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Fiction

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### **THERE'S A MOUSE IN OUR HOUSE**

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By

Robert P. Herbst

It seems like only yesterday but it has already been several weeks now since my lovely wife, Lyudmila, pointed to the space under the kitchen sink and said in her broken English, "Robert! Robert! Oojas animal lives under there!" (Oojas means something like monstrous in Russian.)

Sure enough, on close inspection, it was quite obvious at least one mouse was living under our kitchen counter and judging by the damage, living quite well. Naturally, it instantly became my lot in life to convince the little critter to go live someplace else or DIE!

Anyhow, I went to the local hardware store and selected a trap. On paper it said this trap would do the job on any number of mice but only one at a time. I really had no idea how many mice lived under the sink so one trap was all I thought I needed.

Winter had just set in here in Mount Perry, Florida, The temperature had already dropped to a frigid 65 degrees, I guessed the poor little thing was cold and sought shelter in our home. Unfortunately for us, it found a great quantity of readily available food and so, it seems, it invited all of its friends and relatives.

That night I baited the trap with a nice aromatic bit of cheese and set it under the sink. In the morning a little dead rodent was in the trap. While disposing of the body, I couldn't help but wonder what people who had large numbers of mice did with all the dead mice. I thought a nice mouse dinner would be just the thing for our overweight cat who did nothing but laze about the house all day.

Unfortunately, on presentation, the cat merely turned up its nose at the mouse and walked away with a "you'll have to do better than this" attitude. Thinking the cat might prefer only warm mice I put the little thing in the microwave for a minute. The cat looked a bit more interested but again passed by with a "not good enough" glance over its shoulder.

Obviously the disposal problem was all mine to deal with. The garbage can was all the way downstairs and outside. The toilet was way across the room and behind a closed door. It seemed like just too much effort for one little dead mouse. Then, I thought of the garbage grinder in the kitchen sink. It was close at hand, quiet, and absolutely final.

Trapping went on daily with the trap averaging one mouse a day. In each case I paused for a moment before I turned on the water and flicked the switch which turned on the garbage grinder. Kind of a mental prayer for the mouse to rest in peace. It seemed such a waste. Anyhow,

a moment or two later it was all behind me and I was baiting the trap for the next mouse.

To date we have caught eleven mice. However, in each case it seemed the mice were getting smarter. I was now using peanut butter as bait. At first all I had to do was place a small blob on the bait tray and set the trap. After the third mouse I found after the trap was sprung, something ate the rest of the peanut butter. Then on one occasion it ate the bait and didn't spring the trap. It was time to change game plans.

I began putting the peanut butter under and over the bait tray. I reasoned as the mouse reached in under the tray --- well, I guess you know the rest. This worked fine right up to number ten. After three days I still hadn't caught number eleven. In each case the bait was taken but the trap remained unsprung.

This left me with two possibilities;

- 1) I was dealing with an exceptionally intelligent mouse.
- 2) I was dealing with a rodent who was strong enough to eat the bait while it held the trap open.

The latter idea did not set well with me at all.

I began to have terrible dreams about a Super Mouse, holding the trap open while other mice ate the bait. Then after the bait was gone it would turn its attention to the canned goods stored under the sink. This was hardly my idea of a restful nights sleep. Something had to be done and done quickly.

The cat still refused to be interested in the mice. Now, however, I began to wonder if it was the cat wasn't interested in the mice, or maybe the cat knew something I didn't know. Maybe the cat had seen Super Mouse and didn't want to make it angry. Nothing seemed beyond the point of possibility.

My imagination ran wild. I conjured up a huge mouse poking its head out from under the sink and saying, "You killed my mommy and daddy! Now I'm going to have my revenge!" The thought was absolutely frightening.

The next night I loaded my shotgun with "000 Buckshot" and prepared to wait with the doors to the area under the sink open. It was going to be a long night. My shotgun is an old 12 Gauge, First World War Trench Sweeper, designed to do maximum destruction at close range and it was loaded with the new steel shot. This is exactly what the situation warranted here. I lay down on top of the kitchen table with the shotgun pointed at the area under the sink. The shotgun was propped in a position so it could be fired with a minimum of effort.

Daylight was just beginning to roll the darkness back when I heard a faint noise from the area under the sink. It had to be Super Mouse! With very slow deliberate movements, I slid my finger into the trigger guard and slowly pulled the trigger back. I could just barely see the mouse at the trap. In the early morning light, I saw it was licking the bait off the bait tray. This was the way the little stinker had found to defeat the trap.

I strained my eyes looking for other mice under the sink but Super Mouse was alone and now I had it in my sights. I just lay there a moment or so thinking of all the time and effort I had put into trying to catch this little rodent. Now here it was blissfully licking peanut butter off the trap I had so carefully set for it.

I waited until the bait was almost gone before I pulled a little harder on the trigger. The condemned would have had one last hearty meal. The shotgun went off with an ear splitting roar. A sheet of flame belched from the muzzle of the shotgun to almost where the mouse stood licking the bait from the trap. The flash of light from the shotgun blinded me for a moment and I

was deprived of the pleasure of watching my adversary being destroyed in a hail of steel shot. The force of the shot gun's blast was directed under the sink. With no where else to go, it lifted the kitchen sink out of its place in the counter and threw it about three feet into the air. The kitchen sink was located just up over the stairs to our apartment so as the sink flew up into the air the pipes connecting it to the water supply stretched out and broke causing the sink to flop over before it landed on the stairs and tumbled on down to the first floor.

Water now flowed freely in every direction from the broken water pipes and saturated everything. Frankly, I hadn't wanted quite this much destruction but clearly, this was a case where extreme measures were warranted.

I rolled off the table and turned on the light. As the smoke from the shotgun cleared I could see the destruction was even worse in the light. The buckshot had pierced the bowel of the sink and the waste line as well. All of the canned goods we had stored under the sink were ruined because the steel shot had torn through the metal cans and kind of mashed them up in a heap against the back wall of the cabinet.

The mouse trap was completely destroyed and spread over several feet of area and both doors to the area under the sink were blown completely off their hinges. Lyudmila ran from the bedroom screaming in Russian we were under attack by the KGB. The entire scene was one of pandemonium.

With all this destruction I was sure I had dealt Super Mouse a lethal blow and the little body had simply disintegrated in the blast. It was all over now but the clean up. I also faced the job of rebuilding the area around the kitchen sink. It took a considerable time for Lyudmila to get settled down. She seemed more concerned with the demise of the mouse than the destruction of her kitchen. She wandered about muttering, "You kill haroshinki little animal." while pointing at me. (Haroshinki meaning nice, small and cute all in one Russian word)

It only took a few days to rebuild the kitchen counter, replace the broken pipes and set a new kitchen sink. It looked as good as new except for a few small holes in the wood at the back of the cabinets where the shot had passed through and lodged there. Only I knew the remains of the Super Mouse were now a part of the structure. If Lyudmila had known, I would have never been able to get her to use the area under the sink again.

The shotgun had done its job well as not a trace of the mouse was seen during the entire rebuilding process. I thought this rather odd because nothing really disappears completely. Still, it was a tiny mouse and a very large shotgun.

This night I went to bed with my mind clear of anything to do with mice or traps. I had the first restful night I'd had in weeks. The mouse was gone and I drifted off into the arms of Morpheus content in the knowledge all was well under the kitchen sink.

Morning came all too soon and Lyudmila and I got up to face another day. We went to the kitchen, brewed a nice big pot of coffee and prepared to eat a hearty breakfast. After breakfast Lyudmila put the dishes into the dish washer and went to get the soap powder from under the kitchen sink. From behind me there was a sudden shriek, "Robert! Robert! Again, oojas mouse lives under sink!"