

Bread

By: Phillip Arloro

Rascal stumbled his way past many different cans of food. He had been scavenging for nearly a day now, hoping this would finally be the spot. Knowing the metal was strong and difficult to open he brushed past it. The space was dark, with the only light coming from a small slit high up along one of the walls. Rascal was examining the darkness for food when he came across a box. Testing it to see if it could be opened easily, Rascal was met with exciting results. As the corner began to tear open, the contents made his mouth water and when he took his first bite he was unsure if he could stop himself. Cracker after cracker, he chewed through each one savoring every last bite; it would be a while before he could gorge himself like this again. He ate far past full, falling asleep beside the box.

A loud bang echoed in the space and Rascal jumped to his feet, ready to run. Leaving the rest of the food behind, he ran behind another large square object. The door that Rascal thought was a wall quickly opened, something was thrown inside, and then the door slammed closed. He cowered in fear, trembling at the thought of danger on the other side. He began glancing from behind cover making sure the coast was clear. He finally got close enough now, and the object's smell caught his attention. Rascal made his way towards it, footsteps still slow just in case but ready to run. Its odor was strong and while part of it was familiar, the stronger part of the scent was something he had never experienced.

It was bread, Rascal's favorite food. For weeks he found and devoured this delicious treat and it quickly became his preferred meal. There was something on top of the slice of bread but his mouth began to salivate once more. He wasn't hungry in the slightest but how could he resist his favorite food? Rascal began nibbling away, making himself feel sick. There wouldn't be another opportunity like this, so it was easy to convince himself it was okay. When he was finished, he lay down beside this new box and slept once more.

A man in his mid-thirties entered his kitchen and headed straight for the fridge. The kitchen was simple: old granite countertops that needed a cleaning, a dirty white fridge, 4 cabinets made from maple wood, and an ancient worn-down table of the same material. The floor used to be a clean white but slowly turned to a grimy beige. The man had an exhausted look on his face and just wanted to relax. He grabbed an ice-cold drink from the fridge and plopped himself down at the kitchen table. The man used the edge of the table to open the drink and let out a tired sigh; sleep had been tough these last few weeks.

As he sat there enjoying his beverage he noticed something, or rather the lack thereof. The sound that had been driving him mad for weeks was gone – the tiny scratching had kept him awake night after night. He placed down the drink and stood, putting his hand to his ear and walking around the room, looking for the sound. When nothing graced his ears he clapped in excitement and started opening the cabinets; the one above the fridge and the two under the sink - all empty.

He opened the cabinet closest to the front door to reveal the piece of bread coated with a powdery layer of rat poison: it was chewed about halfway down. Next to it lay a mouse, frozen in death. The man clapped in excitement and picked up the mouse by the tail before tossing him into the trash. Without washing his hands, he went into another cabinet and pulled out the materials to make a sandwich.

“Little rascal”