

Gingers Wood Tyler No-tail Mouse



K. L. Seal

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Dedicated to the bright memory of Elwyn John Morris my dear grandfather who in my youth completely filled my mind with inspiration and a strong love of writing.

This is one of many stories about a very dear friend of mine. Your parents may think it's a bit odd for me to have a friend who's a mouse... but you understand don't you children?

I thought you would.

This event occurred a little more than a week ago. The marvellous event was their magnificently magical New Year's party. I saw the New Year in with my dearest and oldest little friend Mr Benny Badger. It was quiet and simple.



Benny prepared some biscuits and hot milk which we enjoyed by the warm fire, then we listened to some of our favourite songs at midnight. Even Freddy fox paid us a visit for a forkful or two of Benny's delightful blueberry pie.



But the mice all had something more spectacular in mind, something they did every year in a large ball room underground. They got together from all different parts of the woodland and celebrated into the night. The beautiful dresses and tuxedos were a wonderful sight and, if I say so myself, lady mice look so much more beautiful in dresses than humans could ever do.

Tyler arrived at the door with his wife Milly merry mouse, just in time for the large banquet to begin. The door mouse called Doddy, whose job that night was simply to stand at the door and welcome each mouse who arrived, gave them a hazelnut shell of warm and sweet honey, then he smiled and wished them a good evening.



They made their way down the long staircase and entered the hall, and soon began to tuck into all the delightful fruits and nuts that lay spread over the long narrow table, as did all the other jolly and friendly mice.



The orchestra mice played happily on their tiny violins, which they had had restrung by Susie spider earlier that morning. As the six male mice voice choir sang a perfect harmony, the sound they all created together was just perfect. Soon it was midnight at the ball and the mice all jumped around and celebrated cheerfully. Shortly after they all headed their separate ways home. Of course, Milly and Tyler came to my cottage to tell us everything before they went home, and all Tyler seemed to do was complain about the fact there was no jam.

“No jam, Miss Gracie... not one single spoonful of strawberry jam insight... not one!” He was not impressed. You see, like Freddy fox Tyler had a terrible sweet tooth and loved the sticky and sweet taste of jam very much. Unfortunately out of all the wonderful foods Benny badger made, he never once made strawberry jam and so Tyler ever hardly got to taste any.

He did, however, know where he could find some. Just outside the wood, in a small farmhouse, lived a farmer called Franky. He had no children and lived alone, and made jam - not just any old jam, but strawberry, Tyler’s favourite.



“Mmmm... fresh strawberry jam,” Tyler said as he woke the next morning, he licked his tiny lips as he thought of it. He then threw off his handkerchief blanket as he climbed out of his comfortable straw bed, opened his wardrobe and quickly chose a blue button up jumper and a red scarf dressing himself in a hurry, he then rushed through the long narrow corridors towards the living room, as the excitement built up inside him.



But there in the living room with her back towards him stood Milly, taking off her small red gloves. She had just returned from her morning stroll to collect a few small flowers for her little pink flowerpot, which had been sitting empty on the dining table. She had not seen him and he quietly tried to sneak past her. It paid off and he ran off into the wood, heading towards the farm house.



Soon after he scurried quickly past Freddy fox who was heading to Benny badger's set for a small breakfast of blackberries and honey.



"What are you doing out this time of morning then Tyler?" Freddy shouted to him, trying to catch up with the fast little mouse.

Tyler was so excited that he almost didn't hear dear Freddy, but suddenly he turned back and waited for him while he asked, "Hummm? Oh... well, don't tell Milly, but I'm going to the farmer's cottage for some jam."

"Jam? Is jam sweet-tasting, Tyler?"

Tyler could see in Freddy's face that he was anxious to try some, so the sneaky mouse put on a little show for Freddy waving his arms around with excitement.

"Well, of course it is. It's just about the sweetest, tastiest mouthful of joy you could possibly imagine Freddy."

"It's really that good?"

Oh yes, absolutely."

Tyler figured that if Freddy would go with him to the farm house, then he could be certain that Freddy would not run off straight back to Milly to tell her what her sneaky husband was getting up to.

Because unlike Benny, who always kept quiet about other people's business, Freddy was the gossip of Gingers Wood and put the old 'sly' fox name to shame as he could not under any circumstances keep a secret. Still, he had always had a good and caring heart.

"OK well let's go. I'll come with you before I go to Benny's set."

“Alright Freddy, you won’t be sorry.”

Back at Tyler’s home in the roots of an old oak tree, Milly merry mouse began to wonder where her husband was.



“Where on earth is he? He’s normally out of bed by now and eaten some breakfast, oh, dear, dear, dear.” She entered his bedroom to see nothing but an empty nest. “Oh, well where on earth...?” She scratched her head as she thought, then she noticed his little red scarf and jumper missing from his wardrobe.

“Oh, dear, dear, dear, he’s gone off to that farmhouse again - and the farmer’s home on Sundays!” She quickly put on her coat and rushed off into the woods towards the farmhouse.



Tyler and Freddy stood looking up at the back door of the farmhouse, then Freddy opened the old wooden door and they entered the storage room filled with sacks of potatoes and tinned foods.

“Ah ha!” Tyler whispered when he saw the jam jars up on the work top. “Lift me up, Freddy.”



He lifted Tyler up and placed him on the work top then Freddy picked himself one of the



jars and sat down by some potato sacks to enjoy it. Tyler leapt up onto the jar of his choice and tore at the fabric top, before ripping it off completely.

“Mmmmm... you’re right Tyler, it is delightful.”

“I told you, Freddy.”

Tyler then stuck his head into the jam jar wiggling his beautiful long tail happily as he enjoyed his treat.

SNAP!!

“OUCH!”

“What’s wrong Tyler?” Freddy asked, confused with the fuss. Tyler looked behind him to see an upside down sprung mouse trap on the work top.

“What on earth?”

Suddenly the door swung open and there stood the tall farmer with his shot gun.

“Hello vermin! Enjoying ourselves are we?”

“Tyler you said he wouldn’t be home!”

The farmer aimed his gun at Freddy, who stood frozen and terrified. He almost pulled the trigger before suddenly Tyler leapt onto the farmer’s face, distracting him, while Freddy slipped quickly through his legs and out the door. Tyler then followed him. They ran as fast as they could, listening to the gun shots behind them. Suddenly one of the shots fired hit Freddy in the back left leg, before they both slipped into the safety of the wood where they both stood still, trying to catch their breath and calm themselves.

“Well... I think we’ll both agree... we won’t be doing that again.”

“No, Freddy, absolutely not.”

The wood around them was suddenly filled with the voice of Milly merry mouse as she yelled out for her husband.

“Tyler... Tyler! Oh dear, dear... TYLER!”

“I’m here, what are you yelling about?”

“Oh dear... thank goodness, I thought you would be killed by now, I surely did!”

“No, I’m fine.”

Suddenly Milly noticed something terrible about Tyler. “Oh... Tyler where on earth has your lovely long tail gone?”

Tyler walked around in a circle, looking over his shoulders, but there was no tail. It lay caught in the sprung mouse trap at the farmhouse. Later they came to my cottage for some tea. Tyler was in tears most of the evening. I took out the pellets in Freddy’s leg and dressed both his

and Tyler wounds. It was at that time as Tyler cried into my little handkerchief that a knock came at my door. When I opened it, I was smiled at by a face I loved dearly, Benny badger.

“Hello Miss, is Tyler here? I couldn’t find him at his home.”

“Yes... Tyler! Benny wants to see you out here.” I called into the house for him and he slowly made his way out to us with his head lowed and sniffing softly.

“Hello Benny, I’m too upset to talk to you today. I think I’ll just be going home now... sorry.”

“Wait a moment Tyler, I have something to show you.” Benny then pulled a silky sheet off his wheelbarrow to reveal many large jars of strawberry jam.



“Ohhhh,” Tyler said surprised as a small sweet smile spread across his little face.

“I learned how to make it for you Tyler, because I know how much you love jam.”

“Oh thank you Benny, thank you.” He climbed into the wheelbarrow and studied them all closely.

“Well Benny, you sure cheered him up.”

“Yes, I thought it would make him happy, Miss.”

Later we all sat down and enjoyed some jam on toast and tea, as we talked over the strange evening. It took Tyler quite some time to get over the loss of his tail but Benny’s jam sure helped him along the way.

A couple of days later, I happened to pass the farmers cottage on my way to the village and noticed something strange on the back door. When I got closer I realised it was Tyler's tail pinned to the door, with a note from the farmer addressed to all the - what he called - vermin of the wood. The note read:

To all the horrible little vermin of Gingers Wood. This is just a small example of what is to come your way should any of you try to steel my beautiful jam again.

Signed, Franky farmer.

I didn't really know what to make of that small threat, but I know one thing for sure, I shall be making sure that no little beautiful furry friend of mine will ever go near that unwelcoming farmhouse again.



The End