



## **Please! No More Cheese!**

Chester's whiskers drooped as he sat looking at the crumb of cheese he had just dragged across the Dairy floor. All around him he could hear the sounds of lorries unloading milk and machines clanking as they filled milk cartons ready for the shops.

*'I can't, I can't!'* he groaned, shaking his pointed nose from side to side. He brushed the cheese away and ran out into the yard to hide among some cardboard boxes.

Chester was a field mouse really. He lived in the hedge by the Dairy and he and his family had made a secret way into the room where the cheeses were stored.

*Oh* groaned Chester again, holding his middle. He was thinking of all that cheese. *Oh! It makes me feel quite sick to think about it. I couldn't face another piece of cheese, ever - even if it stopped the Dairy cat from chasing me.*

Chester loved cheese, but last night when he and his family broke into the store, he ate and ate cheese till it dripped off the end of his whiskers. Now the thought of cheese made his stomach turn over. He wondered what could take the taste away and then thought of his other favourite food - green peas. Perhaps if he nibbled some of those he would feel better. He made his way to the allotments where there were rows and rows of vegetables and soon found a row of peas with their huge pods hanging down waiting for him. He quickly nibbled open a pod of fat juicy green peas and ate a couple of them just to take away the taste of cheese. Then he curled up among the leaves of the pea plants. He had not quite gone off to sleep when he was disturbed by a gentle flapping sound. A large red and blue butterfly settled down beside him.

*You're Chester,* said the butterfly. *From the Dairy.*  
*Please don't say that word,* said Chester, clutching his middle again. *It reminds me of cheese!* The butterfly wondered what on earth had happened to make a mouse dislike cheese so much, so Chester told her.

*Follow me.* said the butterfly. *I know something you will really love.* Chester followed the butterfly down to the river bank. He could see the enormous factory buildings on the other side and barges and lorries lined up outside.

*Smell!* said the butterfly. Chester sniffed. The smell was delicious.  
*That smells better than cheese,* said Chester. *What is it?*  
*Chocolate!* said the butterfly. They make it in that big house across the river. *And it's gorgeous!*

Straight away Chester's insides knew told him he needed it. *Oh, if only I could swim!* he groaned.

*If you really want to get across I think I could help you,* the butterfly said and Chester could see by her eyes that this butterfly knew a thing or two about magic.



The butterfly took Chester back to the row of peas.  
She turned over some leaves and there was a huge pea pod. *If you look inside that pod, she said, You will see three big yellow peas. They are magic peas. Open the pod and starting from the stalk end, the first one will make you grow bigger if you eat it. The second one will make you very, very small, and the third one will give you the thing you most want in all the world.* With that the butterfly flapped her wings and flew away.

Chester could still smell chocolate. He turned the huge pea pod over and unzipped it by nibbling most of the way down its seam. Inside, just as the butterfly had said, were three big yellow peas.

Before taking the peas from the pod Chester dragged it all the way down to the river bank. He knew how he would get across to the chocolate factory. *I'll eat the pea which will make me big, he said, then I can jump across the big rocks to get to the other side. Now ... which end did the butterfly say I should start?*

Chester sat looking at the pea pod and thinking. *I think the one at the big end must be to give me the thing I most want, so it must be the one the other end!*

It only took a couple of bites and the pea was gone. He sat still and waited to grow bigger. Soon he began to feel strange. The river seemed much wider. The grass was growing much higher. The sky was further away. *Oh dear!* Cried Chester. *I've eaten the wrong one. I'm getting smaller!* A fly went past with a thunderous buzzing sound, then a shadow fell over Chester. He looked up to see the most enormous pigeon making straight for the pea pod. He scampered under the pod. The pigeon pecked at it. The pod rolled down the bank into the river. Chester rolled with it and to his delight he found himself floating in a pea pod boat. He was not frightened now. He grasped a passing sycamore seed to use as a paddle and steered the boat round to rocks to the other side of the river. He arrived just as the magic was wearing off.

Clambering on to the bank Chester pulled the pea pod under a hawthorn bush where the pigeons could not see it, and putting to other two peas under his arms he started off towards the chocolate factory. *I shall know which is which, he said. The pea under my right arm is the one to make me big and the pea under my left arm is the one to give me the thing I most want in all the world.*

Chester followed his nose as the smell of chocolate grew stronger and stronger. He was soon through the fence and into the factory. He ran away from the loud noises and the places where there were a lot of people and at last came to a room full of coloured boxes.

Chester put down the peas by the door where he could easily find them again and in no time he had nibbled through a box and at last got his sharp teeth into the most delicious chocolate. He ate and ate until he was nearly bursting.

*I think I'll crawl between the boxes and sleep for a bit,* he said to himself.

Then, just as looked into the dark space between the boxes he saw two bright green eyes staring at him. Factory Cat had seen him.

Chester ran. He slipped into a narrow gap between the boxes where the cat could not touch him and waited. But Factory Cat waited too. He watched the opening where Chester was hiding. Chester peered out. If only he could get to the magic peas! He could see them where he had left them by the door.

At last Factory Cat dozed off. Chester waited till he could hear him snoring and then crept out and across to the door. *I'll eat the pea to give me the one thing I want most*, he said. *The one thing I want most is to be back home and safe.*

But which pea? Chester couldn't remember which way round he was when he put them down. Was it the big one on the left or the little one on the right? Then he said to himself. *It will be the big one to make me big!* Quickly he pushed the smaller yellow pea under his arm and gobbled the other one.

Factory Cat stirred. He remembered he should be watching the mouse. Chester froze as the cat saw him and ran towards him. But then the cat stopped suddenly. Chester felt strange inside. The cat was getting smaller and smaller as he looked at him. Chester had eaten the wrong pea again. He was getting bigger.

Factory Cat turned to run. He had never met a mouse bigger than himself before. Chester thought this was fun. He forgot all about being scared and started to chase the cat. Factory Cat ran out into the yard where a group of women were talking together. They laughed at the cat running and then screamed as they saw mighty Chester behind him. The women ran even faster than Factory Cat!

Chester knew the magic would not last for long, so he ran down to the river bank and hid under the hawthorn bush until he began to get to his right size again. The pea pod was still there, but Chester was not going to row back across the river. He knew exactly what he was going to do. He took the last yellow pea from under his arm and said with a loud squeak, *The thing I most want in all the world is to be back in the Dairy with my family and friends.*

He closed his eyes. He felt a rush of air all around him, then a bump as he landed on the Dairy floor. He could hear the clank, clank of the machines. He sighed. He was safe.

*Hello! Ben, a mouse-cousin of Chester's looked very surprised. Where did you come from? You were not here a moment ago! You look hungry. Come with me. I found some chocolate this morning. I'll share it with you.*

Chester's whiskers drooped and his face went a pale shade of grey. *'No, thank you! No, thank you Ben. I only like cheese ... and peas ... but only green ones!*