

JULIE

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

Alan and Karter wanted a legendary adventure.

Pam and Hannah wanted to see the pigs rumored to live on the top floor.

Patch had nothing better to do.

What started out as a day of big talk and little action, turned into an adventure none of them will ever forget.

Verb tense

WORLD

Too many
intro
prepositional
phrases

Chapter One

~~In a dark room, in a hollow wall, in a big house, in a small town,~~ a loud noise woke

start here - or "A roarin"

Patch was
woken
by...

Patch from a deep sleep.

~~It was a roaring sound rarely heard so early in the morning.~~

Why?

early-morning

on?

In the dim light, Patch saw little brother Carl across the room, hunched in the corner at

back?

the top of his bed.

Carl clutched his tail with both hands, ears folded back.

His eyes were wide like searchlights, frantically scanning the room for the source of the monstrous growl.

There was the door, bookshelf, toy box, a beast with the arms of victims dangling from its mouth—The little mouse gasped, and then realized it was his dresser, with the shirt drawer open and sleeves hanging out.

✓

When his scan reached Patch, Carl let out a sigh of relief, and whispered.

"Patch, what was that noise?"

Had they never heard the car before?

OK

"It's Ok kid. That was just the Young Man's car. He left early."

Carl released his tail, and slid back under the "Amazing Mouse" blanket Grandma gave him for Christmas.

"Patch?"

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"What?"

"I can't go back to sleep."

"Me either, but we should stay in here until Mom and Dad get up."

Why?

Carl climbed out of bed and ran across the room, dragging Amazing Mouse behind. He jumped in next to Patch, and pulled the blanket tight.

What is Patch's physical (or verbal) reaction to Carl's climbing into his bed? Comforting 2m wrapped around little bro? or pulling away and turning back on him?

"Patch?"

"What?"

"Are Alan and Karter really going to steal food from Abby's dog bowl today?"

"That's what they say."

Why do they need dog food if they eat oatmeal?

"In the middle of the kitchen, in the middle of the day, are they crazy?"

"Don't worry. Those fellows talk big, but they'll chicken out. Alan will come up with some excuse to save face. He always does."

Carl was quiet for a few seconds.

"Patch?"

"What now?"

"If they do try to steal Abby's food, will you go to?"

"Well, if Alan is dumb enough to do it, Karter will be dumb enough to follow, and I'll have to go along."

"Why?"

"It's hard to explain."

"Why?"

OK

"Ok look. The guys and me are starting middle school this fall. In sixth grade, reputation is everything. I don't want to be known as, 'the one who wimped out.'"

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Carl tried to object, but Patch continued.

"It's all good. Abby's a cool dog. She's just curious. Worst case scenario, we get soaked by that big slobbery tongue."

Carl wasn't so easily convinced.

"What about the Woman? She's in the kitchen all the time. What about that cat, Haley? She's so quiet you won't hear her coming. That cat will do more than just lick."

"I know. I know. Alan and Karter know too."

What kitchen?
Small mouse horse within
human horse?

The sound of voices rode a tantalizing aroma in from the kitchen.

Patch gave Carl a punch on the arm. "Let's go, Squirt. Mom and Dad are up, and I smell cheese omelets."

Carl sat up and sniffed. His heightened fear of a possible monster had slowly diminished from the moment he saw Patch. Now, the smell of Mom's omelets overpowered what little fear lingered.

This made way for the usual awareness a little brother has, of the torment a big brother might inflict at any moment.

In an instant, Carl knew what was coming, but it was too late.

Patch pushed him back down and slowly rolled across, "Steamroller!" to the edge of the bed, and up.

When Carl finally peeled himself out of bed, he scrambled to the "beast" dresser and rummaged for clothes.

Patch pulled on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt that read, "The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese."

Why do they follow
conventional and
wear clothes?

"What does that mean?" Carl asked, pulling on a pair of stripped pants.

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“Nothing. Well something, but it’s not for little kids like you. When you’re my age, you’ll understand.”

Carl stopped digging for a shirt, and looked up at his brother.

“Uncle Quincy told me there are whole houses where the mice don’t wear clothes.”

*

Their mother’s brother Quincy is quite a character. He’s a fountain of useless

information, a barrel of laughs, a jack-of-all-trades, and a storyteller extraordinaire. Naturally, the boys think he’s the greatest thing since Cheez Whiz.

*

“Uncle Q’s right. There are lots of houses where none of the mice wear clothes. They don’t have jobs, or go to day camp. They don’t talk, and they also don’t have Mom’s cheese omelets for breakfast.”

Carl closed his eyes, and tried to imagine such a house. “I wonder what that would be like.”

Patch chuckled. “You don’t have to wonder. Just show up at Mom’s breakfast table without clothes, and see what it’s like.”

At the thought of that, Carl grabbed the first shirt he saw, put it on quickly, and headed for the kitchen.

Patch blocked the door. “Hey Goober, you don’t wear striped pants with a checkered shirt. You’re starting first grade in the fall. Do you really want to be, ‘the kid who dresses like a rodeo clown?’”

He pulled a pair of jeans from Carl’s top drawer, and turned them right side out.

“Here, put these on.”

Just notes?
Are pieces
of the story
missing?

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While his brother changed, Patch checked himself in the mirror.

Carl finished, and backed stealthily out of the room.

"Last one to the kitchen's a dung beetle!" he said, closing the door behind him.

The two boys crashed into the kitchen, each with his sights on the first cheese omelet.

Mom was ready for them this morning. The table was already set with two plates of omelet and two glasses of milk.

just 2?

Carl hopped up in the chair across from his father. He lifted the edge of his omelet, peered under, and found it lacking. "Can I have syrup please?"

Their mother, Larue, was at the stove preparing a spinach omelet for herself.

"You most certainly may not young mouse. Between your Grandma and Uncle Quincy, you boys get too many sweets."

Their father, James, sat at the head of the table reading the back half of yesterday's newspaper.

How does he get paper?
mouse size?

*

Since James is always up and out before the day's paper arrives, he has a habit of reading the front half after dinner each evening, and the back half the next morning, with his coffee and toast.

James holds an important position in the mouse community. He is the duly appointed Chief of the Safety and Security Department, which includes himself, four officers, a secretary, and a cockroach trained to sniff out D-Con.

sent. frag.

The SSD patrols all three floors of the house, plus the attic.

They have numerous responsibilities, but their main task is to find traps and trip them. Once tripped, they split the cheese. It's one of the perks for taking on such a risky job.

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trading
with whom?

The best thing about cheese is you can trade it for almost any other food or useful thing.

Except for the teachers and old Doc Thomas, almost all of the adult mice in the house

make their living gathering and trading.

*

CLEVER TITLE!

WHY DO MICE HAVE HUMAN QUALITIES? CLOTHING?

WHO ELSE LIVES IN HOUSE?

WHERE IS THIS GOING?

SLOW START.

ENGAGE READER SOONER - ESPECIALLY TO GRASP THE
ATTENTION OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL READER.

Ed

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

ignore: imagine

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Patch had nothing better to do.
What started out as a day of big talk and little action, turned into an adventure none of them will ever forget.

* very funny and clever. good phrasing.
* zing up your verbs a little. don't go for the simplest or easiest

Chapter One

In a dark room, in a hollow wall, in a big house, in a small town, a loud noise woke Patch from a deep sleep.

It was a roaring sound rarely heard so early in the morning.

OV
- lounge
- why?

In the dim light, Patch saw his little brother Carl across the room, hunched in the corner at the top of his bed.

Carl clutched his tail with both hands, ears folded back.

Carl? Patch?

His eyes were wide like searchlights, frantically scanning the room for the source of the monstrous growl.

He could see...

new paragraph

There was the door, bookshelf, toy box, a beast with the arms of victims dangling from its mouth—The little mouse gasped, and then realized it was his dresser, with the shirt drawer open and sleeves hanging out.

When his scan reached Patch, Carl let out a sigh of relief, and whispered.

"Patch, what was that noise?"

"It's OK kid. That was just the Young Man's car. He left early."

Carl released his tail, and slid back under the "Amazing Mouse" blanket Grandma gave him for Christmas.

"Patch?"

* this section seems mainly about Carl, not Patch.

* don't remove the danger

* names?

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

“What?”

“I can’t go back to sleep.”

“Me either, but we should stay in here until Mom and Dad get up.”

Carl climbed out of bed and ran across the room, dragging Amazing Mouse behind. He jumped in next to Patch, and pulled the blanket tight.

“Patch?”

“What?”

“Are Alan and Karter really going to steal food from Abby’s dog bowl today?”

“That’s what they say.”

“In the middle of the kitchen, in the middle of the day, are they crazy?”

“Don’t worry. Those fellows talk big, but they’ll chicken out. Alan will come up with some excuse to save face. He always does”

Carl was quiet for a few seconds.

“Patch?”

“What now?”

“If they do try to steal Abby’s food, will you go to?”

“Well, if Alan is dumb enough to do it, Karter will be dumb enough to follow, and I’ll have to go along.”

“Why?”

“It’s hard to explain.”

“Why?”

“Ok look. The guys and me are starting middle school this fall. In sixth grade, reputation is everything. I don’t want to be known as, ‘the one who wimped out.’”

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Carl tried to object, but Patch continued.

"It's all good. Abby's a cool dog. She's just curious. Worst case scenario, we get soaked by ^{her} that big slobbery tongue." ^{reassuring smile?}

don't remove danger!

Carl wasn't so easily convinced.

what about something like "Carl fidgeted"

"What about the Woman? She's in the kitchen all the time. What about ^{And Haley} that cat, Haley?"

She's so quiet you ^{would never} won't hear her coming. That cat will do more than just lick."

"I know. I know. Alan and Karter know, too."

The sound of voices ⁽¹¹⁾ rode a tantalizing aroma in from the kitchen.

Patch gave Carl a punch on the arm. "Let's go, Squirt. Mom and Dad are up, and I smell cheese omelets."

Carl sat up and sniffed. His heighten ^{ed} fear of a possible monster had slowly diminished from the moment he saw Patch. Now, the smell of Mom's omelets overpowered what little fear lingered.

make it a verb: "But he was still aware of ..."

This made way for the usual awareness a little brother has, of the torment a big brother might inflict at any moment. ^{on a little brother}

In an ^{immediately} instant, Carl knew what was coming, but it was too late.

Patch pushed him back down and slowly rolled ^{shoved?} across, "Steamroller!" ^{over him, yelling} to the edge of the bed, and up. ^{until he reached}

When Carl finally peeled himself out of bed, he scrambled to the ^{the mattress? or sheets?} "beast" dresser and rummaged for clothes. ^{that was no longer a beast}

^{Across the room,} Patch pulled on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt that read, The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese. ["]

"What does that mean?" Carl asked, pulling on a pair of striped pants.

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

“Nothing. Well, ^{once} something, but it’s not for little kids like you. When you’re my age, you’ll understand.”

Carl stopped digging for a shirt, and looked up at his brother.

“Uncle Quincy told me there are whole houses where the mice don’t wear clothes.”

~~Their mother’s brother Quincy is quite a character. He’s a fountain of useless~~

^{Both} ~~the boys think he’s~~ ^{thought he was} the greatest thing since Cheez Whiz. ^{He was}
^{happily}
^{relieve}

“Uncle Q’s right. There are lots of houses where none of the mice wear clothes. They don’t have jobs, or go to day camp. ^{ie. their} They don’t talk, and they also don’t have Mom’s cheese omelets for breakfast.”

Carl ^{gasp} ~~closed his eyes~~, and tried to imagine such a house. “I wonder what that would be like.”

Patch chuckled. “You don’t have to wonder. Just show up at Mom’s breakfast table without clothes, and see what it’s like.”

At the thought of that, Carl ^{pulled} grabbed the first shirt he saw, put it on quickly, and headed for the kitchen.

Patch blocked the door. “Hey Goober, you don’t wear striped pants with a checkered shirt. You’re starting first grade in the fall. Do you really want to be, ‘the kid who dresses like a rodeo clown?’”

^{Patch} He pulled a pair of jeans from Carl’s top drawer, ^{and} turned them right side out, ^{and fossed them} ^{to Patch,}

“Here, put these on.”

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

While his brother changed, Patch checked himself in the mirror.

reaction?

Carl finished, and backed stealthily out of the room.

slamming?

"Last one to the kitchen's a dung beetle!" he said, closing the door behind him.

result of race

The two boys crashed into the kitchen, each with his sights on the first cheese omelet.

Mom was ready for them ~~this morning~~. The table was already set with two plates of omelet and two glasses of milk.

into

Carl hopped up in the chair across from his father. He lifted the edge of his omelet, peered under, and found it lacking. "Can I have syrup please?"

Their mother, Larue, was at the stove preparing a spinach omelet for herself.

"You most certainly may not, young mouse. Between your Grandma, and Uncle Quincy, you boys get too many sweets."

reaction?

Their father, James, sat at the head of the table reading the back half of yesterday's newspaper.

their father was

Since James is always up and out before the day's paper arrives, he had a habit of reading the front half after dinner each evening, and the back half the next morning, with his coffee and toast.

their father held

James holds an important position in the mouse community. He is the duly appointed Chief of the Safety and Security Department, which includes himself, four officers, a secretary, and a cockroach trained to sniff out D-Con.

--or SSD--

patrol

The SSD patrol all three floors of the house, plus the attic.

They had numerous responsibilities, but their main task is to find traps, and trip them.

Once tripped, they split the cheese. It's one of the perks for taking on such a risky job.

It was

but what

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

The best thing about cheese ^{was!} is you ^{could} trade it for almost any other food or useful thing ^{you want}

Except for the teachers, and old Doc Thomas, almost all of the adult mice in the house
make their living gathering and trading.

*

Jenni's comments

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Chapter One

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Patch from a deep sleep.

It was a roaring sound rarely heard so early in the morning.

In the dim light, Patch's ~~saw~~ little brother Carl ~~across the room~~ hunched in the corner at the top of his bed.

Carl clutched his tail with both hands, ears folded back.

His eyes were ~~wide~~ like searchlights, frantically scanning the room for the source of the monstrous growl.

There was the door, bookshelf, toy box, a beast with the arms of victims dangling from its mouth—The little mouse gasped, and then realized it was his dresser, with the shirt drawer open and sleeves hanging out.

When his scan reached Patch, Carl let out a sigh of relief, and whispered.

“Patch, what was that noise?”

“It's ~~Okay~~ kid. That was just the Young Man's car. He left early.”

Carl released his tail, and slid back under the “Amazing Mouse” blanket Grandma gave him for Christmas.

“Patch?”

Comment [PHS IS1]: I like the anaphora, but you shouldn't start with a character waking up. It's way over done.

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

“What?”

“I can’t go back to sleep.”

“Me either, but we should stay ~~in~~ here until Mom and Dad get up.”

Carl climbed out of bed and ran across the room, dragging Amazing Mouse behind. He jumped in next to Patch, and pulled the blanket tight.

“Patch?”

“What?”

“Are Alan and Karter really going to steal food from Abby’s dog bowl today?”

“That’s what they say.”

“In the middle of the kitchen, in the middle of the day, are they crazy?”

“Don’t worry. Those fellows talk big, but they’ll chicken out. Alan will come up with some excuse to save face. He always does”

Carl was quiet for a few seconds.

“Patch?”

“What now?”

“If they do try to steal Abby’s food, will you go, too?”

“Well, if Alan is dumb enough to do it, Karter will be dumb enough to follow, and I’ll have to go along.”

“Why?”

“It’s hard to explain.”

“Why?”

“Okay look. The guys and me are starting middle school this fall. In sixth grade, reputation is everything. I don’t want to be known as, ‘the one who wimped out.’”

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Carl tried to object, but Patch continued.

“It’s all good. Abby’s a cool dog. She’s just curious. Worst case scenario, we get soaked by that big slobbery tongue.”

Carl wasn’t so easily convinced.

“What about the Woman? She’s in the kitchen all the time. What about that cat, Haley? She’s so quiet you won’t hear her coming. That cat will do more than just lick.”

“I know. I know. Alan and Karter know, too.”

~~The sound of~~Voices ~~and a rode a~~ tantalizing aroma ~~rode~~ in from the kitchen.

Patch gave Carl a punch on the arm. “Let’s go, Squirt. Mom and Dad are up, and I smell cheese omelets.”

Carl sat up and sniffed. His heighten fear of a possible monster had slowly diminished from the moment he saw Patch. Now, the smell of Mom’s omelets overpowered what little fear lingered.

dry voice
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In an instant, Carl knew what was coming, but it was too late.

Patch pushed him back down and slowly rolled across, “Steamroller!” to the edge of the bed, and up. “Steamroller!”

~~When~~ Carl finally peeled himself out of bed, ~~and he~~ scrambled to the “beast” dresser and rummaged for clothes.

Patch pulled on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt that read, “The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese.”

“What does that mean?” Carl asked, pulling on a pair of stripped pants.

Striped

Comment [PHS 152]: You’re jump around between Patch’s and Carl’s POV. Choose one and stick with it.

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

“Nothing. Well something, but it’s not for little kids like you. When you’re my age, you’ll understand.”

Carl stopped digging for a shirt, and looked up at his brother.

“Uncle Quincy told me there are whole houses where the mice don’t wear clothes.”

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At the thought of that, Carl grabbed the first shirt he saw, pulled it on quickly, and headed for the kitchen.

Patch blocked the door. “Hey, Goober, you don’t wear striped pants with a checkered shirt. You’re starting first grade in the fall. Do you really want to be, ‘the kid who dresses like a rodeo clown?’”

He pulled a pair of jeans from Carl’s top drawer, and turned them right side out,

“Here, put these on.”

Does this need to be here? why?

Formatted: Centered

Comment [PHS IS3]: Did you mean to switch from past tense to present tense?

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OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

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Carl finished, and backed stealthily out of the room.

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The two boys crashed into the kitchen, each with his sights on the first cheese omelet.

Mom was ready for them ~~this morning~~. The table was already set with two plates of omelet and two glasses of milk.

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“You most certainly may not, young mouse. Between ~~your~~ Grandma, and Uncle Quincy, you boys get too many sweets.”

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OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

The best thing about cheese is you can trade it for almost any other food or useful thing.

Except for the teachers, and old Doc Thomas, almost all of the adult mice in the house make their living gathering and trading.

*

Nice start. You can cut down on some of the play-by-play. Don't need so much detail about them getting dressed. Good that you worked in the plan for the mice-kids to steal food from the dog dish, since that sets up the upcoming event that I'm sure will (and should) go terribly wrong. Cute relationship between the brothers.

Comment [PHS 1S4]: Can this info be worked in later? It slows the story down.

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OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

James-

This is not the first story where the animals are the main characters, nor will it be the last i.e. Disney for one. But, if I weren't told that these initial characters were mice, I wouldn't be able to tell them from normal kids. It's the author's talent in details and technique that allows us, the readers, to see things through the very different eyes of mice, even ones who have brothers and parents who go to work.

In other words, I feel that this story needs a viewpoint change. Mice who sleep in beds, who have brothers and parents who go to work, who look forward to a cheese omelet for breakfast and go to school are very similar to children we all know. Could you try to observe the world through a mouse's eyes and work into the narrative some specific details that would be specific and unique to a mouse's experience?

There's really nothing else technically wrong with this cute story. Any technical comments are imbedded into the narrative.

So far there is no evil cat or angry person with the cleaver running around trying to kill the mice. So, there's little tension so far. That will have to change. Even a middle-school story has to have tension for the reader to read on.

Good luck with this interesting beginning.

Dave

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Chapter One

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~~It was a roaring sound rarely heard so early in the morning.~~

In the dim light, Patch saw little brother Carl across the room, hunched in the corner at the top of his bed.

Carl clutched his tail with both hands, ears folded back.

His eyes were wide like searchlights, frantically scanning the room for the source of the monstrous growl.

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There was the door, bookshelf, toy box, a beast with the arms of victims dangling from its mouth—The little mouse gasped, and then realized it was his dresser, with the shirt drawer open and sleeves hanging out. (Confusing paragraph. Try to separate the elements – the items, and the little mouse.)

When his scan reached Patch, Carl let out a sigh of relief, and whispered, “Patch, what was that noise?”

~~“Patch, what was that noise?”~~

“It’s Ok kid. That was just the Young Man’s car. He left early.”

Carl released his tail, and slid back under the “Amazing Mouse” blanket Grandma gave him for Christmas.

“Patch?”

“What?”

“I can’t go back to sleep.”

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Carl was quiet for a few seconds.

“Patch?”

“What now?”

“If they do try to steal Abby’s food, will you go ~~to~~ *too*?”

“Well, if Alan is dumb enough to do it, Karter will be dumb enough to follow, and I’ll have to go along.”

“Why?”

“It’s hard to explain.”

“Why?”

“Ok look. The guys and me are starting middle school this fall. In sixth grade, reputation is everything. I don’t want to be known as, ‘the one who wimped out.’”

Carl tried to object, but Patch continued, “It’s all good. Abby’s a cool dog. She’s just curious. Worst case scenario, we get soaked by that big slobbery tongue.”

~~“It’s all good. Abby’s a cool dog. She’s just curious. Worst case scenario, we get soaked by that big slobbery tongue.”~~

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“What about the Woman? She’s in the kitchen all the time. What about that cat, Haley? She’s so quiet you won’t hear her coming. That cat will do more than just lick.”

“I know. I know. Alan and Karter know too.

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Patch gave Carl a punch on the arm “Let’s go, Squirt. Mom and Dad are up, and I smell cheese omelets.”

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

Carl sat up and sniffed. His heighten^{ed} fear of a possible monster had slowly diminished from the moment he saw Patch. Now, the smell of Mom's omelets overpowered what little fear lingered.

This made way for the usual awareness a little brother has^(,) of the torment a big brother might inflict at any moment.

In an instant, Carl knew what was coming, but it was too late.

Patch pushed him back down and slowly rolled across, "Steamroller!" to the edge of the bed, and up.

When Carl finally peeled himself out of bed, he scrambled to the "beast" dresser and rummaged for clothes.

Patch pulled on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt that read, "The early bird might get the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese." Good!

"What does that mean?" Carl asked, pulling on a pair of stripped pants.

"Nothing. Well something, but it's not for little kids like you. When you're my age, you'll understand."

Carl stopped digging for a shirt, and looked up at his brother.

"Uncle Quincy told me there are whole houses where the mice don't wear clothes."

* *(Why the separation?)*

Their mother's brother, Quincy, is quite a character. He's a fountain of useless information, a barrel of laughs, a jack-of-all-trades, and a storyteller extraordinaire. Naturally, the boys think he's the greatest thing since Cheez Whiz.

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“Uncle Q’s right. There are lots of houses where none of the mice wear clothes. They don’t have jobs, or go to day camp. They don’t talk, and they also don’t have Mom’s cheese omelets for breakfast.”

Carl closed his eyes, and tried to imagine such a house. “I wonder what that would be like.”

Patch chuckled. “You don’t have to wonder. Just show up at Mom’s breakfast table without clothes, and see what it’s like.”

At the thought of that, Carl grabbed the first shirt he saw, put it on quickly, and headed for the kitchen.

Patch blocked the door. “Hey Goober, you don’t wear striped pants with a checkered shirt. You’re starting first grade in the fall. Do you really want to be, ‘the kid who dresses like a rodeo clown’?”

He pulled a pair of jeans from Carl’s top drawer, and turned them right side out, “Here, put these on.”

While his brother changed, Patch checked himself in the mirror.

Carl finished, and backed stealthily out of the room.

“Last one to the kitchen’s a dung beetle!” he said, closing the door behind him.

The two boys crashed into the kitchen, each with his sights on the first cheese omelet.

Mom was ready for them this morning. The table was already set with two plates of omelet and two glasses of milk.

Carl hopped up in the chair across from his father. He lifted the edge of his omelet, peered under, and found it lacking. “Can I have syrup please?”

Their mother, Larue, was at the stove preparing a spinach omelet for herself.

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

“You most certainly may not young mouse. Between your Grandma, and Uncle Quincy, you boys get too many sweets.”

Their father, James, sat at the head of the table reading the back half of yesterday’s newspaper.

*

Since James is always up and out before the day’s paper arrives, he has a habit of reading the front half after dinner each evening, and the back half the next morning, with his coffee and toast. *(Nice detail.)*

James holds an important position in the mouse community. He is the duly appointed Chief of the Safety and Security Department. Which includes himself, four officers, a secretary, and a cockroach trained to sniff out D-Con.

The SSD patrols all three floors of the house, plus the attic.

They have numerous responsibilities, but their main task is to find traps, and trip them. Once tripped, they split the cheese. It’s one of the perks for taking on such a risky job.

The best thing about cheese is you can trade it for almost any other food or useful thing.

Except for the teachers, and old Doc Thomas, almost all of the adult mice in the house make their living gathering and trading.

*

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

creatively need -
from mouse point of view

Susan

need conflict - not necessarily

Alan and Karter wanted a legendary adventure.

Pam and Hannah wanted to see the pigs rumored to live on the top floor.

Patch had nothing better to do.

What started out as a day of big talk and little action, turned into an adventure none of them will ever forget.

mouse trap

Turn it into a story

create the mouse world

— where do they live?

Chapter One

In a dark room, in a hollow wall, in a big house, in a small town, a loud noise woke Patch from a deep sleep.

It was a roaring sound rarely heard so early in the morning.

In the dim light, Patch saw little brother Carl across the room, hunched in the corner at the top of his bed.

Carl clutched his tail with both hands, ears folded back.

His eyes were wide like searchlights, frantically scanning the room for the source of the monstrous growl.

There was the door, bookshelf, toy box, a beast with the arms of victims dangling from its mouth—The little mouse gasped, and then realized it was his dresser, with the shirt drawer open and sleeves hanging out.

When his scan reached Patch, Carl let out a sigh of relief, and whispered.

“Patch, what was that noise?”

“It’s Ok kid. That was just the Young Man’s car. He left early.”

Carl released his tail, and slid back under the “Amazing Mouse” blanket Grandma gave

had given

him for Christmas.

“Patch?”

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

“What?”

“I can’t go back to sleep.”

“Me either, but we should stay in here until Mom and Dad get up.”

Carl climbed out of bed and ran across the room, dragging Amazing Mouse behind. He jumped in next to Patch, and pulled the blanket tight.

“Patch?”

“What?”

“Are Alan and Karter really going to steal food from Abby’s dog bowl today?”

“That’s what they say.”

“In the middle of the kitchen, in the middle of the day, are they crazy?”

“Don’t worry. Those fellows talk big, but they’ll chicken out. Alan will come up with some excuse to save face. He always does.”

Carl was quiet for a few seconds.

“Patch?”

“What now?”

“If they do try to steal Abby’s food, will you go to?”

“Well, if Alan is dumb enough to do it, Karter will be dumb enough to follow, and I’ll have to go along.”

“Why?”

“It’s hard to explain.”

“Why?”

“Ok look. The guys and me are starting middle school this fall. In sixth grade, reputation is everything. I don’t want to be known as, ‘the one who wimped out.’”

OF MEN AND MICE BY JAMES KABLER (NOVELLA-PROBABLY MIDDLE GRADE)

Carl tried to object, but Patch continued.

"It's all good. Abby's a cool dog. She's just curious. Worst case scenario, we get soaked by that big slobbery tongue."

Carl wasn't so easily convinced.

"What about the Woman? She's in the kitchen all the time. What about that cat, Haley? She's so quiet you won't hear her coming. That cat will do more than just lick."

"I know. I know. Alan and Karter know too."⁽¹¹⁾

The sound of voices rode a tantalizing aroma in from the kitchen.

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This made way for the usual awareness a little brother has, of the torment a big brother might inflict at any moment.

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“Uncle Quincy told me there are whole houses where the mice don’t wear clothes.”

cute

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} *don't need no*

*

“Uncle Q’s right. There are lots of houses where none of the mice wear clothes. They don’t have jobs, or go to day camp. They don’t talk, and they also don’t have Mom’s cheese omelets for breakfast.”

Carl closed his eyes, and tried to imagine such a house. “I wonder what that would be like.”

Patch chuckled. “You don’t have to wonder. Just show up at Mom’s breakfast table without clothes, and see what it’s like.”

✓ funny

At the thought of that, Carl grabbed the first shirt he saw, put it on quickly, and headed for the kitchen.

Patch blocked the door. “Hey Goober, you don’t wear striped pants with a checkered shirt. You’re starting first grade in the fall. Do you really want to be, ‘the kid who dresses like a rodeo clown?’”

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“Here, put these on.”

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→ no objection
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*

8-12 yrs old

too typical - can't tell they're not human

- no tension -

"Tale of Despair"

the 1st speaker and have it be different

- head-hopping -