

# Imaginations

Welcome to "Imaginations", the space in our paper dedicated to creative student writing, from prose to poetry and everything in between. If you want to see your work in print here, drop off your submissions at our office anytime. We won't print your name with your work if you don't want us to, but for legal reasons we do need a name and where to reach you with each submission. Try to keep submissions no longer than two or three pages at most, preferably less, though to start us off this week we have a fairly lengthy tale. It's all the God's-honest-truth, but somehow we didn't feel that it was really meant to be presented as part of our hard news. Enjoy!

## DANCES WITH MICE

a shockingly true story

It all began on a quiet Spring afternoon in the newspaper office, where I was busily writing away and polishing off the remnants of my lunch when the two ladies who were using our computer in the next room came out to visit. The first of the pair to speak had an air of gravity about her as she pointed toward the room they had just exited and asked, "Is this your pet?". My eyes followed her gesture and lighted on the floor of the inner office where something was crouching to devour its prey.

The prey in question was a carelessly discarded bit of pizza, and the rough beast slouching toward it was nothing more nor less than a mouse, or a reasonable facsimile of a mouse at any rate. It was definitely a rodent of some sort, perhaps a vole, hunched into a fat, furry sphere as if it were a moss-covered golf ball, nibbling away at its goodies and politely ignoring its three rude observers. Bringing my keen, analytical powers to bear, I instinctively pronounced the creature "cute", but then saw my two nervous companions look at me as though I had just given a lollipop to a member of the Hitler Youth. On consideration, I realized that this was indeed a matter of some seriousness, mice being to filth and disease what Avon Ladies are to cosmetics. A rodent among us was an omen of decay, and I smiled with grim irony at the sign on the wall just above the creature: NO FOOD IN HERE! This was more than a rodent before us... this was a harbinger of the Apocalypse.

Something had to be done, if only for the sake of my companions' continued emotional stability. "If he comes near me, I'll scream," one of them said with contained panic. Swallowing my disillusionment with these modern women, I did what a true heroine by the name of Lassie often did in these situations: I went for help. Several flights of stairs later I

found the building's custodians, immersed in their lunch break. My tale of horror was met with a vague mixture of amusement and skepticism, but they promised aid, and I was less than impressed when they handed it to me in the form of a mousetrap: cruel wood and steel, a crude instrument of death, the rodent equivalent of the guillotine. I had been expecting a kinder, gentler solution perhaps known only to custodians, but apparently the rodents had come to be considered mortal enemies. One custodian, obviously a veteran of these struggles, recounted with a mixture of pride and distaste how they had disposed of several mice on the upper floors not long ago. The battle-lines were drawn. It was the lot of we few brave defenders to stave off these miniature monsters who jeopardized all that was good and sanitary in this campus of ours. Of course, I realized, this meant war.

I trudged downstairs again with my lethal bundle in hand, but I felt almost as if I were on my way to my own execution. This wasn't some faceless horror to be casually eliminated. I'd seen it, drunk in its trusting face, made eye contact... had I no pity? I returned to the office to find the mouse peaceful and snug inside the editor's boot, as confident in his safety as if the office were his own little burrow... which, I imagine, he thought it was. For a moment I imagined myself in a blood-stained executioner's hood, and I stood paralyzed until one of my companions asked, "You're going to kill him with that?". I realized then that I couldn't find that ruthlessness in myself. There had to be another way.

Since the "Lassie-run-for-help" strategy had proved unsuccessful, I turned to methods more suited to "MacGyver", and set about trying to find appropriate tools in my surroundings. The simplest inspirations being the best, I siezed a discarded cardboard box from outside and returned to stalk my unsuspecting target, who by this time was again foraging happily amidst the various food scraps on the floor. He seemed casually aware of us but unconcerned, as if we were a pack of street mimes hovering about him on a sidewalk. I resolved to earn his confidence, and so I knelt down closer to his level as his tiny black eyes struggled to take in my hulking frame. "Hey mousie, what's shakin'," I asked with casual indifference. He regarded me with frank, unbeguiled eyes and promptly returned to nibbling a fallen Cheeto. I was not discouraged by this communications gap, however, since I was prepared to address the creature in a language he could understand...edibles. I'd pocketed a discarded packet of breadsticks for just such an emergency, anticipating their value in the delicate negotiations that followed. I unwrapped them with a deliberately obvious outburst of crinkling plastic, and his black eyes shifted upwards expectantly. "Ya hungry," I asked, simply by way of openers since he was obviously starving. I broke off a couple of pieces and chucked them in his general direction. Appetite conquered prudence, and he inched closer, greedily gnawing on these newfound treasures. "Just like mom used to make, eh," I observed. He came towards me and, more importantly, towards my box. There was no fear in his eyes, the way to