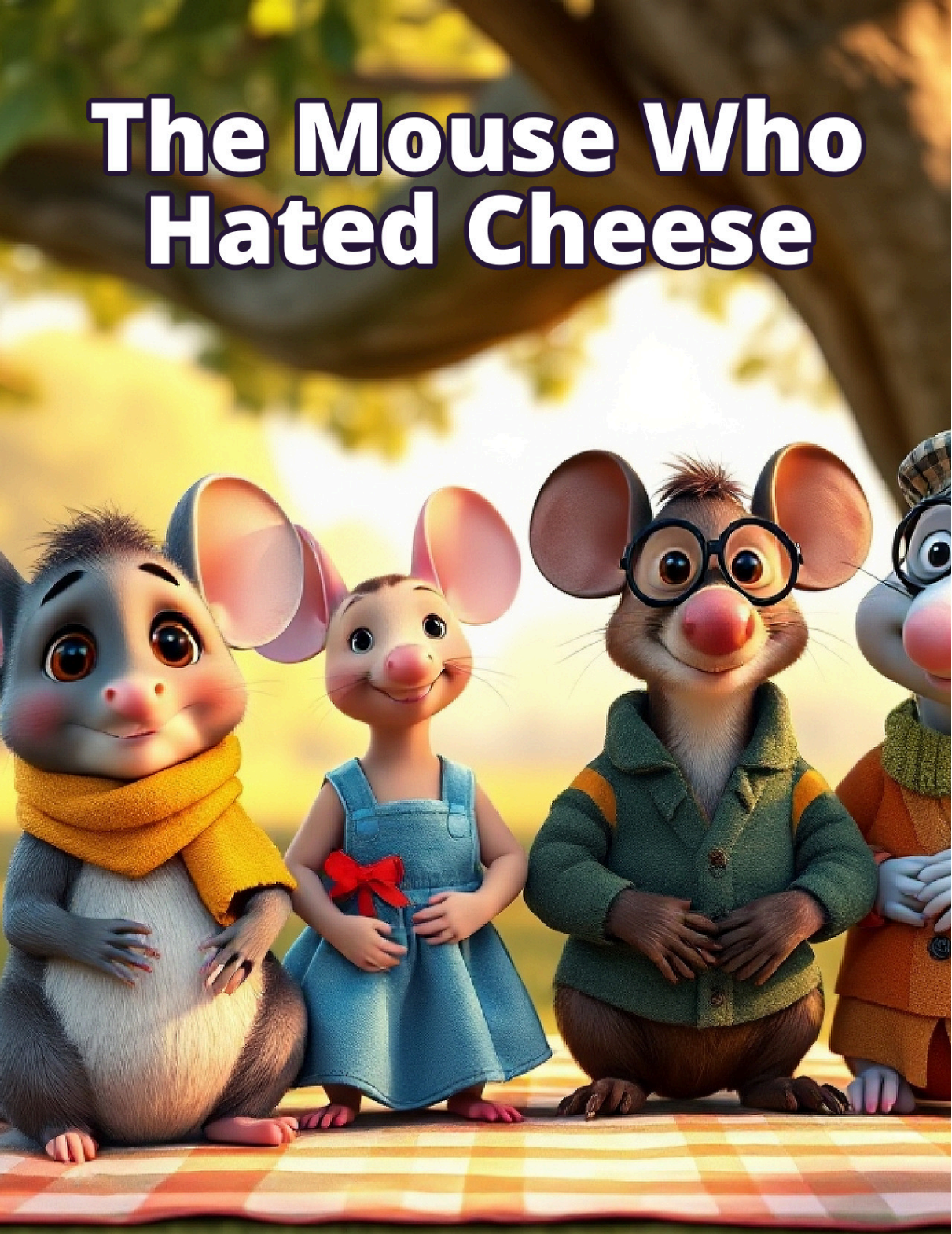
The Mouse Who Hated Cheese



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Milo the mouse lived in a cozy burrow under the roots of a big oak tree. He had soft warm grey fur, a cream belly, and a mustard yellow scarf that his grandmother had knitted for him. Every morning, the burrow smelled of cheese. His family loved cheese more than anything in the world. They ate it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Milo did not love cheese. In fact, he did not like it at all. The smell made his nose wrinkle, and the taste made his whiskers droop. But he never said a word. He did not want to hurt his family's feelings. So every morning, he nibbled a tiny piece and smiled a wobbly smile. His big brown eyes looked worried.

One sunny day, Milo's friend Poppy came knocking at the burrow door. Poppy was a honey brown mouse with a sky blue pinafore and a red ribbon in her hair. She was always cheerful and full of plans. 'Milo!' she squeaked. 'Let's have a picnic tomorrow! I'll invite Finn and Grandpa Rowan. We'll bring lots of different foods!' Milo's tummy did a little flip.

At home, Milo's family was busy making cheese pies and cheese rolls for the picnic. Milo felt a heavy lump in his chest. He did not want to eat cheese all day long. He sat on his little stool and twisted his scarf. His grandfather, Grandpa Rowan, noticed. He wore round spectacles and a green cardigan. 'What's the matter, little one?' he asked gently.

Milo took a deep breath. 'Grandpa, I don't like cheese,' he whispered. 'But everyone in our family loves it. I don't want to be different.' Grandpa Rowan smiled and patted Milo's paw. 'Different is not bad, Milo. I love cheese, but that doesn't mean you must. Everyone has their own taste.' Milo felt a tiny bit better, but he still worried about the picnic.

The next morning, Milo put on his scarf and his small brown satchel. He met his friends at the edge of the meadow. Poppy had a big basket. Finn, a lanky mouse with a bent ear and an orange striped shirt, carried a green backpack. 'I brought apples!' Finn said with a wide grin. 'And I brought berries and fresh bread,' said Poppy. Milo's eyes grew wide.

They found a sunny spot near a bubbling stream and spread out a checkered cloth. Poppy unpacked the basket. Out came apples, berries, bread, and a big yellow wheel of cheese. Milo's heart sank. There was the cheese, right in the middle. He looked at it and his whiskers drooped. Finn noticed. 'Are you okay, Milo?' he asked.

Milo wanted to say he was fine, but his feelings were too big. He took another deep breath. 'I don't really like cheese,' he said quietly. 'I'm sorry.' He looked down at his paws. He expected his friends to laugh. But no one laughed. Poppy put down the cheese and came closer. 'That's okay, Milo,' she said softly. 'Everyone likes different things.'

Finn nodded. 'I don't like berries,' he said. 'But I still bring them because Poppy loves them.' Poppy smiled. 'And I don't like apples, but Finn loves them.' Milo looked up. His friends were not making fun of him. They were listening. Grandpa Rowan, who had just arrived with his walking stick, said, 'See, Milo? Different tastes are welcome here.'

Poppy reached into the basket and pulled out a shiny red apple. 'Here, Milo,' she said. 'Try this.' Milo took a bite. Crunch! It was sweet and juicy. Finn passed him a slice of fresh bread, still warm from the oven. Milo tried it with a few berries. It was delicious! He had never felt so happy at a meal.

Milo's eyes sparkled. 'This is the best picnic ever!' he said. His friends cheered. They ate and laughed and told stories. Milo did not feel different in a bad way anymore. He felt special. Poppy made a daisy chain, and Finn did a silly dance. Even the cheese did not bother Milo. He was too busy having fun.

As the sun began to set, Milo felt warm inside. He had learned something important. 'Thank you for listening,' he said to his friends. 'I was scared you would think I was strange.' Poppy shook her head. 'Friends don't tease. Friends care about how you feel.' Grandpa Rowan nodded. 'And true friends respect each other's choices.'

Milo went home with a happy heart. That evening, his family had cheese again, but Milo had an apple and some bread. No one made fun of him. His mother gave him a hug. 'I'm glad you told us,' she said. Milo smiled. He knew that being honest about his feelings was okay. And he knew his friends would always be there for him.

From that day on, Milo never pretended to like cheese. He brought his own snacks to family meals, and no one minded. His friends often invited him to picnics with many different foods. Milo learned that everyone likes different things, and that is perfectly okay. The important thing is to be kind and to listen.

Milo's mustard scarf still kept him warm, and his satchel held his favorite snacks: apples, berries, and bread. Sometimes Grandpa Rowan joined him for a snack, and they would talk about all the different foods in the world. Milo felt lucky to have a family and friends who respected his feelings. He was not afraid to be himself anymore.

And if you ever visit the big oak tree, you might see Milo having a picnic with his friends. There is always plenty of cheese for those who like it, and plenty of apples and berries for those who don't. Because at Milo's picnics, everyone is welcome, and every taste is respected. That is the best kind of feast of all.