**A Longish Tale**

In all the stories in all the world there has rarely been a tale… about a tail.

But this tale is different because this tail was different.

For this tale was attached to a mouse, and attached to the mouse was a very long tail.

The mouse of this story was named Edward by his mother and Martin by his father.  As they could never agree on names, and rather than confuse the poor creature, his parents simply called him… Medward.

Medward had a brother and a sister, both of whom looked more or less the same, which is to say that all of their mouse parts were of proper size and in the right locations.

But Medward was not like the rest of his family.  In fact, he was quite unlike any other mouse that had ever lived.  Medward had a long, very long, very very long tail.

His tail was so long that Medward rarely ventured far from home for fear of it getting all tangled up, which is why he stayed behind on the day his oldest brother, his only brother, his favorite brother Alexandrew, left home to see the great, big world.

As Medward grew older his tail grew longer, until it became so long and tattered and tangled that it hardly resembled a tail at all, and instead looked more like an enormous pile of unraveled yarn.

“I hate my long tail,” Medward would sometimes say when he was sad.

“It’s not that long,” his mother would tell him.  “It’s just sort of… longish.”

But Medward knew she was just trying to make him feel better.

He had to admit that at times his elongated tail came in quite handy.

His mother sometimes hung clothes out to dry in the warm afternoon sun.

His sister, Jessifer, loved to jump rope.

And his father enjoyed taking naps on the hammock.

Still, Medward often longed for more.

Until one day when his life began to unravel.

Medward received word that his brother, who had been living in a city by the sea in a far off land, had embarked on a trip to see even more of the world.  And somewhere between here and there, Alexandrew’s boat had been lost at sea.

With no thought for himself, Medward departed that very afternoon with nothing but a handwritten map that his father had drawn from memory.

He passed through small towns where he met wonderful people.

And large cities where wonderful people met him.

He ran down roads, swam across rivers, and climbed giant hills as he made his way to where his brother had last been seen.

In the city by the sea in the far off land, Medward found that he did not have enough money to buy passage on a ship to search for his brother.

So he built a raft from the drift wood that lay scattered along the sandy beach.

And set sail that night to find his brother.

For many days and many nights he floated along with no sign of his brother.

But Medward did see tiny fish and huge whales, puffy clouds and round moons, and bright, sparkly stars.

On his fourth day at sea Medward thought he heard a small, faraway, mouse voice cry out, “help…”  although it was difficult to make out clearly over the tremendous sound of the ocean as it ran off the edge of the world.

And that was when Medward saw his brother, Alexandrew, clinging to a piece of mast and a bit of sail, the wreckage from his ship.

Medward paddled and kicked with all his might, but his raft would not go fast enough to catch up to his brother.  So Medward did the only sensible thing he could think of and threw himself overboard.

He swam as fast as his paws could manage to try and catch up to his brother.  And there, a few feet from the end of all things, Medward and Alexandrew were reunited once more.

“Why?” Alexandrew shouted above the rushing waters, “Why did you leave your raft and swim to me when you knew there was no hope?  Now neither of us will survive!”

Medward clung to his brother with all his might.  “Maybe,” said Medward, who knew he should have been scared, but could only manage to feel relieved.  “But at least we’ll be together.”

With that, they passed over the edge.

And that is when a curious thing happened…

They found themselves hanging in mid-air, suspended by, of all things, Medward’s long tail.

And just when it seemed as if they would be stranded, dangling over the edge of the world forever, they could see that they were being slowly hoisted back up and into the ocean.

For many days they were pulled back across the waters and onto dry land.  For many more they were drawn across cities and towns, rivers and mountains, by all the people they had met along their journey.

And two weeks hence, Medward and his brother arrived back home, with Jessifer and their mother and father pulling at the very end of his very long tail.

Medward had travelled the world he had longed to see.  He had found his brother.  And he had been brought back by the one thing that he always thought had been holding him back.

His longish tail.

“So,” Jessifer said, “When do I get to go and see the world?”