

A Christmas Tail



The first time I met Chris he was sneaking around the baseboard of my kitchen, just walking on tiptoes, which is kind of hard with mouse feet, but he did it well.

I had just come downstairs to get a glass of milk. I had woken up in the middle of the night and was having trouble getting back to sleep.

I could always con myself into believing that milk would put me into dreamland. And sometimes it even worked.

Walking across the hall to the kitchen I was suddenly aware of a tiny voice making a noise that sounded a bit like singing. At first, I thought it was the refrigerator making a high-pitched hum but because I have tinnitus I quickly dismissed it as just more random sounds in my head.

Suddenly the sound stopped.

I could almost taste the milk. I needed it. Sleep was waiting for me.

I walked straight across the kitchen floor, padding quietly along on my bare feet.

As I opened the fridge door the light spilled over the floor and onto the wall, highlighting a small grey critter with a tiny body and big ears. He had small black eyes which glistened in the light, and whiskers on each side of a longish grey nose. The little guy was frozen in place, not moving an inch, except his whiskers, which were quivering.

Okay, I've seen mice before, so I had a good idea that this critter was one of "them," but I had never before witnessed what happened next. Suddenly he stood up on his hind legs, balanced himself with his tail behind him like a three-legged stool, and spread his front legs (uh, arms?) out wide. His little squeaking voice started up again with the sound I had first heard. He looked straight at me as he stood there mouthing words that I couldn't quite make out.

I leaned in his direction to hear better. It sounded like he was saying, "Merry Christmas."

That startled me, never having heard a mouse talk before.

"Uh, what did you say, little fellow?" I stammered.

His mouth moved and the tiny voice said something about "Christmas." I was sure he was trying to say. "Merry Christmas."

"Uh, Merry Christmas to you, too."

He replied quickly, somewhat louder this time, "No, my name is Chris Mouse, which is what I was trying to tell you. What's your name?"

Well, at least I could finally understand what the little guy was saying, so I said, "My name's Franklin Dooty, little mouse." I squawked through my dry mouth because I hadn't had my drink of milk yet.

"Hey Franklin. My name isn't 'little mouse,' it's Chris Mouse. And here's the deal, when you address a mouse, you have to say their full name so they don't think you're talking to someone else with the same first name. One other thing. People always talk past us, or they scream and run, but they never talk right to us. That's very disrespectful, you know."



“Sorry, Chris Mouse. I will try to be a better conversationalist with mice from here on,” I managed, while stifling a smile. “So, where do you live?”

Chris Mouse immediately launched into a description of his home, explaining that he came and went through a closet door to his home. He said that he lived in a very comfortable tiny home inside the opposite wall. When pressed on how he could get through a closed closet door, he said, “Follow me” and led me into the second bedroom in our house, squeezing right under the closed closet door and then squeezing right back out again. It was a very convincing demonstration.

“Oh, for goodness sakes,” I exclaimed. “I didn’t know anything could do that.”

“That’s nothing,” replied the mouse, “you should see what we do on Friday nights.”

Now he had my curiosity up. “What happens on Friday nights?”

“You wouldn’t know, would you. You’re gone every Friday night,” he said.

“Correct. We go bowling that night,” I explained.

“Well, promise you won’t get mad, but the minute you leave, all of the rest of us that live here have a party. My wife and kids and uncles and aunts and cousins come, the cockroaches are there, and so are the earwigs and spiders and flies and mosquitoes. Everyone is there, and I’m sure I’m leaving a few inhabitants out of my description.

“We start in the kitchen and form a long line. Us mice work our way into the pantry and we bring out some really good food. I personally like Honey Bunches of Oats, but some like chips, and then there’s a big group that want the nuts in that big Mixed Nuts jar.

“Hey, do you know how many mice it takes to open a Mixed Nuts jar? It takes four of us. We have to tip the jar over, being careful not to break it. Then two of us get on the lid and hold on to the ribbing on the left side of the lid while hanging and swinging in that direction. Gravity helps spin the lid off and the other two mice catch it before it falls down another shelf. Then we pass out the nuts to those that want them.”

I was a bit stunned by this revelation, and even more so just watching this tiny creature who had climbed up the leg of the table and now seemed in full “maestro mode” with his arms outstretched reaching for the sky, gesturing the movements as he described the party.

“How on earth do you do this while we’re gone?” I asked. “I never noticed anything out of place when we got back home.”

“Well, you see, that’s the tricky part,” he explained. “We get everyone to help, putting lids back on, tipping jars back upright, muscling everything right back where we found it. For an hour’s party it takes us almost two hours to get everything back the way it was before our party.”

“Okay, so you eat nuts and stuff. I get that. But eating isn’t all that happens in a party. What else do you do?” I asked.

“Oh right, I forgot to mention the conga line. We all line up single-file and then move like this,” and with that he demonstrated by thrusting one leg out, hopping forward on his other leg, then putting the first leg back on the floor and thrusting the other leg out, again hopping forward. He demonstrated the moves quickly, without any hesitation, moving a total of a couple feet, and finishing with style. “We conga all over the kitchen floor in a long, snaking line. Some of us make clicking sounds with our teeth to set the beat. It’s pretty exciting.”

I tried to imagine how that would look before I asked the question that had been in the back of my mind. “I can see how mice and cockroaches might like some of the food you mentioned. But what about earwigs, spiders, flies and mosquitoes?”

“That’s the interesting part,” he answered with a scrunched-up face. “Spiders like to eat flies and mosquitoes, so the party usually ends up with fat spiders and fewer flying insects. The spiders are happy, and the flies and mosquitoes don’t live very long anyway, so they’re sacrificing for the greater good, and what better way to do it than being the center of attention at a party?”

“The earwigs? They usually crawl up into the houseplants and munch on dead leaves. Sometimes they crawl up the wall in the bathroom and eat the dried skin on your towels, gripping it with their pincers. That’s kind of creepy but I’ll say this, they sure can do a mean conga line. Especially when they stand on their hind legs and click their pincers. It’s impressive!”

I couldn’t have imagined this in a thousand years.

The little grey fellow continued, “But in the last couple of weeks there are some different and confusing things going on in the house. There’s that tree in the living room with the boxes under it. You know the one? The only tree? The one with the lights on it?”

“Oh yeah, right, we usually don’t have trees in the house and when we do they have lights on them, because this is a special time of year. This is when we celebrate Christmas,” I offered.

“What, you celebrate me?” he said quickly, with a surprised look on his face.

“No, Christmas is a holiday when we exchange presents, eat lots of food, and celebrate something that happened a long time ago, long before any of us were born.”

“But you said, ‘Chris Mouse,’” he said.

“No, I said ‘CHRISTmas.’ It means Christ’s birth. We celebrate the birth of the son of God who came to earth to give us good news that we live forever, even after we die in our bodies, and that if we follow Him we will spend forever with Him in a wonderful place called heaven,” I expounded.

“Oh,” he said with a suddenly soft and downcast face. “That sounds like a very nice thing to celebrate. But I was really excited when I thought you said ‘Chris Mouse’ because I never had any celebration when I was born.” Then he looked down at the ground with a wistful look on his little face.

An idea suddenly popped into my head. “Well, Chris Mouse,” I said, “I think we can fix that, although it’s a bit late for your birth. I’ve got an idea. What if every year when this holiday rolls around, we all wish each other a Merry Chris Mouse, as an expression to wish people to have a wonderful time?”

At that, Chris Mouse jumped up and down on his two back legs with his arms stretched upwards towards the ceiling. “Yippee,” he squealed, “I get my own holiday and everyone will be saying my name a lot.”

“Yes,” I said, “but only during that time of year. However, to make you feel even better, if you go outside during that season, you’ll see lots of people greeting each other, saying, ‘Merry Chris Mouse’ to each other.”

He had a quizzical look on his face. “They will?” He was barely able to squeak out this last part, his voice suddenly taking on a different quality.

“They will,” I assured him.

“And here’s what I want you to do. This Friday night, we’re not going bowling because of the holiday, so I want you to gather all the other creatures that live here, and I want you to party like you’ve never partied before.

“We’ll stand quietly in the kitchen and watch so we can have fun just being part of it, but we’ll keep out of the way, I promise. We wouldn’t want to step on anyone.”

His face wrinkled up, “Yeah, that would be bad if you big people stepped on one of us. Thank you for being so thoughtful.

“But, you’re sure it’s okay? We are all kind of shy around people.”

“Sure thing,” I said with a smile. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I need to get a glass of milk so I can go back to sleep.”

He winked. “Anything you want, mister.” And then, he dropped back down from standing on his back legs and was gone in an instant.

I put my empty glass in the sink, returned to my room, crawled into bed, and fell fast asleep.

A few minutes later my wife pushed my shoulder and whispered loudly in my ear, “Honey, are you okay? You’ve been talking in your sleep for the last half hour. What were you saying?”

I leaned over to her, kissed her on the cheek and said, “Merry Chris Mouse, honey.”

This story is also in the first book in the Chris Mouse series, ["Meet The Amazing Chris Mouse"](#)

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