

Bourne
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Telling Time

by Mia Sundby

Souris Fluffytail glanced down at the letter in his paws. To any passing human, he was simply a mouse-gnole (a being standing at a little over two feet tall, with thick, soft fur, large scoping ears, a long tail and a mouse-y face) checking where his next postal delivery was. A keen observer, however, would note the anxious twitching of Souris' whiskers as his large eyes combed the letter's scrawl for what felt like the thousandth time.

It was written in a human's hand, but possibly a human not right in the head; the address was for the wild forest just outside the city. A forest known for a whole host of monstrous monsters who would sooner eat a tiny creature such as Souris than offer him a penny for his trouble; certainly not a place one usually sent a letter. The only humanoids who passed through that way were mercenaries and adventurers --not usually the sort to have a pen-pal.

Souris' tail flicked. No, this couldn't be right.

Souris flipped the letter over in his paws, eyeing the back. The seal was unremarkable, with no crest to denote who it might be from, just a plain boring old smudge of wax. And the paper was cheap and sun-bleached, a little worse for wear, really, as though it had been crumpled in a pocket, and--

He went still.

A little scrawl he hadn't noticed in his rounds caught his eye. It read, "Give this to your bravest mouse-gnole."

Souris' little chest swelled. Though he wasn't sure if it was with pride or the beginning of a heart attack.

He wondered if it would look bad for the postal service if he screamed in the middle of a crowded street.

After several sharp, panicked breaths, he decided yes.

"Oh my," he squeaked. "Oh goodness." He was, he decided, having a panic attack.

Him? Go out there? With-- with all the monstrous monsters? And, and the humanoids swinging swords and axes and--?

His paws trembled.



'Give this to your bravest mouse-gnole.'

Well, by the Burrow, it was flattering, of course, and he'd always considered himself to be a rather plucky mouse-gnole, but it was quite a leap between delivering strange parcels --a pot of steaming soup, or a remedy potion for shrinking, or a live toad-- and delivering a battered letter to the monster-filled outskirts of Mithiurin.

Still... Dread filled his tiny chest. What if someone needed this letter? What if some poor adventurer was out there, in over their head and this letter contained some vital information? Souris knew very little about adventuring, but time seemed a key element in their work, such as it was in his. It had taken him a year to learn to tell human time, but he'd overcome that obstacle.

What was this but another obstacle?

Souris sucked in a deep breath, tucked the letter safely into his postal satchel, and turned to the city gates.