

Gingers Wood.

Harold's Headboard Mice.



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In the spring of 1943, in the time of the second world war, when everyone wanted cheerful news instead of the bad, there, in a small Welsh village, in a cosy cottage among many others, lived an old man called Harold.

He was a cheerful man who always wore a flat cap, glasses, had thick grey hair and always, no matter what, had a friendly smile for everyone. Everyone who knew him loved him very much, Harold may have seemed happy to everyone but inside his home he had no one and was rather lonely, he had never been lucky enough to have a wife but was very much in love with Miss Susie Stevens from down the road who had also never had a husband, she was also secretly in love with Harold. They had felt that way since primary school but because of their terrible shyness they never had the courage to be honest and tell each other.

Harold thought he lived alone but he had four very small and very secretive admirers, they lived in the hollow base of Harold's bed, and got in and out through a small hole behind the headboard, they were mice.

*Poppin and Poppy who were husband and wife, and
Polker and Penny who were also husband and wife.*

Their natural home was the woodland just outside the village of course, but they had moved to Harold's home a year ago when he kept visiting the wood one summer for blackberries, they loved the stranger who looked so friendly, so much that they leapt into his bag one morning and were carried off to his cottage to make a new home.

They were quiet and clean, Harold never minded, he did know they were there, but he never saw them. He left biscuits out in the night and when they were gone in the morning he knew that his headboard mice had taken them.



Sometimes late at night he could swear he smelt the smell of sweet, hot, freshly cooked apple pies rising up through the bed, but of course each time he simply shrugged his large shoulders and fell back to sleep assuming it was just his mind playing tricks on his old nose.



Life was great and cheerful for the mice until one evening, before heading off to bed Polker sneaked quietly past the living room to join the others in the bed, but as he did he heard Harold sniffing to himself.

“I wish I had someone ... everyone needs company ... and I have no one!”

He watched him wiping his eyes with a hanky as he sat alone by the fire.

“Poor Harold.”

He squeaked quietly then rushed off quickly up the stairs and into the base of the bed.

“We must find Harold a wife!”

“Find Harold a wife?”

Penny repeated,

“Yes as soon as possible.”

“Don't you think he would have found one himself if he wanted one?”

“No Penny that's just it, he's too shy, I just watched him crying because he's so lonely.”

“Really?”

“Yes he's too kind for us to watch him suffer we have to help him in anyway we can.”

“All right but who?”

Polker scratched his head,

“Susie ... that woman Susie, we have all talked about how red his face gets when he talks to her.”

“Ok so what do we do, how do we get her attention?”

“Mmmm ... I don't know let's think about it.”

Now mice have very small brains and something a human could think up in half an hour would take a mouse at least a couple of weeks, even months , I remember my dear friend Tommy Tumble mouse took a whole year looking for his shoes, until one morning he suddenly thought to check his feet and

there they were exactly where he put them a year ago, the left shoe on the left foot and the right shoe on the right foot. I'm afraid all mice get confused with some things, unfortunately their brains are just too small to deal with such big problems and this was a very big problem indeed!

Harold's mice sat for months twiddling their whiskers and trying to think of ...

“How on earth can we get them together?”



The confusion of hard thinking went on for two long years, until one day, Polker sat up in his chair and said loudly as the others sat playing cards and nibbling a chocolate biscuit.

“A LETTER !”

“What was that ?”

Penny asked as her round ears pricked with interest, as she sat knitting a long cosy tail warmer for Polker.



“A letter, we shall send her a letter.”

“How? we cant write.”

“No but one of the attic rats can. I remember meeting him and he told me about it, we will go and see the attic rats.”

“All right then Polker if you insist.”



“Bring one of the biscuits, rats don't do something for nothing, he will expect paying”.

Later when they stood in front of Roller Rolling rat as he scratched his ear, they told him what he would have to write but he wasn't to happy about the idea.

“I mean, what have the humans ever done for us old boy, apart from frightening us and hating us at every chance they get”.

“Yes but Harold is not like the others, he's very kind he would never hurt anything he cares too much for life to dis-respect it in such ways”.

Roller thought about it then he picked up a pen from behind him and started to scribble on a piece of paper ...

Dear Susie,

I would very much appreciate it, if you could find time to join me tomorrow for a delicious Christmas dinner, I look forward to seeing you.
Harold.

They then put it in an envelope and sealed it before heading out into the night and leaving it on her doorstep, then they all quietly sneaked back to bed for a relaxing and peaceful sleep.

The next day, as they sat watching him in the garden, there was a shy knock at the door, when Harold opened it, there was Susie holding the note, before she could say anything, Harold asked,

“Would you like to come in?”

She entered the house and sat down, Harold then made some tea, she didn't have to mention the note, soon enough she put it in her cardigan pocket and forgot about it. They didn't speak very much at all for the first half an hour. The mice worried it was going badly until suddenly Harold turned to her and said quickly ...

“Would you marry me ? ... I'm sorry I've been needing to ask you for years but I was always to nervous.”

“Yes!”

She answered with a smile.

“You will ?”

“Yes Harold I've needed you to ask me for years.”

The mice danced around on the window sill with joy, then later watched them both sit down to enjoy a wonderful Christmas dinner. Five months later on the 8th May 1945 they were married in the local church and the whole village turned up to show their happiness for them. The headboard mice watched the celebration from afar with their little bundles of belongings, they had decided to go back home to their families, parents, brothers and sisters who had not seen them for the last 3 years. They wiped their tiny happy tears from their sweet little cheeks and scurried off towards the wood.

As they left the village they realised it was a double celebration because all through the village the people where cheering and repeating the sentence ...

“The War is over!”



The end.