

## First Love Remains

by Jack the Rat

Sam and I were orphans up at Old Brathmus. There were just as many unwanted mice as there were rats, but for some reason, the mice never stuck around. I don't know why; it was such a great place.

We got used to the way people looked at us, like we were covered in warts and needles. I know that sounds like a strange thing to get used to, but we had each other. We'd play games, share inside jokes, climb on the roof in the middle of the night. We were kids; we didn't care.

When it came time for us to go to school, they sent us to Woodshire. It was this three-story block of bricks that dated back to the time of Euratamus or something. All the teachers were mice. Probably eighty percent of the students were mice. I remember a few squirrels, gerbils, 'munks, but you could tell they were spacing the rats out. I didn't have any classes with Sam at all. Those first six years were hell.

Growing up with your head over the crowd is never a good way to fit in. I didn't get picked on so much. In fact, I didn't think such a thing was possible—we were twice the size of mice, even then—but Sam was so shy. He was real wiry too. And a pacifist; I never saw Sam raise a paw or his voice to anybody. He didn't tell me what the other students did, but he grew quieter and more withdrawn. I could tell when he was hurt.

I'd laugh if they ever called me names, but like Sam, I never fought back. There's some unwritten rule about letting the little things go when you know you could bite someone's head in two. I think that's what the counselors of Old Brathmus wanted us to learn, though. By the end of our time at Woodshire, we were shuffling our feet for fear of paralyzing some poor deer mouse.

Briarwood was better. The student body was more diverse, and the rats were trusted enough to congregate without too many watchful teachers buzzing around. Unfortunately, it was around this time that Sam and I started seeing less of each other. We'd still see meet back at Brathmus, but we were both doing our own things by then, seeking our own goals.

I had taken an interest in writing, while it seemed Sam's attentions belonged to a white mouse named Albin. When I met him, he was very charming. He was clever, witty. He could crack jokes about people and they'd sound like genuine compliments. He had this huge theatrical talent; even with the smallest roles, he would steal every play. To be honest, I never cared for the theater, but I never missed Albin's performances. Somehow, it wasn't just *theater*.

I hung out with them a couple times, but it was obvious Sam was taking a particular shine to Albin. I wasn't jealous or anything; I was happy Sam was making new friends.

As familiar as we had become to Old Brath, it's every orphan's wish to find a warm home. Albin's father owned a company that sold furnace units, so their home was warm, clean, and large enough for a rat in some places. Albin's parents were frightened for their lives the first time they met Sam, but with his docile demeanor, it didn't take long before he won them over. Once they knew he was staying at the orphanage, Albin's father made arrangements to build a guesthouse on the property: one suitable for a growing rat.

After a couple years, it was obvious they shared more than just friendship. I remember it took a while to get Sam to talk to me about it, but once it was out, he told me a lot about what happened between them.

"This can't end well," I told him. "I mean, Albin's a nice guy and everything, but well...can't you find another rat or something?"

"Know any other gay rats?" Sam asked and laughed nervously at the lunch room table.

"Not of the top of my head."

"Sam needs me though. And I really love him, Will."

"I know," I said and tried to slip into a more supportive role. "You guys make a great couple."

"He's just so hard on himself sometimes, you know? I wish he could see how amazing he was. I wish he could see what I see."

"What, is he depressed or something?"

"I don't know. He keeps telling me he's not good enough or that people don't appreciate him. And they don't, not for everything he *can* be."

"Well, he just needs to keep acting. Tell him to go try out somewhere outside of school."

"Yeah," Sam sighed. "Maybe I'll try that."

I could tell this weighed on Sam often. All I had noticed of Albin before was the way he could light up the hallways after school with his Broberian pantomime and sharp wit. Now I could notice in the pained frowns as he turned away, something was eating him.

I told Sam that Albin needed professional help. "This is nothing you can do on your own," I said. But Sam wanted to help Albin. He thought it was his romantic duty to help him. For what's a mate worth if he can't save his lover? And all that crap...

One night, when Sam went to visit Albin he found his mate sitting on the kitchen floor with a bottle of wine in his paw. Albin was already grinning off a buzz and Sam tried to get the bottle away from him.

“It doesn’t matter,” Albin said. “My parents are gone all weekend.”

Sam’s no stranger to alcohol, but he knew how prone to emotional wrecks his mate was, and he worried it could turn for the worst. Still, something about seeing that smile on Albin’s face—Sam would do nothing to take that away.

In an hour, they were both laughing on the kitchen floor, empty bottles of wine and mead rolling around with them.

“I want to be with you forever,” Albin said. “Protect me. Keep me away from all those fools. The pain.”

Sam held Albin’s tiny paws in his. The romantic pleas tugged at his heart.

“Do you love me?” Albin asked. “Do you really love me?”

Sam nodded.

“Would you do anything for me?”

“Yes!” Sam said.

“Devour me.”

Confused at first, Sam eventually took the suggestion figuratively. Albin giggled as Sam’s big tongue lapped between his legs. Albin pulled Sam’s face up, so he could look him in the eyes.

“I want you to eat me,” Albin said. “I want to be inside you. A part of you.”

Sam couldn’t even find Albin’s track. What was this his lover was trying to say?

“Swallow me whole. Take my body inside yours. Eat me.”

“Are you serious?” Sam said. “I would never do that. I could never hurt you for as long as we live.”

“I’ve put a lot of thought into it, Sammy. This is what I want.”

Albin’s speech slurred. The mouse’s eyes were fighting to stay open. Albin was asleep by the time Sam tucked him into bed. Sam cleaned up the kitchen and slipped out with the empty bottles, wanting to dispose of them far away from the house so Albin’s parents would never find them.

Sam told me what had happened while we were waiting in line to order graduation gowns.

“That’s nothing,” I told him. “Probably just some kinky thing only a drunk mouse could think up.”

“He hasn’t dropped it,” Sam said. “It’s been almost two weeks and he still wants me to...” Sam looked around to see if anyone was listening, but the other seniors were lost in their own conversations. “You know...”

“I don’t know. He’s an actor. It’s poetic. He knows you can’t do that. Probably some kinda role-play thing.”

“Yeah, you’re probably right. But if his parents catch us, I’m dead.”

The gray mouse taking the order sizes groaned when we approached the table. Sam and I just grinned. After twelve years, we weren’t nearly as self-critical over our size.

Sam was much happier knowing that his mate was just presenting a sexual role-play scenario. He wondered why Albin couldn’t just tell him that to begin with, but one of the things Sam loved most about his mate was Albin’s style of approach. He really was a poet; a poet with life itself.

“Ok,” Sam said to Albin one day. “How do we do it?”

The little mouse beamed with excitement. “We’ll work on it slowly,” he said. “Get you to eat more! We can stretch your stomach with water or something.”

“Water?”

“Or food. Then you can just try to fit more and more of me in each time. Until...”

Sam gulped. “Until I’m ready to eat you.”

Albin glowed; a grin stretched across his face.

“Yeah,” he whispered.

Albin started feeding Sam almost non-stop at that point. He’d offer most of his own lunches to Sam. At home, he’d raid his family’s pantry and take everything out to Sam’s house and feed him all night. I don’t think Sam liked it much at first; he wasn’t used to eating that much. But he had taken enough flack all his life for being such a wraith, he knew it was for his own good.

He gained ten pounds, but it looked good on him. He was finally starting to look healthy. If it went on for another ten pounds (fifteen at the very most), he'd just tell Albin he couldn't do it anymore. Fun was fun, but he didn't want to get fat.

Just as Albin had suggested, the two of them worked at fitting Albin's feet into Sam's mouth. Albin would lie on his stomach and Sam would lift one of Albin's feet to his muzzle and then work the other in. Albin got so excited that many times shivers would overtake him and he would pull his feet free. When he rolled over, Sam could tell by the wet sheets just how arousing this was to his lover.

Sam's previous fears just seemed to trickle away. I hadn't seen him happier in such a long time. He was at a healthy weight, well rested. And he was obviously content with his love life.

"Albin hasn't been depressed all month," he told me. "I really think things have turned for the better."

He was happy. Albin was happy. And I was happy for them. But...you know it didn't end there. I wouldn't be here recounting *The Incredible Adventures of Sam and Albin* if that was where the credits rolled.

Sam was probably 125 pounds at the start of the year, and that's pretty gangly for a grown rat. Around 140, 150, he looked good. He started working out a little too, and you could tell people weren't picking on him anymore. In fact, I caught a few checking him out. He wasn't a bad looking rat.

At 170 though, it was too much for him to control. He tried to exercise, but he couldn't seem to do much without exhausting himself. And that would just make him hungrier.

"Just tell him to cut it out," I said one day in the gym. We had just run ten laps, and Sam was lying on his back, heaving for breath.

"He wouldn't want you fat, would he? He should know to stop." I saw this baby roll of fat just above his waist rising and falling as Sam tried to get his breath.

"I'm not," he started. "I'm not fat...and don't...don't worry. No more."

I handed him a bottle of water and looked away. I had seen enough friends do stupid things for love, but this was just getting sad.

When Sam told Albin he was finished, Albin said it was all right. He had a performance to focus on anyway, and since opening night and graduation were three months away, Sam was confident he could lose most of the weight by the end of the school year. Sam's reprieve left him bewildered yet thankful. Albin still seemed very happy weeks after letting Sam off the hook.

But now Sam wasn't happy. Albin spent all his free time on the play, and Sam had final exams to worry about. This unhappiness and stress didn't cope too well with the added pressure of Sam's new diet and increased exercise. Sometimes he seemed so on edge, I could've sworn he'd explode through the roof if one more thing landed on him.

I never saw him eat during this time, but a month after Albin stopped feeding him, Sam had gained another ten pounds. His brief moment of confidence had faded; the taunts returned. Except this time the mice called him fat and elbowed his gut as they forced past him in the lunch lines, scoffing him for getting double lunches. He looked drawn and heavier than his body conveyed. He looked defeated.

I tried to cheer him up by taking him out to malls and arcades. But there was only so much I could do before I felt his weight pulling me down as well. I had my own life and interests. I had colleges to narrow down, letters to send. I had made my own friends, rodents Sam could never get along with. When I saw my efforts had no effect, I admit, I pulled away.

The next to last time I saw Sam was at our graduation ceremony. I got my gown in the mail a few days before, and I was pretty upset when I first tried it on. I didn't think you could get something as simple as a gown wrong, but I guess they don't make many for rodents our size. I remember the sleeves were so close that I couldn't put my arms out in front of me without ripping the back down the middle. It was made like a cone—too thin at the top and billowing around my ankles. But it was just one day, and I could get through the hour or two ceremony and never worry about it again. All in all, it looked fine. On *me*.

I have never seen a more frightened pair of eyes than when I saw Sam's that day. Doubling the height of most of his surrounding classmates, Sam tried to hide in his only method of cover: this white gown that stopped at his knees. Under a flood of fluorescent light, shadows accentuated the curves of his form-hugging robe. The fabric folded, making visible lines from his underarms, over his bulging chest. He tried to suck in his stomach, but it just showed how soft and fat he really was. And how conscious he was of his recent ballooning.

I saw groups of mice pointing and snickering at Sam who just stood like a witch at the stake. I remember one of my friends saying, "Damn look at the pig!" which only inspired more laughter.

I walked through the crowd until I reached Sam. He hardly looked at me till I took his paw.

"We're almost outta here," I said, grinning and trying to get him to look forward to throwing all this crap behind us.

"I'm scared," he said.

“I know. I am too. But we’re gonna make it. Just another hour. Sixty minutes, then we can leave it all behind. OK?”

He nodded, but I could almost see his heart pounding through that straining white fabric.

We started moving to the auditorium in lines. Teachers conducted order like prison guards.

“I can’t sit with you,” I told him. “We have to be in the order they’ll call us up.”

“Please don’t leave,” said Sam. “Don’t leave me.”

Every day we exchange meaningless platitudes with countless people. Even our best friends in their most relaxed states hide what’s really going on. And when you hear honest emotion—when there’s nothing covering that essence of reality—it’s like one soul’s plea to another. That’s what I heard as Sam begged me to stay beside him. And that’s what made it so hard to have to fall back in line. To sit several rows behind my best friend in peril that day. My brother.

I found it difficult to sit down in my poorly tailored gown, but as soon as I saw Sam struggling ahead of me, I forgot about my discomfort. He tried to sit back, but shot straight up again and tried to ease down without bending as much. Finally, Mrs. Trudeau leaned over to him, whispering something in his ear, all the while keeping that stern expression on her face. The mice around him watched eagerly as he pulled his gown up over his tail. He tried to keep the front of it under the curve of his gut, but it slipped over and made his bare belly quiver. As he slowly sat down on his wide rump, I could hear various snickers, some less masked than others. Sam lowered his head, and Principal Aldorf had to restore order through the podium microphone.

The ceremony ran smoothly for a while after that. Dudley Maussen addressed his class as our valedictorian and Mrs. Handleton’s symphony performed a stilted Briarwood school anthem. The stream of graduates flowed up the steps and across the stage, steady and thankfully quick. But when Sam’s turn came to stand, there was a hiccup in that smooth traffic. Mrs. Trudeau marched up again and nearly yanked him out of his chair. He stuttered in his movements to get the gown back over his belly and tail.

When he tried to walk forward, Sam caught the inside of his gown with his knee and fell forward to another barrage of jeering. Trudeau pulled him upwards and snapped at him. Sam removed his gown to increasing laughter. Everyone around me was rolling in their seats.

I nearly jumped up twice but thought it might be even more embarrassing for Sam if someone came running to his rescue. To my surprise, however, it was Albin’s father who came to his side. He tore into Mrs. Trudeau and held Sam’s paw as he ushered him up the steps, sweeping an angry leer at the entire auditorium.

Sam tried to hide his belly with his folded gown, but it was too wide and even hung over the waist of his dress pants. Every step Sam took visibly shook the fat on his bones. His tail curled against his legs as he shuffled, half-crouched across the stage. He grabbed his diploma and tucked it into the ball he was trying to turn himself into.

If it was me, I probably would have left right then and there and said that's enough, but Sam followed the designed trail back to his seat. When I passed him, I tried to catch his eyes, but his face was hidden. I didn't see Albin among the watchers in the balconies, but I did bow my gratitude to his father who had returned to the side of the room, his arms folded tight across his chest. It was then that I felt a pang of hatred for Albin. Where was he when Sam needed him?

I didn't see Sam after we were let out; he just disappeared. I tried calling him after graduation. I even visited Albin's house, but my timing was bad; Albin's parents told me Sam and Albin had left for a two-week vacation. They wouldn't tell me where. I had turned to walk away, but I couldn't.

"Sir?" I said and turned to find Albin's father holding the door. "Thank you for taking care of Sam."

"It's my pleasure," he said, nodding. "Everyone deserves a home."

"You're a good father," I said and knew I couldn't say any more; a huge lump had formed in my throat.

"Well, thank you," he said, and after a moment, he let the door close between us.

It was Sam who ended up calling me in the middle of July. We agreed to meet at the Hillside Café that night. I could tell he had something big to tell me, and it didn't sound like it was going to be easy to swallow.

I got there early and waited in a booth where I could see him come in. When he finally did, I was glad he didn't see me first; my eyes must have popped right out of my head! Sam was enormous. If he weighed anywhere near 200 at graduation, he must have been 230 when he walked through that door. It was hard to hold back my shock; it had only been a month!

I tried my best to compose myself when he noticed me. I waved him over and felt instantly guilty at leaving the little café chairs as his only option for sitting.

"Would you like the booth?" I asked, standing up with a smile. I nearly fell over the table beside us when Sam tried to squeeze over to where I had been waiting. I took a chair and gazed over Sam's body. His stomach spread out over his lap; two fat breasts rested on top of its round expanse. His cheeks puffed out more, and I could even see a furry roll folding at the back of his neck whenever he lifted his head. If he lowered it, a double chin was there to meet him. Everything about him had at least tripled in girth from the rat I

had grown up with. I wondered if I would have been able to recognize him if I hadn't been lucky to witness his change over the past year.

"How have you been?" I asked. "Where's Albin?"

Sam's new weight had hidden what I should have noticed from the start. His eyes were just as laden as his buried bones. Lifting them to me seemed a great effort.

"He's gone," said Sam.

"He left you?"

"No," he said. "He's here with me."

"What?" I leaned forward on the table. "What happened?"

"I did it," he said, looking up with a matter-of-fact numbness in his eyes. "I did it. I ate him."

"You..." I sat back and looked him over in disbelief. "Don't kid around about that, Sam."

But he wasn't. He explained how every time he and Albin played together he could fit more of Albin's body in his mouth. Once the mouse's toes reached his throat, all he had to do was swallow, and he could lock Albin in place. He managed to stretch himself to accommodate these strange bedroom sessions until the night before the play when Sam swallowed his way to Albin's crotch. As always, when Albin came to orgasm, he tapped Sam to let him back out. Sam would then have to ease his lover back out. A careful process according to Sam, and the further they would go, the more dangerous it felt; it took almost an hour to get him out that last time.

For their summer vacation, Sam and Albin were allowed to stay in Albin's family's cabin. Sam, still traumatized by his recent deluge of humiliation, begged Albin to encourage his new diet. For a few days, Sam was able to cut back as well as remain active. They would take long forest walks and swim in the lake. At the dock, there was even a canoe that Sam took quite a shine to rowing.

But the withdrawal from such a large appetite wasn't easy to fight. In the middle of their first week, Sam was groaning and rolling about on the bed with his arms to his stomach.

"I can't take it anymore," he said. "I need food!"

Albin agreed to turn a blind eye to Sam's diet, but only after Albin had showered.

"Then you can have anything you want," he said. With a suggestive wink, Albin slipped out of sight.

Twenty minutes passed and Sam started to wonder what was taking Albin so long. He could have eaten anything. If he could just muster up the energy to stagger to the kitchen, he would have raided every shelf and drawer.

But then Albin emerged, blow-dried and bare. To see his mate approach, his white fur shining in the light, Sam's hunger was distracted. Enough so he didn't say a word till Albin was crawling over him.

"Not now," Sam said. "I have to eat."

"Just a quickie," Albin said. "Then we can go into town and have a nice romantic date at that steakhouse you had your eye on."

Sam imagined it. The two of them enjoying a big meal together. Sharing dessert. Playful smiles and loving eyes.

"All right," Sam said as he petted Albin's clean fur. "That sounds nice."

They held one another and spent more time kissing in that moment than they had in months. Sam felt all the problems of his recent past shy away. It was all gone now. Behind him and never to return.

Albin turned around, a motion signaling his desire to be devoured. Sam instinctively slipped Albin's feet into his muzzle and swallowed. The action was one that triggered Albin's lust like none other Sam could perform. Albin moaned, and Sam ran his furless paws along Albin's thighs, feeling his erection that had grown instantly. Sam swallowed again, turning his own body to accommodate what was to come.

Once he had Albin's legs inside him, he looked up at his lover for any sign he might want out. But Albin had not yet climaxed. Sam's nose was against Albin's sack; he lingered there, sniffing to excite his lover. Sam's mouth engulfed Albin's balls, and still nothing. He could feel Albin's feet in his belly. He felt so full and straining. He had to move slowly, easing his mouth around Albin's hips. Albin moaned and Sam knew he must be close. Still, working past Albin's erection—the hot breath, the wetness of Sam's maw—the mouse wouldn't cum.

"Yes! Yes!" Albin screamed, and Sam wondered just how much more it would take. He tried to swallow but it was no use; his throat was stretched too far. Sam's tongue found Albin's tail, and up to that point he thought he could control his progression, but passing Albin's hips—the mouse's widest point—Sam's jaws relaxed a little and locked Albin in a position that terrified Sam. Suddenly he was no longer in control. He could feel how easily Albin could fall into place. Sam's body wanted to be done with this meal—send it down where it belonged. He had to hold Albin under his arms to keep him from slipping away. Albin looked down and responded to Sam's wide and frightened eyes.

"It's ok," Albin said. "Don't fight it, Lover. This is what I wanted."

Sam was fighting it though. He could feel his mate's heart pounding rapidly against his gums. Albin's body was beginning to curl up in his stomach, and Sam said it felt as if Albin was doing most of the work now. His little white-furred paws pushed against the mattress, against Sam's attempts at keeping him out.

"Take me, Sam. My beautiful rat. Eat me so I can curl up in your warm body and remain a part of you forever."

Sam wanted to scream. The nightmare wouldn't end. There was nothing he could do about it. He was trapped, helpless in his immobility. None of his muscles were responding right; even his arms were getting weak.

"Don't worry about getting in trouble, Sam. I've got everything worked out. It's all in my bag in the trunk. Oh, I love you, Sam. My wonderful, wonderful rat!"

Sam had reached Albin's tiny shoulders and Albin licked Sam's muzzle everywhere he could reach. With only his head, arms, and the tip of his tail visible, Albin could only use his lower weight to help pull himself down. Sam came to the realization that this was really it; There was no way to get Albin back out without seriously damaging himself.

Albin's head began to slip in Sam's muzzle. His big ears pushed up over his eyes. He sank more quickly now. As his muzzle slid into Sam's, the last thing he said was "I love you."

After the rest of Albin disappeared from view, Sam closed his aching jaws. His clothes ripped and riding up his bloated body, Sam just lay there on that great bed, while his lover slowly slithered into his final resting place, all curled up in Sam's massively stretched stomach.

Truth didn't set in for Sam then. Albin was still there, and Sam took that time to pet his stomach. He was so exhausted and immobile he fell asleep before Albin even struggled for air.

Sam spent days in bed, going through shock every time he woke to that empty room. He felt drugged on top of the overwhelming depression and was able to sleep through most of it.

When he finally decided to get out of that room, it was with a bolt of fear. By not eating, he was letting himself digest his lover away. He was losing weight—he was losing Albin. He tore apart the kitchen and gorged himself with every last calorie he could find. He vowed to himself never to lose that weight. He had lost Albin once. He would never lose him again.

The weight he had gained was so great, that Sam had to cut the clothes off his body. It was difficult to walk around; his balance was alien to anything he had known before.

When he finally decided to leave the cabin, he had to wrap a sheet around himself. He was surprised to find, in the bag Albin had mentioned, a set of plus-sized clothes, an envelope containing a card to Albin's savings account, and a note addressed to Albin's parents:

Hey, Mom! Hi, Dad! I know this will come as quite a shock to you both, and I'm really sorry I have to do this. Please don't worry, as I have put a lot of thought into this.

Remember that school I told you about? The one that would let me study under a drama specialist who could guarantee my progression as an entertainer? I know you didn't like the idea and wanted me to go to a closer university. You even wanted me to study something more "practical". But I cannot wait any longer. This is my dream, and I have to live it.

I know running away is never the answer, but if I waited any longer, I know I would just let something hold me back.

Don't worry about me not finishing high school either; you'll see someday that this will pay off greater than any diploma ever could.

And please don't blame Sam for any of this. He doesn't even know my intentions of running away. He wanted me to stay just like you did. I just hope he gives you this letter.

I may not be able to write for a while, as the courses are supposed to be pretty strenuous. I've figured out the cost of everything, and I'll be able to cover it all (and more) with savings.

If you ever want to send anything or write me sometime, the address is on the back of this letter.

Please don't worry.

I love you!

Your son,  
Albin

P.S.: Please let Sam stay with you until he can get on his feet.