

A Love Story in 1145 Words

By

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Sometimes it's hard being a mouse. Especially one whose very existence is one of the most closely guarded secrets in the world, and all this despite the fact that I wear one of its most recognizable faces. Yet everyday I walk around out in public having my picture taken, as anonymous as I am famous.

Humans.

Parents think I'm just a man in a costume. It's only children who see me for the mouse I really am. But as it is with Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny, the sparkle in their little eyes will eventually fade with their slow but inevitable march into adulthood. It's hard to watch the light fade, even harder for Minnie than for myself.

Neither of us understand what happened in 1928 back in Marceline, Missouri. Like the victims of some bewildering science experiment gone wrong, almost overnight we grew and grew, so big we couldn't fit into our home in the garage wall anymore. The boy who lived in the house found us. Little did I know he'd become my best friend ... and at times my worst enemy. He hid us, sheltered us, taught us English. Eventually when he and the world were much older I asked him why Minnie and I couldn't go out into the world for ourselves, come out into the light from the shadowy world of pseudo-animation we inhabited. He laughed a funny little laugh. "Because they don't call biographers creative geniuses," was his only reply.

Yet here we are, Minnie and I, our 'biographer' long gone, what should have been our own natural life expectancy long gone as well. Unlike him, we'd become ageless, immortal, doomed to the wonder and horror of this human world, marching through time as its silent witnesses. Only two humans, the top company executives, actually know of our existence, talk about

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awkward dinner parties. Two humans, two mice. But who else can we invite? My wife loves to cook so I endure it as I would anything for her.

Walking through the tunnels they look at me and wonder why I haven't taken my head piece off, but no one gives it a second thought. When I'm alone I duck down the dark passageway and through the hidden door.

"You're home," Minnie sighs.

"Do I ever really leave?"

She sighs again then smiles as she takes off her apron. "Anything interesting happen today?"

"My handler thought I was a method actor again."

She laughs that adorable high pitched laugh she became famous for. My companion for over eighty years, she's still as lovely today as the day I spotted her across the garage floor. I'd given her my cheese. I'd still give her my cheese. Even God's oddest blessings are just that, blessings.

"So what would you like to do after supper?" I ask.

"One of the pyrotechnicians was telling me they're changing the fireworks up tonight."

"Minnie, how many times do I have to tell you to steer clear of the humans after hours."

"But he was so sweet." She bats those impossibly long eyelashes my way knowing full well I'm helpless against them.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah." When I drop down in my chair and flip on ESPN, she walks over to block my view of the television, hands on her hips, a smile playing at the corners of her mouth.

I cave. Nothing new there.

"Okay, okay."

Three hours later we're strolling down Main Street watching the fireworks for the ten-thousandth time. She was right, they'd used more pink. Beside me she squeezes my hand. I look her way and our eyes meet.

We were in heaven.

We were in prison.

But the bars were pink like the fireworks bursting overhead and in my heart.

My love.

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My life.

My Minnie.

“Can we take a picture with the two of you?” a mother asks as she shoves her children and reluctant husband in front of us.

Even from behind the expressionless public mask of our features, I can see Minnie roll her eyes, yet she strikes an adorable pose with the clueless humans.

Feeling a tug on the sleeve of my tuxedo jacket I look down into the sweet little face of a rosy cheeked girl. “Are you the real Mickey?” she asks in a hush. Leaning down, I cup my hand to her ear and whisper. “Yes, as a matter of fact, I am.”

She giggles and runs to her mother.

“What did he say?” she asks her daughter as she hands her back the balloon with my wife’s face on it.

“He said he’s the real Mickey! I knew it the minute I saw him!”

“I’m sure he is,” the mother replies as she dismisses the wisdom of her small one, dragging her behind her as they head towards the castle.

When I feel Minnie take my hand and her head come to rest on my shoulder, I whisper “You’re right.”

“Not that I’m disagreeing with you, but about what?”

“It’s good to get out sometimes ... when we’re off the clock.”

“That would imply we’re getting paid.”

I turn and take her hand as we start back towards our underground burrow. “Maybe we could invite the humans over to dinner again next week. I know it freaks them out a little to sit at our table, but maybe if they stopped by more often, they’d get used to us ... you know, a pair of giant mice that speak English better than they do.”

“Oh, you!” She playfully swats my arm. “Alright, I’ll call Fred’s secretary and set something up. I’ve just the recipe I want to try out on them.”

For a moment we walk in the blissful silence of two lovers who know each other better than they know themselves.

Then I stop. “Should we invite Goofy?”

“Lord, no! Mice, they can handle, that half man – half dog government science experiment reject they’d just go running to the hills from. No, as far as he’s concerned, let the humans live with their illusions.”

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I laugh. I mean how could I not. “Just as well, now that I think about it, I think he’s in New York for a dog show. There may have been a Pekinese involved.”

“Will that . . . man ever learn?” she laughs. “Alright, four for dinner it is.”

“Why couldn’t Pluto have been real instead of him? I’d have liked to have had a dog.”

Again she smacks me on the arm as we disappear behind a door leading down into the tunnels.

Tomorrow I’ll get up and repeat today, just like I repeated last month and last year. We’re changeless, ageless. How long will we walk this earth? These things used to bother me, that is until I realized eternity would never be enough so long as Minnie was always by my side.