

My Tiny Mouse Heart

By Riley Smith

it is very important that the characters in this scene be very obviously mice. Anthropomorphized mice, sure, but mice nonetheless.

Scene: Mister Mouse sits at the breakfast table (no, this is not Mickey Mouse. Mouse is a very common last name in the animal world. Lots of mice go by Mouse. So he's not even related to Mickey. Mister Mouse, in fact, works at an insurance company. He does a reasonable job for reasonable pay and tries to keep his family reasonable) reading the paper and eating breakfast. His wife washes dishes or some other domestic nonsense in the background.

Mrs. Mouse: So what did the Doctor say?

Mister Mouse: *(not listening to her)* What? Oh, yes. Of course you look great today, honey.

Mrs: Mister Mouse, you are not listening. What did the Doctor say?

Mister Mouse: Oh. He said the problem was with my heart. I need to avoid stress or I'll have another attack.

Mrs: Was that all? He didn't tell you to stop drinking?

Mister: *(putting down his paper)* I had two beers at a barbeque, Mrs. Mouse. Two beers.

Mrs: I was just asking.

Mister Mouse picks his paper back up.

Mister: No, all he said was that I couldn't yell, or lose my temper, and that I shouldn't be startled.

Mrs: Oh. *(calling offstage loudly, scaring Mister Mouse into dropping his paper)* Kids?!!

Dina and Tommy enter. Tommy is the youngest, and Dina is a teenager. They greet their parents quickly, so as not to take too much time away from valuable jokes, but enough of a greeting to communicate their ages and family role.

Mrs: *(loudly whispering and gesturing toward Mr. Mouse)* Kids, your father just came back from the doctor.

Mister: I have heart problems, I'm not deaf.

Mrs: If you were deaf, I wouldn't need to whisper.

Tommy: (*childish panic*) Heart problems? Is dad going to die?

Dina: If dad dies, who gets his car?

Tommy: I don't want dad to die!!

Dina: Do you get it, or can I have it?

Mister: I'm not going to die. Mrs. Mouse, calm Tommy down. Dina, it'll be a cold day in hell before I let you drive my Mazda.

Tommy: Is dad going to hell?!!

Dina: He has missed church the last four Christmases.

Mrs: Daddy's not going to die, not for a long time yet, unless he keeps drinking.

Tommy: Dad drinks?!!

Mister: Honey, I don't think you're helping the situation.

Mrs: The point is, kids, we have to help daddy be really calm, because he's not going to be able to jump around and yell anymore, like he likes to.

Mister: I don't like to yell. Sometimes the situation just calls for it.

Tommy: Dad can't yell? I can't get in trouble? (*jubilantly*) I'm climbing on the chairs! (*proceeds to do so*)

Dina: He's not allowed to lose his temper? (*Dina joins Mister Mouse at the table*) You know that guy, Adrian? We're dating.

Mister: The rat?

Mrs: (*gasps*) Mister Mouse! Your language!

Mister: It's the name of his species. He's literally a rat.

Mrs: Still. It feels wrong to say it out loud.

Tommy: I'm going to climb on the kitchen counter!! (*does so*)

Mister: I am a mouse. If someone calls me "mouse", that's fine!

Mrs: That's different.

Mister: How? How is it different?

Mrs: Fine, fine, if you feel that way. It's not different.

Tommy: Can I say "rat"?

Mrs: No, dear.

Mister: The kid can say "rat" if he's talking about a "rat"!

Mrs: Your blood pressure, hon.

Dina: I can say rat because I'm dating one.

Mister: Not in my house!!

Mrs: Mr. Mouse!! Keep your temper!

Tommy: I'm going to climb on the table!!!

Tommy does so. Mister Mouse calms down, grabs his son, and helps him jump off the tabletop.

Mister: Dina, you will not see that boy anymore.

Dina: Yes, I will.

Mister: Dina! *(clutches at his chest. He stops and breathes)* Mrs. Mouse, handle this.

Mrs. Mouse has Dina stand up and looks her dead in the eye.

Mrs: You have to stop dating him, dear.

Dina: I can't. We're in love.

Mrs: Oh? Really? Well that's fine then.

Mrs. Mouse lets go of Dina.

Mister: Honey?

Mrs: What?

Mister: Do you want my little mouse heart to explode, dear? Is that your goal?

Mrs: No, my goal was to be a writer, but I dropped out of my MFA program to raise your kids.

Mister: Touché.

Tommy: Mommy didn't want us?!

Mister: *(this line means that only Tommy was not an accident)* No, she wanted you.

Dina: What the hell, dad?

Mister: I mean, she wanted you, too. After we sorted things out.

Tommy: I need a deeper, more meaningful way to express my angst! I'm going to go join a rock band! And grow my hair out!

Tommy runs out.

Dina: Well, this is all very pertinent, because the only reason I told you about Adrian at all is because I'm pregnant. And I'm keeping it.

Mister: WHAT?!!!!

Mister Mouse stands up, yelling, clutches his chest.

Mrs: That's wonderful, Dina! There is nothing so good for the heart as having a family.

Mister Mouse: That's it! I'm going with Tommy to join that rock band! If I'm going to die at forty, I want it to be high and on top of a pile of groupies!

Mister Mouse marches out.

Mrs: *(completely and utterly sincerely)* What a lovely family we are.

Dina and Mrs. Mouse put their arms around each other's shoulders.

Dina: If it's a girl, I'm going to name her after you, mom.

Mrs: Oh, honey... not if it's half-rat.

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