

## *Tiny Tale #2*

# **How to Outwit a Clever, Jumpy Flea**

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Rubbing his two front legs together, Buz peered down at Nelson and scowled. He'd just realized his friend had beaten him at every game. Worse, winter was showing no signs of letting up and games were all they had.

Buz was getting tired of being stuck inside. He seemed to be losing his happy-go-lucky nature. After all, he was a travel bug and needed action. Winter made him bored and being bored made him obsess over Nelson's cleverness.

Buz leaped from the window ledge and circled the bedroom. He'd spent most of the day looking out the window, staring at the snow. Its white was endless, creating a flurry of dots that swirled inside his eyes and made him dizzy.

Landing on the shag carpet, Buz reached up to poke Nelson. His friend was curled up on Brown Dog's paw, fast asleep. Frustrated, Buz snapped Nelson's eye mask. The small flea groaned and rolled over.

Buz wanted his friend awake. He needed a distraction; so he cupped his hands, leaned forward and shouted, "Get up!"

Startled, Nelson screamed and leapt two feet into the air!

Watching the nervous reaction made Buz smile. It gave him a clever idea.

"Buzworth von Wanderwing!" Nelson snapped. "Why do you insist on interrupting me from my sleep?" The small flea tightened his robe and tossed his eye mask to the ground.



“I’m tired of being cooped up,” Buz explained. Rubbing his back legs over his wings, he continued, “You want to play a game?” he asked coyly.

Nelson hopped onto the rug next to Buz. “Are you prepared to lose?” he asked, looking up. “Buz, I know you get bored but I’m afraid these games might... well... lower your self-esteem.”

“What do you mean?” Buz asked.

“You know I’m pretty clever, right?” Nelson continued.

“Yes,” Buz answered. “So?”

“Well, it’s just that if I always win, you might get frustrated,” Nelson explained.

“How do you know you’ll win this game?” Buz questioned.

Nelson sighed and pulled out his *Book of Plans*. The book contained charts, ideas, and data collected for practically every life situation. Providing sage advice, Nelson had referred to the book since he was a wee flea.

Sitting down to spread the book across his lap, Nelson finally found the page he was looking for.

“Look here.” He pointed. Buz leaned in. “This is a *Self-Esteem Chart*. See this graph?” Buz nodded. “It outlines how someone repeatedly doing something one is not good at results in a lowered opinion of oneself.”

Buz squinted to read the small words alongside the graph and shrugged. “But this isn’t a game,” he stated.

“Well, what is it then?” Nelson sighed.

“Let’s call it a bet,” Buz said.

Frustrated he’d not convinced his friend to leave him to his nap, Nelson gave in. Slowly he stood up. “Okay, what’s this bet?”

Buz pressed his foot down into the shag carpet and drew a tight circle around Nelson.

“I bet you I can get from here to the bookcase by walking right through that circle I just drew,” Buz explained.

Nelson turned around and stared at the bookcase behind him. It was shoved full of old, yellowing paperbacks with busy covers.

“That’s impossible,” Nelson said, looking down at his feet. “I’m in your way.”

“That’s right,” Buz said hopefully.

Nelson narrowed his eyes. “Unless,” he continued cautiously, “you shove me out of the way.”

“Nope.” Buz smiled.

Nelson paused to scratch his head. “Aha!” he shouted finally. “You’ll lift me!”

“I won’t even touch you,” Buz promised. “But you have to do one thing for me.”

“What’s that?” Nelson asked.

“Turn your back to me,” Buz said.

Wanting to get the silliness over with, Nelson gave up and turned around. “Good luck,” he said over his shoulder. Buz walked closer.

After a few seconds, all was quiet. Nelson was just about to turn around when Buz shouted into his ear, as loud as he could. “BOO!”

It worked. Nervous by nature, Nelson screamed and jumped two feet into the air. Grabbing the opportunity, Buz shot under where Nelson had been standing and ran to the other side.

Nelson landed and found himself staring straight at Buz, who was smiling and leaning against the bookcase.

“Okay, you got me,” Nelson confessed. Suddenly self-conscious, he tightened his robe and looked down.

Buz felt bad. “You still win ninety percent of the time, you know,” he encouraged.

“Ninety-nine,” Nelson corrected, smiling as he picked-up his eye mask and hopped onto Brown Dog. “Goodnight, my clever travel bug friend.”

“Goodnight,” Buz replied and flew up to the windowsill.

It was getting dark outside. The cold gave the stars an extra bright sparkle. Peering at the sky, Buz thought about a whole world full of bugs peering at the sky, and how he’d like to meet them all someday.

*This Tiny Tale was brought to you by:*

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