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&
her granddaughter,
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Printed in USA

First Edition 2015

ISBN: 978-1-932774-79-5

Illustrations & Cover Design

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Printed by

Lightning Source

La Vergne, TN 37086



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CHARACTERS



KING RUMURUS



PRINCESS ANGELINA



QUEEN MATILDA



CORNELIUS



TRINA



ARTHUR



MARY



FLICKY



TICKY



MICKY



LICKY



GINGER



SAMMY



MEG



QUEEN OF SHEEBA

PROLOGUE

How it all began

King Rumurus, ruler of all Murindia, the most powerful mouse in the universe, was taking his nightly stroll through the palace gardens. The moon was bright; the stars twinkled joyfully in the mid-summer night's sky, and the King felt the happiest he had been ever since his beloved Queen had left Murindia many summers ago.



He glanced down at his little daughter, Princess Angelina. She could hardly remember her mother, though he never allowed her to forget how beautiful she had been, how kind, how clever, and, well, how everything a mouse could possibly be! And the Princess was exactly like her in every way.

“There’s a boat coming up the river, Father,” Angelina exclaimed suddenly as she climbed up onto the parapet to catch a better view of the water below.

The King reached out a paw to steady her. “Careful now!” he warned. His eyes grew very wide and then narrowed to little slits as he peered below. “You’re right, Child,” he said slowly after a very long time, clicking his teeth together as he always did when he was upset. “I wonder...?”



He didn't finish his sentence. He couldn't. And Angelina, her big eyes fixed on the King's face, saw two large tears begin to roll down his cheeks, plop onto his whiskers, and drip silently onto his favorite velvet cloak that she had made for him herself, with the help of the palace seamstress, of course. Angelina was still far too young to do many things on her own, except eat and talk. She could do those without help from any of the servants. In fact, her proud father thought her the cleverest mouse in all Murindia, and that was saying a lot!

"Why are you crying, Father?" Angelina asked, as she took out a lacy, embroidered handkerchief from her dress pocket and reached up just in time to prevent a third tear from adding another another dark wet patch to the precious cloak. "Don't you think that maybe there are angels in that boat? They're probably bringing us a message from mother. Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful!"

King Rumurus shook his head sadly as he took her paw and squeezed it tight. "I don't think there are angels in that boat, daughter. Listen!"

Angelina pricked her ears and listened very, very carefully as only a mouse can do. Then she flicked her whiskers and clapped her front paws together. Cornelius, the court herald was announcing in his deep, monotonous voice, "Welcome, oh welcome, visitors from the world of men, to the famous kingdom of Murindia."

The King was weeping now and not even Angelina, who was very good at math, could count the tears as they streamed down his cheeks. She tried to comfort him, but it was no good.

“Dear, dear Father, please don’t cry,” she begged. “You know nothing can harm us as long as we’re safe in Murindia. That’s what you’ve always taught me, isn’t it?”

The King nodded. “Yes, Angelina,” he said and his words were heavy and sad, “that is what I’ve always taught you. And nothing can harm us unless we let it.”

Angelina clapped her paws together once more. “Well then, we won’t let it, will we, Father? So let’s not be sad, please! It’s such a beautiful night. And we’re having visitors. I love visitors! They’ll be here any time now.”

“You must go, Child, and leave us,” King Rumurus said hurriedly, as he saw Cornelius already leading six very important looking mice up the palace steps.

“But, Father, I really...,” she began.

“You must go,” repeated the King. “It’s very late and time you went to bed.”

“But you will tell me everything tomorrow, won’t you? Promise?”

The King did not answer. Instead, he motioned with his paw to a very stately looking mouse that was standing in the shadows, awaiting orders. “Please see that my daughter has a fine supper, Trina,” he commanded. “Give her some of cook’s very best cheesecakes topped with honey. Oh yes, and let her read her favorite book for at least half-an-hour.”

Trina smoothed out her starched white apron, made sure her frilly lace cap was sitting very straight, adjusted her gold-rimmed spectacles on her nose, and then bowed very low. She was the Princess' lady-in-waiting and she loved Angelina just like she would her own daughter. She also loved making curtseys. It was said in Murindia that no one, not even Queen Matilda herself, had ever been able to curtsey as gracefully and as beautifully as Trina.

"Come, Your Royal Highness," she whispered, as she ran over to where Angelina was standing. She gave another bow, not quite as low as the bow she kept for the king, but still, an amazing bow for all that. Then she took the little mouse gently by the paw and began to lead her indoors.

"But Father hasn't promised me yet," Angelina protested. Suddenly, she turned, twisted, and escaped Trina's firm grasp. In a moment, she was back at the King's side. Cornelius was approaching them by now, followed by the six visitors.



Angelina threw her paws around her father's neck. "Promise me, please," she whispered in his ear. "Promise to tell me every teeny-bitty thing that happens tonight?"

"I'll tell you all I can," the King whispered back.

"Tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow."

"Your Majesty?" Cornelius was trying to come between them, as he always did, just at the wrong time.

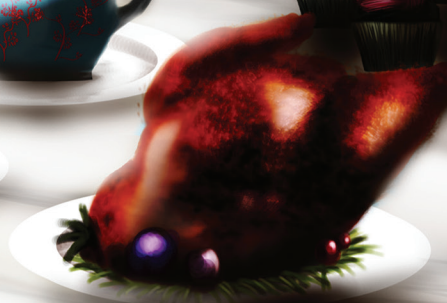
Angelina made a face and gave a long drawn-out sigh. She was the kindest mouse that ever lived. She loved every mouse in Murindia except Cornelius. She had tried hard to love him, too, but it had been absolutely impossible.

Cornelius rubbed his whiskers with a large white handkerchief which he kept tucked away in his top waistcoat pocket and glared at the tiny mouse who glared back.

"Run along now, Angelina," her father said, more sternly than she had ever heard him speak before.

Angelina gave the court herald an extremely haughty glance and then walked slowly away, head held high, eyes straight ahead, over to where Trina was waiting in the shadows.

Trina led her across the lawn and up another flight of stairs which led to the nursery and soon she was feasting on cheesecakes and honey and a whole lot else besides.



“I don’t want to read my book,” she told Trina with a pout as she was being tucked into bed. “And I don’t want to go to sleep until I know why those strange visitors have come to see us and why Father seems so sad.”

Trina rubbed her nose with one paw and peered at Angelina through her spectacles. “I’ll ask the palace seamstress to make you the prettiest dress in all of Murindia tomorrow, Your Royal Highness, if you’ll only be good and go to sleep,” she promised. “It’ll be bright red, your favorite color, with orange tulips embroidered all over the collar and sleeves. I’ll...”

“I don’t want a bright red dress with orange tulips, Trina,” Angelina said decidedly. “All I want right now is to be in Father’s arms and to know everything is going to be all right.”

Trina gave the little mouse a kiss on the top of her head. “And it will be all right,” she said brightly. “You wait and see. It has to be all right. Everything is always all right in Murindia.”

Now that statement made Angelina think long after Trina had blown the candle out. “Everything all right?” she repeated to herself. “I don’t think so.”

Angelina was usually the happiest you could imagine, but this particular night she had never felt so nervous in all of her short life. The clock by her bed ticked away the hours and still she could not sleep. Something terrible was happening in the palace. She could feel it in her four paws, in her long tail of which she was extremely proud, in her little fat stomach full of

cheesecake and honey, and most of all, in her heart which was beating so fast and so hard she thought it was going to jump out of her chest.

At last, she could bear it no longer. Slipping out of bed, she scampered through the long dark corridors until she reached her father's bedroom. The door was open. Angelina held her breath, closed her eyes, and then took a running leap and landed right in the middle of the large four-poster bed which no one had ever slept in except the King and on very special occasions, herself. Well, that is not quite true. Queen Matilda had slept there, too, a very long time ago, and the King kept her pillow by his side, and made sure it always had a fresh pillowcase on it. This made Angelina think that maybe, one night, she might creep into her father's room and find her mother lying there, sleeping peacefully, just as if she had never ever gone away.

"Father, where are you?" Angelina whispered into the darkness.

There was no answer. "Father's still in the Council Room," she muttered to herself. "Something dreadfully important must be going on."

Now Angelina was a very curious little mouse. How could she stay alone in this huge bed while something very exciting seemed to be happening in the palace?



It took two minutes and thirty-two seconds to reach the Royal Council room.

Creeping in behind the red velvet curtains that separated the room from the ante chamber where visitors awaited an audience with the King, Angelina could just about hear what was being said.

“I will put the whole matter to the Princess,” King Rumurus was telling his visitors. “She...”

Angelina gave a start and put one paw to her mouth to stop from gasping out loud as she realized what she was doing. She was deliberately eavesdropping, something she had never done in her whole life. She knew that eavesdropping meant listening to what others were saying when they didn't know you were there. This, she had been taught by her father, was almost the worst sin a mouse could commit. Only murder was worse, he had told her, over and over again.

Trying not to make any noise, she scampered back to her father's bedroom. Let him tell her all she needed to know. That was best. Father's ways were always best. But meanwhile, she would wait for him to come to bed.

Soon Angelina's eyes closed as she snuggled down into the blankets. The light was streaming in the window when she awoke hours later to find her father sitting up in bed, looking down at her with such a sad expression in his eyes that she could hardly stand it.

“Come, Daughter,” was all he said.



Angelina soon found herself safe between his strong paws. Now she felt she could face anything and anyone, even Cornelius and the strange visitors from the world of men. But first, she had to confess.

“Last night, I heard you say ten words, Father,” she whispered. Angelina felt his paws tighten around her. “But only ten, and then I ran away,” she added.

King Rumurus stroked her head gently. “What did you hear?” he asked in a very low voice.

“I will put the whole matter to the princess. She...’ That’s exactly what I heard you say, Father.”

The King gave a very long sigh but said nothing. “So will you, Father, will you do it now, tell me everything, I mean?” Angelina persisted.

“Yes, Child. Of course I will.”

“All?” Angelina persisted. “Every teenie weenie thing? All about why these mice have come from the kingdom of men? And all about Mother?”

The King gave a start. “All about your mother?”

“Yes, Father. I mean, you were sad last night because you were afraid. You were afraid that I was going to go away like Mother did, weren’t you?”

“Yes, Angelina, I was afraid,” he admitted slowly. “Very.”

“So you will tell me about Mother, won’t you?”

The King shook his head sadly. “No, Child. I can’t do that. I’ll tell you why these visitors are here and what it has to do with you, but no more.”

Angelina threw her paws around her father’s neck and hugged him tight. “But please, Father. Please, tell me. If you don’t then I’ll...”

“No, Angelina,” the King interrupted. His voice was stern now. “I can’t tell you. I promised not to.”

Angelina’s eyes opened wide. “Did you promise Cornelius, Father?” she wanted to know.

The King smiled very faintly. “No, not Cornelius, Angelina. I promised your mother,” he said and now his voice was so sad, Angelina thought her heart would break. “And a promise is a promise, you know.”

Angelina nodded sadly. “Yes, Father, I know.” She gave a sigh and snuggled down once more between his paws. ‘Then tell me everything except that,” she pleaded. “Everything!”

And so King Rumurus told his daughter everything except “that.” He told her why the visitors had come and what they wanted and a whole lot more. It was a very serious, very private, father-daughter conversation that even you and I are not allowed to listen into, at least, not yet. So let us tiptoe out of the palace, into our boat, and sail back to the world of men. And if we are very patient and read to the end of the story we are about to write for you, you will find out all you want to know. So be patient, for what we have just told you is only the introduction. The actual story is now about to begin!

We hope you buy the book to read

"The rest of the story."

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