us while we're singing!" came a tiny voice (I think your person guessed how to read the word "tiny").

Yikes froze in surprise.

"Let's do it again!" squeaked someone.

And suddenly, several high-pitched voices began singing, "We're jolly guys! The bear's just too small for us.

"We dance and sing, Ding, Ding, Ding, Ding!

"Just like this! We live carefree, Tra-la-la."

Yikes impatiently shouted, still sniffing with his soft nose, "Who's there?"

"It's us, your friends! We're here!"

"Where here?" The voices seemed very close to Yikes, but he couldn't figure out where they were coming from.

"We're here, on your back. We're your faithful friends!"

Yikes managed to twist around and looked at the bump on his black back. At the very top, three little brown bugs were happily hopping, clapping their tiny hands and somersaulting in the air.

“Who are you?” Yikes asked in confusion, watching the tiny acrobats.

“We’re the theater troupe ‘Black Rabbit Guests,’” one of the bugs replied as he took off his tiny hat and bowed. “My name is Earl Fleahula, I’m the artistic director and choreographer of this ensemble. And these are my colleagues!”

One of the bugs, the chubbiest, momentarily stopped jumping. He grabbed a hair from the rabbit’s fur and squeezed it, like you would shake hands with someone when you meet, “Chevrolet! Nice to meet you, Mr. ... uh...”

“Yikes!” the little rabbit introduced himself.

“Well, now we’re acquainted. Ah, how pleasant it is to meet such a kind, smart, and handsome rabbit,” Earl Fleahula whistled and smiled widely.

“Very p-p-pleasant,” Yikes stuttered, because he still didn’t know whether he was pleased or not. He kept staring at the third bug, who hadn’t stopped jumping up and down.

“And who’s this?” the rabbit asked, bewildered.

“This is our local star! Split Under the Satellite,” announced Chevrolet, glancing enviously at his friend.

“Split what?” the rabbit asked in astonishment.

“S-p-l-i-t Under the S-a-t-e-l-l-i-t-e, — Earl Fleahula slowly pronounced, still smiling, “That’s the name. Given for outstanding flexibility and high jumping ability.”

Yikes thought that a satellite was probably a bird that flew higher than any other. But he couldn’t guess what a “Split” was.

(One day Yikes did see this very “Split”, but that will be a little later.)

The jumping bug continued hopping and, as a greeting, saluted the black rabbit by touching his foot to his head while still mid-air. Usually, soldiers do this when greeting generals, though they don’t do it in the air, and not with their feet, but with their hands while standing. But no one was thinking about that.

(Do you know what these bugs were? Here’s a hint: the first letter is “F”. If you thought about fantastic pancakes, then no, you didn’t guess right. And I think it’s time for you to have a snack. Those bugs were ordinary fleas. Ask the person reading this to you if they’ve ever had fleas and how they feel about them. If they don’t like them, I completely agree with them.)

But suddenly, Yikes felt so happy. His new friends showed him acrobatic tricks, told stories about their travels, sang songs, and praised him for being friends with them. This is how our black rabbit got mixed up with the wrong company. Or rather, the wrong company jumped on him and felt at home.

Yikes grew very fond of his friends, because now he wasn’t so lonely. But from that time on, he began to itch behind his ears, under his armpits, and on his sides. The worst part was when it itched on the lower part of his back, where Yikes couldn’t reach to scratch properly. It was terribly uncomfortable. It was then that the jumpy trio smiled the most and were so kind to Yikes that he thought these are true friends! You could even call them family.

Chapter Four



(Finally, Yikes will meet his best friend of all time. But before we dive in, let me remind you of what happened in the previous chapter. Our Yikes, lonely and isolated, befriended some ordinary fleas. Of course, this couldn't lead to anything good...)

The bugs called themselves wandering artists, forest brotherhood stars, and stage geniuses. Yikes ran around the entire forest, eager to see their performances. But after the first concert, our little black-eared friend realized that everything the fleas talked about looked very different in reality.

“Our show is the most grandiose event in the forest,” they claimed, promising, “All the forest creatures will come. You're lucky to be our friend because we are the most famous artists this season.”

But Yikes couldn't understand why he had never heard of Earl Fleahula, Chevrolet, or Split Under the Satellite until now.

The first performance clarified everything. The fleas tried with all their flea might. They held their breath, made noises, grunted, shrank, and wriggled as if they might burst from the effort. But Yikes didn't even realize that this was the grand performance they were talking about. For him, it was just one tiny, squeaky “peek” and nothing more. As for the audience of these meaningless jumps, whistles, and giggles — it was just lazy caterpillars, curious gnats, and other creepy creatures whose names could be found in some scholarly book about insects. For

example, *Culex pipiens*, which means “squeaking mosquito.”

The most successful performance, according to the wandering artists, occurred the day Yikes stumbled upon a giant anthill. That, they thought, was success! They’d never had so many spectators in their lives. The annoying little bugs did everything they could to drag out their show. They stood on each other’s heads, danced in the air, and hopped in rhythm to the song they themselves were singing:

“Tra-la-la! He’s a flea and I’m a flea!

Tra-la-la! We laugh ha-ha-ha!”

Yikes sighed and thought: Why don’t my friends notice that the ants don’t care about their performance at all? Each ant was busy with something: some were repairing the anthill, some were watching over little ants, and many were searching for new sticks, leaves, and berries for the others.

Yikes was bored out of his mind. He didn’t want to be a bad friend, but every time he eagerly waited for the end of the show. He only wanted to return to his burrow and get a good nap after all the long and dangerous sprints. Before that, of course, he had to scratch his back properly.

(Do you know, little one, how rabbits differ from hares? Hares love to run freely through the forest, while rabbits must live with their family in a burrow. It turns out that our little black-eared friend behaved not like an ordinary rabbit, but like an unusual one. I wonder what will happen to such a rabbit next?)

One day, Earl Fleahula turned to Yikes saying, “Here, we’ve

already conquered everyone with our grand talents.”

Yikes was stunned by such audacity. Sometimes he wondered how such a tiny, not-so-pleasant-looking bug could hold so much self-importance. And Earl Fleahula, with a wise look, continued, “We need to go to the misty swamps.”

Yikes’s eyes widened. Everyone in the forest knew that the misty swamps were the most dangerous place in the world. Not only did the swamps have swamps and mist, but they were also home to the cunning fox, Lieutenant Andreliis. Yikes didn’t want to meet the red hunter, because, as we know, foxes eat rabbits. And they don’t care if it’s a black rabbit or a grey one, washed or unwashed, they’ll swallow such little creatures in a heartbeat, without batting an eye.

“I don’t want to go to the swamps,” Yikes whispered and stared at his friends. “There, I could go from being a black rabbit to being eaten, and I don’t want that. And besides, there’s no one there who hasn’t seen your acts, except for mosquitoes and gnats.”

“What, are you scared?” Earl Fleahula was surprised. “We thought we were friends with a brave rabbit, but you’re just a little coward.”

“I’m not a coward, but it’s very dangerous,” Yikes insisted.

And that’s when the fleas showed their true colors. They started laughing at the little rabbit, calling him a cowardly mouse. They said they thought Yikes was their friend, but in reality, he was just using their kindness and support. They said they would

have been better off befriending the hazel dormouse, who, of course, was a billion times braver than Yikes.

Yikes felt very hurt and upset. (And it's understandable, right, little one? It's sad when those we think are our friends start hurting us and making us do things we don't want to do. I hope your friends don't do that. And if friends start acting like fleas, maybe they aren't friends after all?)

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