“Tiny”

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When I finally got my teeny bite of cheese, I had waited a total of forty-five minutes. I guess my one hundred thirty-two brothers and sisters were quite hungry.

I was the runt of my large mouse family. My name is Thomas Ignatius Nathanial Yusuf. Most people just call me Tiny. My parents were running out of names, since I was the second youngest in my family. For inspiration, my parents sent my older brother Swiss downstairs. He found out that the human lady who we let live in our house, Mrs. Bo, had once had a husband. His name was Thomas Ignatius Nathanial. If that was good enough for him, it was apparently good enough for me.

We have a long history with Mrs. Bo. My family moved into this house years ago. But it was only recently that Mrs. Bo discovered we were up here in the attic. After Mrs. Bo learned we were up here, she started capturing us, and that’s how the tradition began. Everyday Mrs. Bo comes up here, captures three of us and puts us in a bag. Then she brings us downstairs. When the doorbell rings she grabs the bag and gives it to a little boy, “For Dragon.” Then she shuts the door and goes back to watching TV.

Every day, we live in fear and hope we don’t get picked. We mice have long heard of myths of dragons that eat little furry creatures like us in one gulp.

I went to the water pipe that has a tiny hole in it just big enough for us to get water out of it. I heard a bit of scurrying behind me, but I didn’t think much of it as I assumed it was one of my many siblings, boy was I wrong. As soon as I got my last lick of water I was scooped up by a big furless paw. I squealed as I was dropped into a big, brown, paper bag. I landed on my back.

The bag had tiny holes in it so I could breathe and see glimpses of the outside world. The bag smelled of old vegetables and fruits. I also smelled the smallest bit of spices. Maybe some salt, pepper, and paprika.

Once I got up from my fall, I started to look around with the little light I had. I found some decaying vegetable leaves, a twist tie, and a few loose peppercorns. I picked up the peppercorns to see if they were edible but decided that since I just ate, I should save them for later.

I gathered up all I had found and put it in a small pile. I put the pepper on top of the leaves and the used the twist-tie to hold it all together.

After I was done making my little bag I went and sat down in the corner. I heard two more squeals as my older brother Swiss and my younger sister Mi-Mi were dropped into the bag. Swiss landed on his feet and looked ready to fight anyone he saw. When he saw me, his gaze softened.

When Mi-Mi landed she was not so lucky. She was the only mouse in the family smaller than me so of course she landed in the worst position, her tail. She stood up and had just enough time to say, “I’m okay!” before falling on her face. Me and Swiss rushed right to her side. Swiss grabbed her arm and pulled her up.

“Mi-Mi?” said Swiss, “Can you stand?”

“My balance is terribly off!” she said.

“Yikes!” I said when I looked at her tail. I really wished I hadn’t taken that extra gulp of water. The tail was bent at and unnatural forty-five-degree angle and was bright pink.

“Is it that bad?” she asked as she held onto Swiss’s shoulder for support.

“Yes” I said.

“It’s not that bad” offered Swiss, “But if I were you, I would try to eat something, cheese heals everything, especially swiss.”

“I have pepper!” I exclaimed.

“That’s not cheese, but I guess we can give it a try.” Swiss said reluctantly.

“Here” I said handing her one of my small black spheres of pepper. That left four pepper corns in the leaf sack. She popped the whole thing in her mouth.

“Blah!” she exclaimed as she spit the pepper out “What is this?!”

“It’s pepper?” I said not knowing what else to say.

“Pepper is bad!” Mi-Mi said.

All of a sudden, the bag was jostled around as we were carried downstairs from the attic. That’s when we heard it. There was a loud tune echoing through the whole house.

“Coming!” yelled Mrs. Bo in her raspy voice. We heard the creak of a door opening.

“Hi Mrs. Bo!” said a cheery voice of what seemed to be a little boy.

“Meh!” grumbled Mrs. Bo, “Take the mice and go feed them to Dragon!”

We got thrust into the little boy’s hands and heard the door slam behind us.

“Go to Mrs. Bo’s, she said. It’ll be fun, she said. It was *not* fun!” he said angrily. He continued this until he stormed into a large blue box with a point at the top.

The box, from what I could see, had holes in the side, so it must not have been a very nice box.

“Mom!” The boy called as he walked in, “Why can’t we just buy store-bought food for Dragon? Mrs. Bo hates me!”

“Now, now” said the boy’s mother, “It’s free, and you promised you would pay for everything by yourself. And that includes food, unless you don’t want that new X-box?”

“No! It’s okay. Mrs. Bo is just…prickly?” he said trying to take back his previous statement.

“Thank you, Conner!” said his mother, “Now go up and feed Dragon before he starves.”

“Okay, Mom” said Conner.

“Who is Dragon?” Mi-Mi whispered.

“I don’t know” I said.

“Shh! Be quiet!” whispered Swiss.

We were shaken around quite a bit as Conner pounded up the stairs.

Conner walked into a new room. The walls were painted blue with circles of all different colors on it. Some of the circles had rings, others just swirls of colors. There was one giant circle that looked like it was blazing. It was a bright canary yellow. On the ceiling there were stars and before Connor turned on the light, they had a slight glow to them.

In the corner of the room, there was a glass cage. Inside the cage was a green monster, known as an iguana. Tales of these creatures were told as horror stories to little mice back at the attic, and now I was seeing one with my own eyes! The iguana looked like a dragon that could quite literally eat your face off. I’m not going to lie…I peed a little at the sight of him.

“Hi Dragon!” said Conner as he walked toward the iguana. “Who’s a good boy?! Dragon is! Time for lunch.” Then he dumped all of us in with the green monster.

“RUN!” squeaked Swiss as he landed. He helped Mi-Mi to her feet, who landed right next to him, and ran under a rock out of reach of the Dragon.

I was not so lucky. I somehow landed on the complete opposite side of the glass cage. Once the iguana saw that he couldn’t easily get to the other two, he directed his attention on me.

“Nice Dragon” I said in a very shaky voice. I tried to sound calm, but my voice cracked with fear. I looked around. I saw a small hole in the lid of the cage but otherwise no other route of escape.

“Tiny!” squealed Mi-Mi, as the Dragon crept toward me. Swiss covered her mouth fast as to not direct any of the green monster’s attention on them.

I looked at the ground, all shredded grass – no use for that. Then I remembered, my pepper. Maybe if he thought it was food he would go after it. I threw one peppercorn as far as my tiny paws could manage. It landed behind small plant in the far corner.

The Dragon looked out over at the pepper, then his gaze returned back at me. Realizing that there was nowhere for me to go, he curiously went after the pepper.

As soon as he started to turn, I took off like a shot. He gulped the pepper down in one bite, sneezed, then turned back to where I had been standing. I was halfway to the rock, then a quarter. I dove under right as his jaws snapped at where my tail had been seconds before.

“Tiny!” exclaimed Swiss, who completely forgot that he was holding Mi-Mi in an upright position.

“Eek!” she cried as she toppled over.

“Oops! Sorry, Mi-Mi!” said Swiss rushing back to her side.

“It’s okay.” she said.

“We have got to get out of here” said Swiss as he eyed Dragon warily.

“I know” I said.

“But how?!” said Mi-Mi, “There’s no way to escape other than that little hole in the lid.”

“Then we get out through the lid” I said.

“But that’s impossible” said Swiss, “Unless you are keeping some secret from us and know how to fly!?”

“I know, but we can climb” I suggested.

“We can’t climb up this slick glass!” Swiss said critically.

“If we only had suction cups” I said.

“Well, we don’t” he said back sharply.

“Maybe jet-packs?!” I exclaimed.

“What?! Get serious Tiny!” he shouted back at me.

“Why are *you* being *so negative?!”* I yelled back at him.

“Guys!” said Mi-Mi as she stumbled between us, “We could use a rope!”

“We don’t have a rope” Swiss said as he rolled his eyes at his little sister.

“But we could *make* one!” she said with excitement in her voice.

“Out of what?” I asked.

She picked up some of the grass, then while leaning on Swiss’ shoulder, pointed at my twist-tie.

“We would do it tonight, so Conner couldn’t see us, and hopefully Dragon will be asleep. We’ll weave the grass together, at and the end we’ll put the twist tie! Then it’s simple: distract Dragon, throw the twist tie over the crack in the lid, climb out, then Ta-da! We’re free!” she said proudly.

“You make it sound so easy” I said. She smiled.

“If we’re going do this, we had better start weaving right away” Swiss said. As soon as it got dark, we all sat down and started to construct the rope.

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We weaved and weaved late into the night. Conner was fast asleep. I looked down at our make-shift rope. It was probably a foot long. I attached the twist-tie on the end, when I heard faint squeaks.

I looked outside of the cage into Conner’s room and saw our whole mouse family waiting to take us home!

“Look!” I whispered to my siblings.

“Mom, Dad?” squealed Mi-Mi.

“Let’s go!” said Swiss grabbing the rope and hoisting it over his shoulder, ready to throw.

“Wait!” I said, “How are we going to distract Dragon?”

“It’s fine, he’s still asleep” he replied. I groaned. Swiss didn’t have a plan and I had a bad feeling.

Swiss threw the rope with perfect accuracy. The twist-tie hooked around the hole on the very first try. Mi-Mi squealed with delight.

“Okay, me and Mi-Mi will go first!” Swiss said as he picked up his little sister. They darted all the way to the roped. Swiss clambered up masterfully, then motioned to Mi-Mi to grab on. Swiss pulled up the little mouse, then re-lowered the rope, and looked in my direction.

But just as I thought we were free and clear, Dragon stirred. The scurrying of my siblings woke the green monster and he now made his way towards the rope, curious at the new addition to his home.

I thought maybe I could use the pepper trick again, but I doubted he would let me go that easily. I tried picking up all three of my peppercorns, but my tiny paws could only hold one.

After what felt like hours of deliberation, I finally determined to make a run for it. I crouched low. In my best running position, I took off and nearly made it. With only inches to go, Dragon turned towards me, mouth open – I was running straight into Dragon’s mouth!

His eyes were wide, pupils dilated, as I stopped dead in my tracks, he watched my every move.

All I needed to do was distract him for one brief second and I could reach the rope and escape.

My first instinct was to retreat and regroup. Maybe I could just hide in this glass prison forever. Then I thought about Mi-Mi and Swiss, and all of my 130 brothers and sisters.

I knew I only had one option. I wound my arm up and threw the one and only peppercorn I had as hard as I could towards the Dragon’s only vulnerability, his eye. As soon as the small round sphere left my paw, I closed my eyes afraid of what would come next.

My heart pounded as I waited to be devoured. But instead of the sound of my bones being crunched in the jaws of that monster, I heard a slight whimper come from his direction. And when the dragon began to cry, I knew that I had won.