

THE RESCUE

Carmen Saptouw

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Rufus was a young mouse who lived with his mom, dad and little sister in a beautiful home in the woods. It was a peaceful place and they lived happily together, but then it all changed. One morning Rufus went to pick some berries for lunch, but on his return he discovered the home he once knew was ruined... and his family was gone. Poor Rufus broke down in tears, afraid that he had lost his family forever, but then he heard a voice from above. "Don't cry little mouse, your family is still alive." He looked up and saw a sparrow.

"The farmer destroyed your home and took your family," she continued. "Do you know where he took them?" Rufus asked wiping his tears. "My first guess would be to his farm," answered the sparrow. Rufus was relieved that his family was alive, but he knew this would not be the case for too long. "I have to save them! Which way did they go Sparrow?" asked Rufus. "He went in that direction," she said as she lifted her wing and pointed to her left. "The farmer is dangerous, I do not recommend that you take this journey alone," the sparrow continued. "Thank you," said Rufus and he ran in the direction shown by the sparrow.

After running for quite some time Rufus felt tired and his legs grew heavy. He looked at the road ahead; it stretched for miles in front of him. I can't stop now ... I have to keep on going, he thought. He was so weary that he didn't notice the hole in the road; he stumbled and collapsed from exhaustion. Suddenly something cool dripped down his whiskers. He opened his eyes and saw a beautiful girl mouse. He looked at her in confusion. "There is no need to be frightened. My name is Anna and I thought you might like some water," she said and handed him a leaf filled with water droplets.

He took the water and gulped it down. "My cousin and I were walking home when we saw you fall down. The holes are always where you don't expect it to be," said Anna and she smiled. When he didn't respond she asked, "You looked in a hurry; where were you going?" Before Rufus could answer, her cousin interrupted and asked, "I think the question is what is he running from?" Rufus explained what happened to his family. Anna immediately offered to help, but her cousin was resistant. "We don't know him Anna! We should leave," said Pete. Anna ignored his comment. "This is my cousin, Pete, excuse his manners. We are actually on our way to his father's home, where my aunt is preparing supper. Would you like to join us?" asked Anna. "Thank you but I can't. I have to help my family," answered Rufus. "Well you can't help them on an empty stomach, now can you? And maybe my uncle can assist you," said Anna. "Anna let us not interrupt a mouse on a mission. He needs to get going and so do we; my parents are waiting," impressed Pete. "I'm sure your parents would be proud to hear how you have helped a fellow mouse," she replied. "Now come on it's almost supper time," she said as she held her hand out to Rufus. Once he was out of the hole the three mice walked towards Pete's home.



Pete's parents were very friendly. Rufus instantly felt welcome in their home. After a meal and a night's sleep he woke up feeling refreshed. He walked to the kitchen and found Pete's mom cutting cheese for breakfast. "Morning my dear did you sleep well?" she asked. "Yes thank you ma'am, but I have to get going I have to find my family," answered Rufus. "That might not be a good idea son. Why don't you rather stay here with us? It's so much safer," she suggested. "My wife is right, Rufus, we have heard terrible tales about the farmer and you might be too late," said Pete's father. "The tales don't matter, they are my family and I can't just give up on them," said Rufus and he walked outside the house to the ground above.

"You know, my parents are right," he heard Pete's voice behind him. "There have been terrible tales and not just one; there have been different sources from butterflies and birds. If you haven't noticed, the ones I mentioned have wings. The four -legged ones don't stand a chance! And another important fact, how will you get there if you don't have directions?" Pete continued. "Stop it, Pete," said Anna as she approached them. "Don't listen to him, Rufus, these are all just little obstacles and there is always a way to overcome them," she continued. "You are crazy, cousin," said Pete. "No I am not. There have been four -legged animals that have escaped the farm," she continued. "Who?" asked Pete. "I'm talking about the one without a tail," Anna answered. "You know that he is just a story teller," Pete said dismissively. "No he is not and I am sure he will be able to help us with directions to the farm," Anna argued. "Well there is only one way to find out if she's wrong, Pete," said Rufus. "How?" asked Pete. "You will have to take me to him," said Rufus. "We can't just leave, what about my mom and dad?" asked Pete. "Tell them we are going to show Rufus around the area to calm him down," said Anna. "That is not a bad idea, cousin," said Pete and he ran back into the house. Once he returned the three mice walked towards the squirrel's house.

After some time Pete said, "Maybe we should take a break." "There is no need, we have reached our destination," said Anna thrilled as she pointed at a nut tree. Rufus looked around. "I see nuts and birds on the branches, but not a sign of a squirrel," said Rufus. "He is not here," said Pete. "We have tried; let's go back home," he continued. "Not so fast," Anna said as she disappeared around the tree. "Where are you going?" Pete asked. When she didn't answer, they decided to follow her. "Look there is the door to his home," she said excitedly. They looked up and saw a hole in the trunk of the tree. Anna took one of the nuts on the ground and threw it at the door. It didn't reach the hole, but it made a hollow sound against the tree trunk. "If he is inside, that noise will definitely get his attention. Now stop standing there and please help me!" demanded Anna. They picked up some nuts and followed Anna's lead.

Moments later they heard an irritated voice coming from the hole. "Who disturbs my nap?" It was the squirrel. "Down here," Anna shouted. "We have come for your advice. You see we have to make a journey to the farm to save my friend's family. They have been captured and we wondered if you would aid us on our journey and provide us with the directions to the farm?" she continued. "Don't be fools; give up your silly mission now. The farm is not a place for mice," the squirrel answered. "But my family, I need to save them!" cried Rufus. "You might have to ask yourself what you will be saving. By now it's probably too late for your family to be saved," said the squirrel.

"You said 'probably' so they might still be alive. I will not give up, I have to try to save them," said Rufus. "Look at me mouse," the squirrel said as he climbed out of his hole and jumped on to one of the branches. Rufus noticed that the squirrel didn't have a tail. "This is what happened to me on the farm. Do you want to share the same fate?" the squirrel said seriously. "No, but I

know I can help them if I can just get to the farm,” said Rufus. The squirrel looked at Rufus and knew that he wouldn’t change his mind. “You are persistent little one,” said the squirrel. “I don’t think you are going to convince him,” said the sparrow sitting on the branch below the squirrel. “I met him yesterday before his journey started. He shows persistence and courage, and I think you should assist them,” she continued. After some time the squirrel finally said, “Fine, I will give you directions to the farm, but don’t say I didn’t warn you.” He climbed down the tree to meet them on the ground and provided the necessary information. “Now you better be on your way if you want to reach the farm before night time. And remember you need to find the white building; that is where you will find your family mouse,” said the squirrel. “We must try to do more for them, Jack,” the sparrow said as the mice departed. “I know, I haven’t seen such determination in a long time,” said the squirrel. “I will meet with my brothers and see what I can do,” said the sparrow as she spread her wings and departed from her branch.



When they reached the turn off to Pete's house, Rufus turned around and said, "Thank you for all your help, but it's time for me to leave." "What do you mean?" asked Pete confused. "I have to start the road to the farm," said Rufus. "Yes we know, but do you intend to go on this journey on your own?" asked Anna. "Yes," said Rufus, "I can't expect you to put your lives in danger for my family." "But what about your life, Rufus?" asked Anna. "She is right you know, you stand a better chance with the two of us by your side," said Pete. Anna looked at Pete in amazement. Rufus wanted to disagree, but then he remembered the words of the sparrow. "You are right," he answered, "this is a journey I can't take on alone." "Since that has been settled, shall we get going? The stream is still miles away," said Anna as she started walking.

The wall of the farm became visible as they reached the stream. We are so close, now to find a way across, thought Rufus as he walked towards the water. "Where are you going, Rufus? We can't swim remember it's not something mice do," he heard Pete shout from behind. "He is right, there is no way we can cross," said Anna in agreement. "We must find a way! We can't give up now," said Rufus determined. He looked at the stream and walked to where the water reached the grass. He lifted his foot to place it in the water.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you," he heard. On the water, close to the grass, he saw a grasshopper on a leaf. "The stream can't be trusted," the grasshopper continued as he jumped off the leaf onto the grass. "I have to get to the other side," said Rufus desperately. "Why would you do that, the only thing on the other side is the farm," said the grasshopper. "That is exactly where I want to be," answered Rufus. "You know animals don't usually volunteer to go to the farm," said the grasshopper.

Rufus explained to him what had happened to his family. "Now do you understand why I need to cross the stream?" he asked. "I will assist you on your journey," said the grasshopper. "You will?" asked Rufus surprised. "Yes, you are a brave mouse and I admire that." "How will you help us?" asked Anna as she reached Rufus and the grasshopper. "I travel the stream all the time. All you will need is a leaf and a few twigs for steering purposes," said the grasshopper confidently. "Wait a minute; you want us to cross the stream on a leaf?" asked Pete. "Yes it can work. I saw him do it," said Rufus. "No way," said Pete, "this time count me out," he continued. "Come on Pete, if the grasshopper can do it, why can't we?" asked Anna. "Because we are mice, we drink water, but we don't cross it," said Pete. "Fine you can stay Pete, but I am going with Rufus," said Anna.

"Now that that has been settled, let us find you what you need to make the crossing," said the grasshopper. Close to where they were standing, the grasshopper saw a palm tree leaf that had recently fallen from a branch. "That is perfect," said the grasshopper. "Now grab a few twigs over there and place it on the leaf," he continued. The two mice moved quickly to gather the twigs. "Now we have to pull the leaf towards the stream," said the grasshopper. "It's a bit heavy," said Anna. "Pete, if you don't mind, your assistance would be appreciated," said the grasshopper. Pete grabbed the leaf and helped them move it closer to the water. "This is absurd," he grumbled. Anna, Rufus and the grasshopper climbed on the leaf. "Pete, a little push please," said the grasshopper. He gave them a push and the leaf moved on to the water.

"Good bye, Pete, we'll see you soon," said Anna. Pete looked at the leaf as it started to move. He watched Anna and Rufus wave at him. He closed his eyes and sprinted. He jumped and landed on the leaf. The others looked at him astonished, but all he said was, "just hand me a twig already," and then started to paddle.

The grasshopper hopped to the end of the leaf and placed himself on the stem. He was watching the stream very closely guiding them with each stroke. They were almost halfway across the stream Rufus realized as he paddled. "Don't be unnerved, but the water looks like it is becoming a bit more rocky," he heard the grasshopper. "What do you mean?" asked Rufus, but then he felt a bump. They almost lost their balance. "Steady now just keep on rowing, we are almost on the other side," said the grasshopper. The next knock of water was much more powerful. Anna lost her balance and fell into the stream. "Anna!" they shouted simultaneously. Rufus's first instinct was to jump after her, but Pete stopped him. "Not a good idea Rufus," said Pete holding his arm tightly. The grasshopper moved to the side where Anna was last seen. He looked into the water, but there was no sign of her.

"Boys I need you to focus grab your twigs and keep on steering or we will all find ourselves sharing Anna's fate," he commanded. "We can't just leave her," said Rufus concerned. "I know Rufus, but there is nothing we can do, we can't swim. We will have to wait and see, but for now the grasshopper is right, we have to keep on steering," said Pete calmly. Reluctantly Rufus took his twig, his eyes still fixed on the spot where Anna was last seen, but there was no movement other than the current.

Steering the leaf had become more difficult without Anna, but they kept on. "Faster boys we are going off our course," shouted the grasshopper panicked. Rufus noticed something in the corner of his eye. He realized it was Anna appearing on the surface of the water. "Look its Anna!" he shouted excitedly. She was lying flat on her back floating on the water. "How can that be?" asked Pete. Then they saw a grey surface underneath her. "It's the stream fish," shouted the grasshopper. "I don't think she is breathing," said Rufus. He threw his twig down and moved towards her. "What are you doing?" he heard the grasshopper shout as the leaf tilted. Rufus lost his balance and rolled in the other direction. He was reaching the edge of the leaf, but then the leaf balanced itself and started moving forward. Pete and Rufus look at each other confused, but then the grasshopper shouted, "It is another stream fish. You are a blessing dear one!"

The fish took them to the shore. Rufus jumped off the leaf as soon as they were close to dry land and ran on all four feet to Anna. The fish moved its body sideways and Anna slid from its back on to the grass. Rufus watched as the fish moved backwards, its body now slightly in the water. Anna was now lying on her side, her little body still motionless. He couldn't help himself, he was suddenly consumed with sadness. He felt an arm on his shoulder. "All is not lost yet Rufus, look closely," said Pete. He noticed she was still breathing. Suddenly Anna coughed and released water. "She's alive!" the grasshopper shouted. Anna opened her eyes. "Anna, you scared us," Rufus said feeling relieved. "What happened?" she asked. "The stream fish saved our lives," said the grasshopper. "What can we do to thank you?" asked the grasshopper turning his focus back to the two fish. "There is no need. We heard about the mouse and his journey when he spoke to you on the other side of the stream. We are grateful that we could assist you, but it is time for us to return to the water. Goodbye and good luck," said the fish and then they disappeared under the water.



“Rufus you have reached your destination. Follow me and I will take you to a gap in the wall which will allow you to enter the farm unnoticed,” said the grasshopper. “Anna will you be able to continue?” asked Rufus. “Yes, I am feeling better,” she replied. Rufus and Pete helped Anna to get on her feet and together they walked towards the gap in the wall. “Look! I can see the white building,” said Pete as he peeped through the gap. “You’re right, it’s not that far,” said Anna and she crawled through the gap. Pete followed her.

“Grasshopper will you be coming with us?” asked Rufus. “Unfortunately not, this is where I leave you my friends,” said the grasshopper. “Thank you, Grasshopper,” said Rufus. “It was my pleasure and I wish you well on your journey,” he replied and hopped off. Rufus then crawled through the gap in the wall. On the other side Pete and Anna were waiting for him. “Look Rufus it’s the white building,” said Anna. “We should get a closer look,” he replied. Pete and Anna nodded in agreement. The three mice ran towards the building. Rufus could see their destination getting closer and he couldn’t help but smile. “Wait!” said Pete out loud. They all stopped suddenly. “What?” Anna asked. “The door knob moved,” answered Pete. “Let’s be safe and hide behind that crate,” said Rufus.

Safely behind the crate they saw the door open and it revealed a human. “That must be the farmer,” whispered Rufus. They watched him lock the door. “Look...!” whispered Anna frightened. Right behind him was a white, fat furry cat. “A cat!” Pete panicked. “Keep your voice down. Do you want him to hear us?” said Anna firmly. The cat and farmer walked to a tractor parked outside the white building. The farmer climbed on the tractor, but the cat stopped suddenly. It sniffed the air and started moving towards the crate. The three mice stood dead still, not a breath left their nostrils. The cat was coming closer.

The tractor’s engine suddenly started. The cat stopped, turned around and followed the farmer onto the tractor. A sigh of relief came from behind the crate. “That was really close!” said Anna. “Thank goodness it got distracted, otherwise we would have been mice pudding,” said Pete. “The coast is clear, we can go to the building now,” said Rufus. When they reached the door they saw a tiny door at the bottom. “That’s perfect, we can fit through it. Pete, will you keep watch while we search inside?” asked Rufus. “Sure thing,” answered Pete. Anna and Rufus disappeared through the door. “It’s cold in here,” said Anna shivering. “Look,” said Rufus as he pointed to rows of cages. There were two levels of rows. “Rufus, you check each cage at the bottom and I will check the top shelf,” said Anna. Before Rufus could answer she moved toward one of the cages and climbed it. Rufus looked inside each of the bottom shelves, but found nothing. “They are all empty,” said Rufus.

“Hello,” he heard. It was Anna he realized. When he looked up to the top shelf he saw she was standing by a cage. “Don’t be afraid; we are here to help. I am Anna and down there is Rufus. We are looking for his family,” she continued. “I am George. You must be here for the other mice, but I fear you have come too late,” said the hamster. “What do you mean?” Rufus asked. “They are in the room next door facing death as we speak. I am sorry, but they are to be the snakes’ supper tonight,” he continued. No it can’t be, thought Rufus. “How do I get to the room?” he asked desperately. “It is right over there,” he said and pointed. “It’s not locked, but I wouldn’t go in there if I were you,” he warned.

It’s been a while since they entered the building, thought Pete. He was starting to feel restless waiting outside the small door. He decided to peek inside. This place is enormous, he thought. He looked around and saw Anna talking to someone in one of the cages. What am I doing? I have to get back outside he thought. He turned around, but right in front of him was the furry, fat cat. “What a lovely surprise! I thought I smelled something delicious earlier,” said the cat. Before Pete could move the cat knocked him to the floor. “Now lay still,” she said. Pete closed his eyes as the cat bared her teeth. She is going to eat me he thought. She picked Pete up with her mouth and walked away from the door. “Please don’t eat me,” pleaded Pete. The cat ignored him and kept on walking.



Suddenly the cat felt something jump on her head. She ignored it, but then she felt it on her nose repeatedly. What is happening thought the cat? Then she felt a tickle right by her nose. "Let go of the mouse, cat, he is not meant to be eaten!" Pete heard a familiar voice. The tickle returned the cat couldn't help herself and sneezed. Pete flew right out of her mouth. "Run, Pete!" shouted the grasshopper. Pete got to his feet and ran back to the small door as fast as he could. "How dare you grasshopper? I'll show you what I do with tiny creatures like you! You will wish you never entered my farm," the cat said furiously. The grasshopper took this as a message to start hopping. When he turned around he saw the cat was right behind him. He saw the farm wall coming closer and hopped through the gap of the wall. The cat was going too fast to slow down and followed the grasshopper. The grasshopper reached the other side of the wall safely, but when he turned around he looked straight into the cat's furry face. The cat couldn't move she was stuck, only her head made it through the gap. "Stuck are we? Well good luck with that," said the grasshopper and hopped off. The cat meowed at him bitterly.

Rufus ran to the other door. It was closed so he couldn't enter. "No!" he shouted, frustrated and hitting his fists against the door. Then he heard a thump, he looked up to see Anna hanging on the door handle. "How did you get there?" asked Rufus. "No time for questions, just PUSH Rufus!" she shouted. He pushed, but nothing happened. "Wait, let me help," he heard. When he turned around he saw Pete. They used all their strength and pushed together. The door creaked and opened slightly. Rufus squeezed in at the door. Anna dropped to the floor, looked at Pete and asked, "My word, why are you so slimy?" "Don't ask. I'll fill you in later. Come on what are you waiting for?" answered Pete. They followed Rufus.

Once inside they saw a big glass container. "That must be the snakes' den," whispered Anna. Rufus walked to the container expecting the worst. They could see some plants, rocks and two branches leading to the top of the container and then the snakes. Pete instantly moved backwards. "They are huge!" he gasped. "I don't see my family. What if we are too late?" said Rufus. "This journey is not over yet," said Pete. "How do you know?" asked Rufus. "Because I think your family is over there," said Pete as he pointed upwards. When Rufus looked up he saw a small cage above the snakes den. Inside he saw two mice. "Mom, Dad!" he shouted and ran to get a closer look. There was a rope attached to the cage. He ran, jumped and then he climbed it.

He reached the top of the cage and opened the latch. "Mom, Dad!" he said relieved and hugged his parents. "Rufus you came for us. But how?" asked his father. "It's a long story, I will tell you all about it on the way home," he answered. Then he realized his sister wasn't in the cage. "Where is Lola?" he asked concerned. His mother started to cry. "I fear we have lost her son," said his father. "No it can't be!" cried Rufus. "You see son," his father continued, "the snakes have a lever in their den and once they put the weight of their tails on it, the floor at the bottom of the cage opens. Your mom and I grabbed on to the sides of the cage, but your sister fell down to the snakes' den. When the floor closed we tried to look for her. We saw her try and find shelter, but then we lost sight of her." "So she might still be alive," said Rufus hopeful.

Rufus looked down searching the den. It can't be, he thought. I came this far, she can't be gone. Anna and Pete were watching and listening to what was happening in the cage. They moved closer to the container and started searching for any sign of Rufus's sister. "Over there, look!" said Anna. "Snake number two, to your right look at his head," she continued. Rufus saw that the snake's mouth wasn't closed. There was something sticking out. "Rufus I think that's a tail," shouted Pete.

Rufus turned his attention back to his parents. "Mom, dad I need you to get to the top of the cage and climb down the rope and stay with Anna and Pete." His parents followed his instructions. Rufus followed them to the top of the cage once his parents were on their way down. He pushed his body forward jumped as high as he could and went falling down to the den below. He plunged down and landed on the snake's neck. The snake had no choice but to spit Lola out and then he went limp.

"Who dares to enter our home without our permission?" the other snake hissed. "Run Lola!" shouted Rufus, but fear has taken all movement from her limbs. "A mouse! You have come into my home and knocked my brother unconscious. I will have to deal with you," the snake continued. Rufus moved quickly toward his sister, grabbed her by the arm and ran to one of the rocks in the den. He noticed the rock was close enough to the branch leading to the top of the cage. "Climb, Lola!" Rufus shouted panicked. This time she obeyed and they climbed onto the branch. "Keep your balance, Lola; walk to the top of the cage," he said. Looking down he could see the snakes moving to the rock. One jumped forward to strike, but missed Rufus by an inch. Rufus walked towards the top of the cage minding his balance. He reached his sister at the top of the branch and they jumped. They landed on the floor.

"Oh my children," their mother said immediately running to them. "We thought we were going to lose you both," she said sobbing. "Guys, I'm sorry to break up the reunion, but we have to leave this place now," said Pete. "I agree," said Anna. Rufus nodded in agreement. Leaving the feeding room, they passed the empty cages once more. "You guys made it," said the hamster. "Yes we did," said Rufus. "Would you like to join us? We are on our way leaving the farm," he continued. "Yes please," the hamster replied and followed them.

Safely outside the white building they walked towards the gap in the wall only to find it was occupied by the cat. "I see you got what you deserved," said Pete to the cat. There was no reply only her tail dropped, admitting defeat. "What do we do now?" asked Anna. "Look," said Lola. A flock of birds were circling above them. "It's the sparrows," said Pete. "They must be here to help," and he waived his little arms in the air signaling the birds.



“Over here!” came the shouts from the ground. The sparrows saw this as a sign and descended towards them. One by one they were lifted off the ground and took flight safely clutched in the claws of the sparrows.

The sparrows landed safely at the tree of the squirrel. Pete's parents were there too, Rufus noticed. The squirrel approached him. "I see you made it mouse, you are a real hero. It seems the sparrow was right about you. I didn't believe her at first, but here you are. It just shows the power of persistence, faith and little courage. You are truly a brave little mouse," said the squirrel. "Thank you, but you have forgotten one thing," Rufus replied. "I didn't undertake this journey alone. I had a lot of support and because of that this mission was successful and my family is home safely. So thank you to all my friends for aiding me in making the impossible possible."

THE END

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About Carmen Saptouw

As a young child of only 8 years old, she was inspired to write children's stories. Following her childhood years, she got so involved with being a teenager that she completely forgot about her passion for writing. Only in 2011, the year she turned 29, was her passion reawakened from its deep slumber when her dad found the stories she had written as a child. So more than 20 years later she rewrote the stories with the aim to preserve it, but as she typed, the stories evolved and new ideas were sparked. She aspires to share her stories with children around the world, and for each story to have a sound moral lesson. Visit [Tales by Carmen Saptouw](#), sign up and follow her blog as she explores how parent and child can apply the life lessons contained in her stories.



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