Thomas the Rat

A Furry Story

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Chapter 1 - How I Got My Name

 I am Thomas, a twelve inch long golden brown city rat, but not just any golden brown city rat, for I can think, speak and even walk just like you can. I was born in the city sewers, near what humans call a nuclear power plant. My parents had both died, not long after I was born, killed by humans while searching for food and I had to learn quickly to survive in the sewers on my own. Somehow, even though I was very young and very small, I had learned very quickly and began to thrive, deep in the sewers. I soon became big and strong in the deep dark shadows, far away from the human’s prying eyes growing stronger and smarter every day.

 I knew right from the very start, that I was different from the other rats in the sewers. I found that, unlike the other rats, I could reason and solve difficult problems that came up from time to time in the sewers, things like flooding of the nest during rainy days. I had found a hole, high in the sewer walls, on a small ledge. I climbed the wall to it and made my nest in it, using a thin piece of rope that I found to climb down from it. I found that I could hold and manipulate things in my forepaws, like a human can. I also learned to use things to help me, like this thin piece of rope, which I learned to tie a knot in and use it to pull things up to my nest, as well.

 I found that, unlike the other rats, I could see in color, clear and at great distance, when outside in the light. It took me some time to get use to the light of day, after being in the dark most of my life. When I got used to it, I began to explore outside of the sewers, quite often, during the day. I found that, just outside the grate, was what humans called a park, a place where they went to rest, relax and play. I would sneak out just before dawn, and hide in the thick bushes, just outside the sewer grate. I would then watch the humans walk by all day and see what they were up to. I would sit and listen to them talking all day to each other and slowly learned to understand what it was they were saying.

 Sometimes the humans would drop things around, what they called, trash cans, or accidentally leave them by the benches they were sitting in. I would sneak up when no one was around and pick them up, carrying them to a bush and try to figure out what they were used for. Most of the time it was just trash, but once in a while I found a treasure and would carry it back to my nest and store it there. Soon my nest was cluttered with all sorts of shiny and useful things, like a shiny pocket watch, a pen knife, a candle and some matches, which I learned painfully to use very carefully.

 I also found that I could walk and even run on my hind legs like a human, when I wanted to. This often came in handy when I found something too big to carry in my mouth and wanted to carry it to my nest, even with a big vicious cat, on my heels. One day, I had found a small pen light on the ground and picked it up. I looked it over trying to figure out what it was, when suddenly a big black and white pussy cat found me and began to come for me quickly. I suddenly realized I was still holding the pen light, while running for my life, on my hind legs, as fast as I could. I looked down and saw my hind feet moving quickly beneath me and put my head down and gave it all I had.

 I finally made it to the grate that covered the sewers and dove inside, for shelter, landing on my hind paws. The cat clawed at me and I moved back, pushing the button on the pen light, by accident and turning to on. I then slowly walked away on my hind legs, playing with the light and totally ignoring the cat, as it relentlessly tried to get at me through the iron bars. I took it back to my nest, tied it to my rope, climbed up it into my nest and pulled the pen light up into it. Let’s see an ordinary rat do that. It was later, after the light became dim and then stopped working all together, that I found out about the batteries, but more of that later.

 Because of these differences, the other rat, though me strange and would not come near me, often chasing me away if I tried to get too near them, or their nests. I soon found myself totally isolated from them and felt all alone. I began to spend more time outside the sewers, then inside, watching the humans and picking up things they dropped. I would look at the humans talking to each other and wished I could talk to them also. I had tried many times, but every time I tried, they would chase me away too, just like the rats and so I found I was isolated from them, as well, caught between two worlds, but never part of either.

 So I turned to learning what I could from the humans and how they communicated, like through books and newspapers. An old lady, who often came to the park, used to read out loud to herself and I would sit in a tree behind her and follow her hand movements, as she read, to see what the word, she spoke, looked like. My mind seemed to be able to quickly decipher their written language and soon I was reading books and newspapers, myself. That’s how I discovered that I needed only to replace the battery in the pen light to make it work again and soon had light in my nest, once more. My vocabulary grew every day and soon I could read as well as any human could.

 I also learned a lot about what they thought of us rats and it wasn‘t very nice. I saw many ads in the magazines and newspapers for rat poisons, rat traps and my all-time favorite, the glue trap, which is quite a very horrible way to die, if you ask me. Also there are these humane traps which is supposed to trap us alive, but that is only if they check them often and don‘t let us starve to death in them first. Then, even if they do check them and take us out, they would sell us to some pet store to become snake food or just, as they call it, put us to sleep humanly, which is quite ironic in itself. Either way you slice it, I’m still dead and I don’t relish that thought at all.

 This information has saved my life, more than once and also the lives of the other rats in the sewers. Now that I knew what they looked like and how they worked, I would disarm them and or dispose of them quickly. However, even though I had all this vast amount of knowledge, I still found myself caught in one of their cleverer animal traps, one day, while trying to disarm it. The male human that caught me, then took me to a medical lab and sold me to them for blood money. I was then strapped down and a number was shaved and tattooed into my right hip and they put me in a strong cage.

 They soon began trying to use me, as a test subject, in some kind of sick, twisted experiment of theirs. Other rats and many types of other animals were there already, some sick or dying from what they had been doing to them and I realized quickly, that I had to find a way out and soon, or wind up just like them or worse, dead. I soon began to notice them, putting things into my food and water and pretended to consume it, instead tossed it out of my cage when they weren’t looking. I only ate and drank what I though was safe and so confused them for a time. Nothing they tried to do to me seemed to be working and then they tried to sneak the stuff in, where I could not see them doing it. However, by time I knew what it smelt like and still managed to avoid it.

 I watched them daily carrying the dead bodies of other animals to a bin and dispose of them like so much garbage, making me keep ever vigilant to their tricks. They began, however, only giving me food and water with the stuff in it and I soon became hungry and thirsty, trying hard to resist eating or drinking it. I grew very weary and disheartened, laying around in my cage all day, looking at it and wanting it badly, but knew I had to resist. This went on day after day, a battle of wits and will, that I was somehow able to keep up with, so far. However my will was breaking and the humans are a very devious race and they found a way to finally fool me into eating something.

 I knew they won the battle, when I eat it hungrily, thinking it was safe and soon grew very feverish and my body started to tremble. Not long afterwards the pains in my head and stomach started and I began to heave violently. I can’t begin to describe the pain, but it was like I was being ripped apart from inside my body and mind, on a genetic level. This caused tremendous convulsions of my body that shook my cage violently again and again. I don’t know what they had given me, but I laid in my cage and remained like that for three long agonizing days, wanting to die, but somehow managing to survive through it.

 After the pain had finally passed, my body relaxed, floating in a fog which slowly began to clear. I quickly began to recover after that, to their amazement and felt even better for it, then I had before. I also seemed to be able to think even more clearly, then I had before. I realized quickly that I had to find a way out and soon before they decided to find out why I was able to survive this usually fatal experiment, by what they called, dissecting me. Which, by the way, I found out later, is a very unpleasant, discussing thing they do in the name of research and is very fatal to the recipient. Ever sense I was first locked up in this cage, I had been watching how they were opening it up. So that night, I managed to pry open my cage with a piece of metal bar that I broke off of it, finding myself even stronger then was before, also.

 At first I franticly ran around the lab trying to find a way out, but couldn’t and finally just calmed myself down and found a place to hide instead, till I could think of something. I finally remembered that the night janitor usually came in at night and disposed of the dead animals, so I found the bin that they put the dead animals in and slipped inside. I came, with a great fright, face to face with the cat that had chased me that day, in the park, when I found the pen light. I looked at it and felt very sad, even though it had tried to eat me, it didn’t deserve to die like this, either. Being a rat though, I was able to stand the awful smell in the bin and at last the night janitor came in.

 He unlocked the door and walked in, picking up the bin and took it out of the lab room. I peeked out of the bin, as he started down the hall to a set of stairs. He then carried it down several flights of stairs finally coming to a dark corridor that lead to a very warm room. There was a big black steel door and the night janitor opened it up and I saw a huge fire inside it and felt it’s intense heat and decided I didn‘t like it at all. I suddenly realized, with a jolt, he was going to toss the contents of this bin into it… which included me! I quickly jumped out of the bin and ran for my life, scaring the living daylights out of the janitor and so I managed to run up the stairs and got away. I quickly found a piece of heavy equipment and hid behind it panting hard, trying to catch my breath and calm down.

 Soon the place was crawling with humans trying to find me, especially when they realized I was a certain test subject that they wanted to examine. I found a spot under the equipment where I could watch them, without them seeing me. The lead lab technician was there, the one who had been working on me all along and ordered me captured dead or alive. “If it’s dead, I can still dissect him to find out what I want to know.” he said and then laughed sinisterly. I swallowed hard and remained out of sight till they gave up for the day and night fell once more. I then crept out cautiously and carefully continued my search for a way out of this mad house. Most of the ways out contained many humans with dogs, called security, both day and night, so I could not get out that way without being seen and possibly eaten by the dogs.

 I had made my way back up a few floors and was eating some crackers that I found behind a desk, on the floor. When the night janitor came out of a room with some bags and tossed then into an opening in the wall. It had a shiny metal chute sliding downward with a door at the end that had a strange symbol on it and opened outwards. He tossed in some more boxes and bags and I noticed the same strange symbol on them both. I wasn’t able to find out any more about the chute that night, as the lab began to come alive with humans once more, continuing their desperate search for me. I simply found a spot under a cabinet and slept there, until I was awakened, sometime later, by two humans talking near the chute.

 Apparently the older female was teaching the other female about how to do things around the place. “Now this chute is for throwing away biohazard materials, so don’t use it for anything else, it leads out to a bin outside that is picked up daily at 8:00 AM in the morning.” My ears perked up when I heard the word **outside**, but I wasn’t sure what this biohazard meant. “Oh well, it leads outside, that’s all I need to know.” I thought to myself and made my plans for tonight and then rested some more, as they continued the search for me.

 That night I stood there under the chute, trying to figure a way up to it, when the night janitor came out of a door carrying and large amount of boxed with that biohazard symbol on it. I hid under a chair peeking out from behind one of its legs, as he dropped them down in front of the chute. He then walked back into the room and I took my chance and began to quickly climb the pile of boxes. There was the smell of blood and other strange pungent odors coming from the boxes and bags, but I was focusing only on the chute and getting out of this horrible place.

 Suddenly, he came out of the room and saw me on the pile of boxes, he grabbed his broom and swung quickly at me. I managed to dodge it and landed on the very lip of the chute standing on my hind legs. He looked at me and said “Your that rat every ones been a looking for.” and struck at me, before I could jump in, knocking me some distance away. “The boss has put a big price on your head and I’m going to collect it right now.” He then came at me again swinging his broom once more, hitting some shelves. Equipment and boxes went flying everywhere, as he continued to chase me all around. He chased me all over the place swinging at me wildly and knocking over and breaking more things, becoming frightfully angry with me for some reason.

 Each time I made my way back to the chute he would manage to cut me off. Realizing he could not catch me alone, he then called on his walky-talky and soon other humans joined in on the chase. They destroyed almost everything in the area trying to catch me and it began to look like they might actually do it, as I was becoming exhausted from the chase. Then a door burst open and the lead technician burst in yelling out “What the #’@!$% is going on?!!” Everyone froze, except for me, who made a b-line for the chute and they all stood there in the shambles of the place and watched me, as I jumped in.

 I slid quickly down the chute and then fell several floors, into the most disgusting mess I had ever had the misfortune to fall into and being a rat I know disgusting. Apparently, someone had forgotten to pick up this bin for quite some time and I almost gagged myself, just from the stench of it. Luckily there was a large rusty hole in its side and I pulled myself, retching, out of the slimy mess. Several syringes were stuck in me and I pulled them, painfully, out of me. There was an open area to the outside, but I began to feel too sick to try to make a run for it. I then craw to a crack in the wall nearby and hid myself, inside of it, as they came down to look for me.

 No one wanted to open the bin and check inside, because it was, of course, a biohazard bin and they could get sick and die from it. A chill hit me and not because of this sudden revelation and then the pains started. The lead technician said “Don’t bother searching, he’s probably dead already, or soon will be, after falling into that mess.” I could still hear them looking around for a quite a while, as I just laid there, vomiting blood and holding my heaving stomach, until they finally left. At night I staggered and crawled weakly out of the crack and somehow found my way back to the safety of the sewers.

 I found myself a dark hole and crawled into it, laying there for days, as I trembled and shook uncontrollably, in a fevered daze. My fur fell out and I was blind for several days after my fever left me, but they both slowly returned fully. I don’t know what kept me alive all that time, but I managed to survive once again and lived to crawl back out of that hole, starving half to death. I began to eat anything I could get my paws on and luckily, humans, in the city throw a lot of food away. I became a one rat menace, knocking over trashcans and raiding them, eating everything I could find and vanishing without a trace, before the humans could come out to see what was going on.

 My health soon returned and I finally found my way back to my old nest, once more. I was soon back to my old ways and was stocking up my nest, once more, with all sorts of things the humans would discard or drop. I found a plastic thing that would light up when I pushed a button on it and showed a lighted picture of a blond female human. I pushed another button and another human female popped up on it. There were many human female pictures on it along with a series of numbers under them. Later that day, it began to play obnoxious music and I tried to make it stop. Then when I pressing a certain button and it stopped.

 I then heard a human female speak “Hello, Jorden, this is Marsha, I was wondering if you could come over and maybe we could get together later.” I said back at the picture of the young red haired human, now displayed on it “I’m not Jorden, but maybe you would like to talk to me, instead.” She went silent for a moment and said “Obviously, I have the wrong number, I’m sorry to have trouble you.” I said quickly “Please talk to me, I’m so lonely and have no one else to talk to.” This was not a lie, as I was lonely and had no one to talk to, as the other rats would not talk to me or even come near me.

 Again, she went silent and then said “Look you sound like a nice person, but I just can’t talk to someone I don’t know.” I said sadly “I understand and you’re right, you don’t know who I am and if you did you probably wouldn’t want to talk to me anyway. You sound like such a nice human female, so I think you’re too good for this Jorden fella, as he has way too many human female’s pictures and numbers on this thing of his. You need to find someone very special and I’m not talking about me ether.” and I pushed the other button and the picture went away.” I sat there in the dark silence, feeling for the first time really alone.

 Suddenly, the thing played that terrible music again and when I pushed the button again, the same red haired picture came up again. Then I heard her say “Listen I will take your advice about Jorden, if you will talk to me for a while.” I perked up and said “Sure, what do you want to know?” She hesitated a moment and said “Why did you call me a human female, just then, most people would have call me a woman?” I thought about it a moment and said “Because you are a human female and I’m not a human, I’m a rat.” She went silent a moment and said “You shouldn’t be so hard on yourself, you sound like a nice man.”

 I laughed at the thought, understanding what she was trying to say and said “No, really I’m a golden brown furry rat from the city’s sewers.” She giggled and said “If that’s so then why can you talk on a phone to me?” I thought about it for a moment and then said “I really don’t know, I just can, I found this thing and figured out how to use it.” “You mean the cell phone you stole from Jorden.” She said quickly and I replied “No, I mean the ceeell phoonne I found by a bench, while I was watching you humans in the park.” She laughed and said “You really think you’re a rat, don’t you?”

 “If you don’t believe me, come by the park tomorrow and see for yourself, smarty.” I said huffily and hung up. I sat there fuming for a while and then slowly fell asleep. I awoke the next day and washed and groomed my fur thoroughly, determined to confront the know-it-all human female, looking my best. I then went up to the bushes and waited for her to arrive. I knew I was taking my life in my own hands, exposing myself like this, but I was tired of being alone. I stood there in the bushed with the cell phone and waited and waited. Noon came and still she didn’t show up and then evening arrived and still she didn’t come.

 But just when the park lights came on and I was about to give up, I saw her, but she was not alone, there was a couple of policemen with her. They talked to her for a while and she said something to them and they then left. She walked slowly, looking around cautiously and sat on one of the park benches. I slowly crept up to the bench, staying in the shadows, as much as possible and then climbed up onto the bench. I looked at her from the corner and whispered “Hello.” She was startled and jumped up looking around “Who’s there, the cops are not far away and I will scream if you try anything.” I steeped out into the light and said “Relax, I mean you no harm.”

 She stood perfectly still and slowly looked down and froze, as she saw me. She turned slowly and seemed about to run when I implored her “Please! Don’t run away.” She stood there with her back to me, but made no attempt to run, so I continued “I know I’m just a rat and am really discussing to you humans, but please hear me out. I’m the only one like me, as far as I know and am so lonely. Please, be my friend.” She turned around and slowly sat down on the far corner of the bench staring at me. I then stood up on my hind legs and looked at her not sure what to say next.

 She started the conversation by clearing her throat and saying “Sooo…. What do I call you anyway?” I shook my head and said “I really don’t have a name, to tell you the truth.” She thought about it for a moment saying “Well I need to call you something, it’s not polite to say hay rat. What about… Thomas?” I thought about it for a moment and said “I like it… Thomas I am.” She looked at me curiously and said “Hello Thomas, I’m Marsha. So how did you learn to talk like this so well?” I pointed at the bushes and by the sewer and said “By hiding there in the bushes and listening to you humans talk.” She looked at me in wonder and said “You mean you taught yourself to talk?” I nodded.

 She then looked around me and said “Did you bring Jorden’s cell phone?” I said “I sure did and jumped down on the ground and picked it up. She got up and came around to me and I held it up for her to take. She looked at it and began to push the buttons, the look on her face changing to disgust and she said “Why you dirty rat…” I quickly said “What do you mean? I cleaned myself thoroughly before I came here, today.” She looked at me and held her hand over her mouth and said “Oh, I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean you. I was talking about Jorden. “ I looked at her and said “Well don’t make us any more discussing, by associating us with him.”

 She laughed and said “Your quite right.” and then she said “You mean you really washed yourself before you came here?” I smoothed out and spot in my sleek shiny fur and said “Washed and groomed myself thoroughly.” She sat down on the bench by me and said “My, I do feel special and honored by you. So where do you live, Thomas.” I pointed over to the bush by the grate and said “I live in the sewers behind that bush. I’ve lived there all alone sense I was a young baby rat.” She stood up and looked over at it saying “So you live all alone …”

 Suddenly someone approached, a big man in a mask and grabbed her putting his hand over her mouth and starting to drag her away. I got angry and growled running up his back and began to claw and bite at his masked head. He screamed and let her go trying to get me off of him and she ran away. I went wild growling and tearing at his head and face violently. He managed to grab me and throw me some distance away and then he pulled out a gun and shot me. It grazed me in the side, spinning me around and I collapsed on the ground, going unconscious.

 When I awoke I found myself laying in the middle of some sweet smelling wood shavings. I tried to get up, but the pain in my side was too much and I collapsed on my back. That’s when I noticed that my side was covered in cotton, with some kind of sticky stuff holding it on. I looked around and found myself in some kind of square glass container and it was on a table, in some kind of room. At first I thought I was back at the lab, but the door opened and the young red headed human female named Marsha came in the room and smiled at me, saying “I’m glad to see you awake, how do you feel my little hero.”

 I touched my side and found it sensitive and winced a bit saying “I’m ok, just a scratch. How are you, did he hurt you at all?” She hugged herself and said “I’m still a bit shook up by it, but other than that I’m fine. You messed the punk up pretty good though, before he shot you and they took him away to the local hospital under guard. I told the police that you were my pet rat and I was letting you enjoy the fresh air, so they let me take you with me, with a warning. I noticed the tattoo on your right hip and decided to take you to a friend of mine, instead of veterinarian, that is someone who tends to sick animals and might have contacted the lab you came from.”

 “My friend is helping me to heal you and will not contact the lab. ” she said, opening the top of the cage. I looked up at her and said “They took me from my home in the sewers and tried to hurt me. I would rather die than return there again.” I said angrily. She stepped back and said “Don’t worry I won’t let them get you, Thomas.” I calmed down and said “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you, it just that I almost died twice because of that place.” She smiled, bring her gentile hand down and rubbed me under my chin. I found myself leaning into her gentle touch, for the first time, trusting a human.

 “You’ll be safe with me and Mr. Perkins.” She said gently. The door suddenly opened and an old gray haired male human, who I had seen in the park many times, came in. He came up to the cage slowly, as not to startle me and said “Well Thomas, how are you feeling today?” I looked up at him and said “It still hurts a bit , but I seem to know you, weren’t you the one who use to drop some cheese down by the bench every time you came to the park?” He smiled down at me and said “Yes, I saw you many times peeking from the bushes at me and tried to get you to come to me, but you never did. Then you went missing for several weeks and I thought something bad had happened to you.”

 I looked at him and rubbed the tattoo on my hip and said “Something bad did happen to me, some humans in a lab tried to kill me and almost succeeded twice, with their sick experiment and syringes and I wasn‘t the only one there ether.” I then proceeded to tell them my story of the last few weeks. When I finished Marsha had both of her hands covering her mouth, with a look of horror on her face. The old human male looked disgruntled and said “I often wondered what they were doing in that place and now I think I know. I going to make some calls, I be right back.” and he left the room quickly.

 The Marsha picked me up gently and hugged me saying “Oh Thomas, I’m so sorry you went through all that. That was too cruel a thing to have gone through, even for a rat.” I looked up at her and said “That’s why I have been so lonely, the other rats in the sewers don’t like me, because of the way I am and until now I never trusted a human before, so I’ve had no one to talk to, till you came along.” She smiled down at me and said “Well I hope I can make things up to you for what’s happened to you.” I snuggled into her and said “You have already Marsha. Here I though all humans were out to get me and though me totally discussing, but you stopped and actually listened to me.”

 She sat me down on the table and said “To be totally truthful Thomas, at first you did frighten me and before I met you, I did think all rats were discussing. But there was something in the way you spoke to me and you did saved my life last night and now I can’t think of you as just a rat anymore.” I looked at myself and displayed my body to her and said “But that’s what I am, Marsha, I’m a rat. I may be able to talk and reason like you, but I’m still a rat. I’ve lived in the sewers and am brown and furry with whiskers, short round ears, a pointed muzzle and a long naked tail, a rat.” She smiled and said “I know that, but you’re also my friend now and that makes you special to me.”

 I thought about it a moment and said “I can live with that.” and stood up and offered my paw. She looked at me and then realizing what I was doing she took my paw and shook it gently. I then winced, as the pain hit me in the side and I sat back down holding my side. She said “Oh Thomas, let me get Mr. Perkins.” I held my paw up and said “No, I’ll be fine, just over exerted myself a bit, never been shot before.” She still looked concerned and left the room to look for Mr. Perkins. That’s when I heard her scream and cry out “Thomas run, their coming for you!” Suddenly understanding what she was saying I ran quickly for the opened window I saw and jumped through it, still holding my side, as I heard them burst into the room.

 Luckily I wasn’t very far up and slipped down the fire escape and jumped into a dumpster and hid amongst the garbage and waited. I could hear voices outside, Marsha was yelling at Mr. Perkins “Why did you betray Thomas to them?” Mr. Perkins said” I have been trying to get that rat for some times to sell him to that lab and know he worth millions to them now and I’m going to get him. So tell me, where is his home?” Marsha said “I’ll never tell you.” I looked out of the dumpster, as he grabbed her and jumped out and ran past him.

 He saw me and came after me and I ran, even though it hurt a lot. I then ran into traffic, under the mass of moving cars, seeing a sewer drain on the other side. There was the screech of tires and a loud thump, followed by people screaming, but I dodge the cars and made my way to the sewers. I stopped and looked back only a moment and saw Mr. Perkins lying face down in a pool of blood in front of a car and then dove into the sewers, hoping Marsha would be ok. I tried to make my way back to my home, but they were there snooping all around my home and I knew I would not be able to go back there right now.

 I then decided that I needed to find somewhere else to live, at least for a little while, till the heat was off. I then limped off, with a heavy heart down into the sewers and into the deep darkness of them once more.

Chapter 2 - My New Life, Deep in the Sewers

 I trudged on deeper and deeper into sewers and soon came upon an area that I had not been in before. By now my wound was healing nicely and I managed to get most of the sticky stuff off of me. I continued on for some time getting hungrier, but hearing and seeing nothing, but the water dripping from above into the runoff of rancid sewage. There seemed to be now end to it and soon I became worried. Then suddenly, I began to hear skittering up ahead and smelt the scent of rats coming nearer. All of a sudden I was bowled over by another smaller rat running hard and fast, right into me and we both fell hard to the unyielding concrete ground. We looked at each other, only a moment and then she got up quickly and ran off. Then large rat came around the corner and stopped, growing viciously at me and I growled right back at him and then we fought, tooth and nail. He soon found out that I wasn’t an ordinary rat and was far stronger then he was and quickly retreated.

 I stood there breathing heavily, whipping his blood from my claws, when she came up cautiously to me and I heard her said “Thanks.” then she covered her mouth and gasped. My jaw dropped, as I realized she had just spoken to me in human. She started to run away from me and I said “Please stop, I mean you no harm.” she stopped and slowly turned around, to stared at me. I could not believe what I was seeing or hearing and walked slowly up to her sniffing at her curiously. She froze, as I walked slowly around her and said “Please… don’t hurt me.” I stood up in front of her on my hind legs and said “Are you for real or am I just dreaming?” She stood on her hind legs and said “I… If that is so… then we are both in the same dream.” and then bowled me over again and nuzzled into me this time and we stared into each other‘s eyes for a long moment.

 Then there came more scurrying up ahead and she quickly got up on her feet and said “RUN!” and ran off. I quickly followed after her, as I realized my defeated opponent was bringing some of his close friends with him. She came to a runoff full of rapidly running sewage and jumped onto something big, floating in the middle of it and then onto the other side. I did the same and landed next to her, as she grabbed a rope and pulled hard. When the first rat tried to follow us he found the floating thing missing from under him and fell into the sewage and was quickly washed down stream. The other’s hissed and growled at us, but she just stood there and held the rope until they left and then walked off unconcerned.

 I saw the rope go taunt once more and the floating thing slowly went back to where it was. I then quickly followed her and said “That was incredible, you’re pretty smart for a female rat.” She stopped and began to chuckle, as she turned around slowly to face me. That’s when I got a good look at her, as rats go, she was gorgeous and I felt my heart skip a beat. “And you must be pretty strong to have beaten Stroth so easily.” I looked at her, as she walked up to me and said “Stroth?” She nuzzled me and said “That huge vicious male rat, who was chasing me that you just trounced back there.” We then suddenly heard some more ruckus from behind us and she said “Quickly, follow me to my nest.” and she ran off, with me quickly following her.

 She made her way down the sewers and came to a hole in the wall and darted through it. I followed her quickly and she pulled a stick and a brick fell down over the passage. We stood still, as the skittering of many clawed paws went by and then she led me down a path to a large opening she had, as a nest. There was way more cool human junk here then I could have ever put in my old home. Then suddenly there was bright lights and I discovered that she had a string of lights hung all around her nest and had hooked them up to an old exposed electric wire in the wall. I was simply amazed by what I saw, as I looked around and then I came nose to nose with her.

 “Ok mister, where did you come from and how did you find your was down here?” she said aggressively. I looked at her, as she pushed me back and I said nervously “Look, my name is Thomas and I lived, all alone for over two year, near what the humans call a nuclear power plant, on the east side of the city. I was captured by humans, held captive for nearly two weeks and nearly killed by them. I then got shot by one, betrayed by another human and then got chased out of my home by them. I then blundered my way down here in the dark, lost and alone, nearly starving to death. Then I got attacked by a huge crazed rat, after being ran over by you.” By this time she had me pinned up against the wall of her nest holding me there by my neck and looking at me fiercely. I suddenly began to fear for my life, when she simply said “Oh.” and just let go of me. I fell flat to the floor, on my face and laid there stunned for a moment, as I watched her walk away slowly on her hind legs, swaying her hips gently, as she walked.

 I got up, brushing myself off and cautiously walked up behind her, as she laid down on her soft comfortable looking bed, in the middle of her nest. She rolled over, turning her back to me and said “You can make yourself at home, if you like. There is some cheese over there in a box and you can sleep over there in the corner.” and then pointed to the box of cheese and then to a pile of cotton, never once turning around to look at me. I looked at her in surprise and then walked huffily over to the box of cheese and broke off a piece. I then stomped over to the pile of cotton, eating the cheese and threw myself down on it, grumbling to myself.

 After I had laid there for a while, being only half asleep, I felt her climb in next to me and lay down beside me, thinking I was sound asleep. I just laid there quietly, enjoying the warmth of her soft furred body next to mine and basked in the knowledge that I was no longer alone, even if she was a bit crazy. She then cuddled into me and we soon fell sound asleep. I then had a dream for the very first time in my life, of her and me standing in a field of tall grass. The wind was gently blowing her soft fur around and the sun shone in it brightly. There were tall trees nearby and not a building in sight and the only sound was of birds chirping in the trees and the sound of crickets. I then saw several young rats running up to us and realized they were ours and I felt happiness like I never felt before.

 The next morning, I woke up next to her soft warm body and just laid there looking at her lovely soft furred face, as she slept, hardly believing my eyes. Suddenly she stirred, opening her deep amber eyes wide and then jumping back, startled. She then blushed, seeing me just lying there just watching her quietly. I smiled and said “Good morning.” she gathered her wits and said, shyly” G… good morning.” realizing I had caught her sleeping next to me. She then got up and quickly walked away from me to the other side of her nest, turning her head to look back at me for a moment. She then slipped into another hole in the side of her nest and I heard her skittering away.

 I laid there for a while feeling confused; I had finally found a beautiful female that was just like me and she seemed shy, almost afraid of me. I began to search my own feelings and realized that I too was a bit afraid of her as well. I had been on my own for so long, struggling hard to survive, being rejected by all of the other rats. I had begun to think that I was the only one like me, in all the world. Now here she was, every bit as cleaver and resourceful as me and so soft, warm and beautiful, as well. I was having strange feelings inside me for her and it started to frighten me a bit, never having felt like this before.

 I got up and looked around her nest, finding some very interesting things lying about. “She did say I could make myself at home.” I said to myself and I began to gather up some things from her vast hoard. I found some strong thick string and a large treble type fishing hook and tied the string to it tightly and coiled the string up. I also found some small firecrackers and some white tipped matches. I knew what firecrackers were, from watching the human children play with them in the park, on various occasions and remembered painfully what the match could do. I put them both into a small change purse with a short leather strap. I had found it laying around and found that it would hang right over my neck and shoulders comfortably. I then found what I thought was a long sharp metal letter opener, but I could hold it easily in my forepaws like it was made for my hand and set it aside also.

 Then I found something that made me stop and stare. There in the pile of human junk was a small shiny gold object like a ring or bracelet and I picked it up slowly. I found myself slipped it over my head and sliding it down my long neck, almost to my shoulders, a perfect fit. I looked into a large mirror that was leaning up against the wall of her nest and admired how good it looked on me, against my golden brown fur. I had seen pictures of humans wearing such things around their necks, but this was way too small for a human, but it seemed to fit me nicely, like it was made for me. It had an intricate carvings of a vine that entwined all around it, with bright silver gold leaves. There on the front, where it came to a point above my chest, was an amber gem, that seemed have an inner light of its own.

 She then suddenly came up behind me, from out of nowhere and rested her head on my shoulder looking at my reflection in the mirror and saying “It looks very good on you Thomas. My father found it and gave it to me not long ago.” I started to take it off, but she stopped me and said “It all right, you can have it for rescuing me last night. It looks better on you then it ever did on me anyway.” I still took it off and said “Thanks, but it was you that rescued us both, not me.” She stood back up and I turned to her, handing it to her. She took it and reached up slipping it back over my head and down my long neck to my shoulder once more and said “Then except it as a gift from me.” I then touched it and said “Then I will accept your gift, although I have nothing to give you in return.”

 She touched my cheek and looked deep into my eyes, saying “Just don’t leave me, Thomas. I’ve been all alone sense my parents disappeared mysteriously, a year ago.” I cock my head to one side and said “Mysteriously?” She nodded sadly and said “Sense I was born, they had taken good care of me in this very nest, teaching me all they knew and how to survive in the sewers. Then one day, my father came back with that very lovely thing and said they had found something wonderful, but never said what it was. After that they both began going out exploring the southern sewers, where all the runoff sewage goes. I desperately wanted to go with them, but they said it was much too dangerous for me. They would be gone longer and longer, each time they went out and then one day they never returned.”

 She then buried her face in my chest fur and began to sob quietly. I hugged her and said “At least you knew your parents for a while, mine had died not long after I was born. I have been all alone ever sense then, as the other rats in the sewers wanted nothing to do with me. I had to learn to survive on my own.” She looked up with a start and said “You were that young and learned to survive, all on your own?” I nodded and said “It was very hard at first, but I seem to have an inner strength, that keeps me going and my instincts for survival are keen. I was able to learn quickly what I needed and where to find it, avoiding humans at first, until I had grown up. I then began exploring the outside world. I watched the humans and learned to do things they did. I learned to speak and read their language and later learned to write it, as well.” She looked up at me in surprise and said “You can write?”

 I nodded and she said “I can’t even do that, yet, you’ll have to teach me.” Then suddenly the gem began to glow between us and she stepped back, with her eyes opened wide in surprise. I closed my eyes and began to feel a strangely warm and euphoric, feeling like I was floating above the ground. I then felt myself returning to the ground and then collapsed to it and blacked out. My dream continued, as suddenly a storm erupted and we franticly gathered our children. I then turned and saw a dark monstrous form coming for us and cried out in fear, waking up with a start to find her looking down at me with a look of great concern on her face, saying “Thomas are you all right?” I just looked at her and smiled saying “I just realized, you’ve never even told me your name yet.” Taken aback by my words, she shyly said “I… I’m Tareesa.” I reached up and brushed her cheek gently and said “That’s a nice name for such a beautiful rat, like you.”

 She blushed and said “You’re not yourself Thomas, that thing has done something to you.” and help me to my feet and tried to remove the necklace, but it would not come off. She tugged at it, until I placed my hands on hers and then she looked up at me and stared deep into my eyes and I said “I have never been more myself than ever before.” and kissed her deeply. She pushed me back, away from her, panting a bit and said “Please don’t do that.” and walked away from me. I chided myself for being so bold, but she was right, I wasn’t being myself. I walked slowly up to her saying “You’re right, I’m not myself. I’m sorry, but I meant every word I said. You are the most beautiful female rat that I have ever seen in all my life and very intelligent as well.” I removed the necklace and held it out to her and said “If this is going to come between us, then I give it back to you.”

 She looked at it and then smiled, walking up to me and taking it, placing it back over my neck and said “It’s yours and for some reason, for good or bad, has responded to you.” I touched the amber gem and said “Maybe it will lead us to your parents.” As if in response a glowing pointer appeared right between us, moved a bit and then settled in one direction. She stepped back looking at it and then away to where it was pointing.” She turned in that direction and said slowly, as if in a dream “It’s pointing towards the southern sewers. M… my parents… are there, but can they still be alive?” I looked at the brightly glowing pointer and said “It burns very bright and I somehow feel certain that means they are still alive and well.” She came up to me excitedly, as the pointer winked out and said “Then we must go to them, Thomas. They must have given it to me in the hopes that I would discover its purpose, but it never responded to me. You were meant to find it and lead me to them.”

 I held up my hands and said “Now let’s not go rushing off, without planning ahead and gathering things for the dangerous journey. We need to figure out how to get past those vicious rats and there will be more dangers than that, I’m certain, before we get there. We need to search through all your stuff and find if there is other things that your parents may have found and hidden here for you to find.” She seemed angry at me at first, for hesitating, but sudden realization crossed her face and she looked around and lowered her head, closing her eyes, saying “Your right. No use going off half-cocked and getting ourselves both killed.” I walked up to her and hugged her gently, saying “I’m certain they are all right.” She looked up at me and said “I so glad, we met, Thomas. You make me feel so happy and safe, just like when my parents were around.” I closed my eyes and held her, saying “Just call me big brother.” She put her arms around me and said “No… you’re much more than that, to me.” I opened my eyes to find her looking deeply into them and then she gently took my head in her hands and kissed me lovingly.

 She blushed and then turned, slowly walked away, saying “But please understand… I’m feeling both afraid and uncertain right now. I need more time to search my feelings about you.” I watched her walk away, knowing what she meant, as I was feeling the same way too, about her. I had never experienced feelings like this before and didn’t know what to do. I looked down and looking at the things I had found more closely. The letter opener, or what I had thought was a letter opener, that I had found, fit my hand much too good and was way too sharp to be what I had thought it was. It was double edged and very sharp and was ornamented with small very intricate gems in it hilt. “A sword perhaps?” I thought to myself, but it was way too small for a human. I had read about swords, but had never seen one, but it fit the description. I swished it around and realized it could be used against the vicious rats to fight them off and could be very dangerous, if used unwisely. It felt good in my hand, as if it were made for it.

 I looked around to find, where I had found it, for something to put it in to keep from cutting myself while I carried it and found it’s scabbard and a little belt, both of which I had also read about. I suddenly realized these things were made for a rat about my size, but who made them, surly hot a human. I slipped the sword into the scabbard and found them to fit nicely together. I then placed the belt around my waist and found it to fit nicely also. “Was it possible, that her parents had found other intelligent rats like ourselves, down the southern sewers, that were more advance then us.” I thought to myself, as I touched the gem on the necklace. It seemed to grow warm to the touch and I realized it was responding to me.

 I closed my eyes and then saw a vast network of tunnels, with many rats working and living together. Most of them were wearing things, like the sword and the necklace, along with many other things, much like the humans wore, like clothing. There were beautiful lights strung about, much like the ones in Taressa’s nest, but without visible wires. Then suddenly the face of a large black furred male rat, with glowing eyes, interrupted my vision and I heard him say menacingly “Who are you?” I was startled, losing the vision and stood there panting, a bit frightened. Taressa noticed and came over saying “Thomas, are you alright?” I looked at her and describe what I had seen and she stood there, excitedly and said “Then my parents had found something, but why had they not come back to get me, I wonder?” I looked at her fixedly and said “Yes, that’s a good question and one we need to cautiously find out about. There was someone who disrupted my vision, another rat, but one more wise and powerful, yet menacing, I could feel it. We need to be careful, for now he knows about me, I‘m certain, but I don‘t know his true intent.”

 She looked at me, a bit dubiously now, and said “How did you see this in the first place?” I touched the gem, which was cool to the touch now, and said “The gem responded my thoughts about what your parents might have found and showed it to me.” She then saw the sword strapped around my waist and said “What is that?” I pulled it out and showed it to her, saying “It’s something that the humans call a sword, but it was made for us to use.” She touched the edge and cut herself, saying “Ouch!” I took her hand and looked at it, feeling the gem respond once more and her wound closed, as if it never was. She pulled her hand out of mine and looked at it in astonishment, saying “How did you do that?” I took her hand once more and said “The gem… it just seems to respond to my thoughts. When you cut yourself just now, I took your hand thinking ‘If only I could heal your wound’ and it did.”

 She reached up and touched it saying “You better be careful using this, Thomas, such things are unnatural and dangerous.”

To be continued.