



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Alta's Guinea Pigs

Mary Graham Bonner

Late one winter night, while Alta slept, a small voice came from outside the guinea pig box.

"Don't be afraid," it said. "I'm Peter Gnome. I've come to visit. I won't hurt you — I think you're all perfectly lovely."

This pleased Daddy Guinea Pig so much that he immediately invited the gnome to look at the children. Peter Gnome lifted each of the three little ones in turn, gently. They squealed in their sleep and curled back up again — no more than small warm fistfuls of fuzz. Peter couldn't make up his mind which was the loveliest, and said so.

This delighted both parents enormously. They had never been able to decide either.



Then Peter Gnome, in a friendly sort of way, asked: "Did you ever feel tempted to eat the babies when they were very young, Mr. Guinea Pig?"

There was a brief, thunderous silence.

"Feel like eating my own *children*?" Daddy Guinea Pig squealed, so loudly that Peter Gnome was quite certain Alta would wake up. "Never! Not for a single day! I have loved them from the very first, and more all the time!"

"He really has," said Mother Guinea Pig. "He's quite remarkable."

"He's devoted to us," chimed the little guinea pigs, sleepily.

"I'm delighted to hear it," said Peter Gnome. "Do forgive the question — I'd only heard a rumour."

"There are guinea pigs who do such things," Daddy Guinea Pig admitted, rather calmer now. "But I am not one of them. Never, never, *never*."

"Then I am honoured to have met you, sir," said Peter Gnome. And he left behind a cabbage leaf and the warm conviction that this was a very fine family indeed.

riri.com offers 3,000+ free stories — fairy tales, fables, bedtime stories, myths and more — for every age, in 13 languages, with free printable PDFs and often audio. Reading should be a right, not a privilege. Share riri.com and spread the joy of reading.

Instagram: @riri_reading · Pinterest: pinterest.com/riricom