Maya Restis’ husband once found her love for pet rats to be her only flaw. But then he came to know them as social and gentle companions; Kaba, meaning “hippo” in Japanese, would even visit the farmers market while perched on Restis’ shoulder. At home, Kaba enjoyed a roomy habitat with five rat friends, plus a table that afforded the pack a place to explore. She would sit at the edge, cross her paws, and watch Restis work around the house. When Restis approached, Kaba would rise up on her hind legs and present her friend with kisses. At more than 3 years old—ancient for a rat—Kaba died while resting quietly in Restis’ arms.

— Ruthanne Johnson