

Tiny Tale #3

Love and Danger in Paris

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Nelson blew on his latte and stared at Buz. They'd been sitting at the Parisian café for what felt like hours. For the first time, it was Nelson who was bored. Buz, on the other hand, was happy. As a travel bug, he craved new places like Paris.

Nelson hated new places. Uncomfortable, the little flea fidgeted with the edges of his robe and watched his friend watch the female bugs flit by.

"You know, Nelson," Buz said suddenly, "Paris is the city of love. Maybe you should try and find someone?"

Nelson placed his hot drink on the table and tightened his robe with a yank. "You seem to have forgotten," he scoffed, "I am heading home once this adventure is over. Therefore, I have no time for love."

Buz ran his back legs over his wings and smiled at the flurry of bug activity around him. "You could just give it a try," he suggested.

Nelson stood up. "Oh no, no, no, my friend," he said, hopping closer. "That will NOT work. Falling in love means getting stuck and I'm NOT getting stuck away from home."

Buz chuckled. "You make falling in love sound dangerous."

"It is," Nelson replied. "Very."

Buz dismissed his friend and talked to the ladybug sitting next to him. He even tried speaking a little French. Nelson rolled his eyes. He hadn't learned any French. It wasn't necessary. He wouldn't be speaking any French back home.

Closing his eyes, Nelson dreamed of home, or more specifically, the Patterson's home. He and Buz both lived there one long winter. Those months had been the best of Nelson's life.

Mostly, he napped on Brown Dog, enjoying a safe and stress-free existence. Well, almost stress-free. There was the stink bug attack. But other than that, he rarely needed his *Book of Plans* – a book he'd had since he was a wee flea. It was filled with all the information a bug might need to escape any terrible life situation.

“Earth to Nelson,” Buz shouted through cupped hands. Nelson jumped a bit. He was a nervous fellow by nature. “Meet my new friend, Annette.”

Nelson brought his attention back to Buz and smiled weakly. “Pleased to meet you,” he said, shaking the ladybug’s hand. Nelson noticed Buz’s stupid grin and frowned. “Buz, we can go now,” he snapped.

“Not yet,” Buz whispered. Leaning in, he continued, “Annette has a friend who is flying over here right now. The two of you can share coffee!”

“That would be great, no?” Annette chimed in.

Nelson started to nod his head *yes*, but then wondered if he should shake his head *no*. Not sure what to do, he glared at his friend. Buz, in return, smiled and shrugged. Nelson looked away and eyed a lovely French Poodle trotting by. Perhaps he would hop on and nap there for the rest of the day.

Moments later, Nelson watched a beautiful butterfly zigzag in and land nearby. Dusting herself off, she walked over and sat down next to Nelson. “Hello” she said, extending one arm. “I am Aimee.” Nelson shook her hand and stared. He’d never seen such a beautiful bug in his life.

“Nelson, why don’t you speak up there, buddy?” Buz chimed in.

Nelson could hear Buz and Annette giggling at him. But still, he was tongue-tied. Aimee’s compound eyes were mesmerizing. He felt as if he were in a trance. The feeling was not exactly pleasant...but not altogether unpleasant either.

“Speak up!” Buz shouted loudly.

Startled from his stupor, Nelson screamed and jumped two feet into the air. This happened a lot to the nervous bug, but this jump was different. Gravity didn’t bring him back down to the ground as usual. This time, cresting his leap, Nelson simply stopped moving.



Hearing the bugs below him gasp, Nelson looked over his shoulder to assess the situation. It appeared he was stuck to a strip of fly paper. Fortunately, no other bugs were on there with him. Still, he wanted off. The problem was the paper was sticky and the more he struggled, the more he got stuck. Finally, Nelson gave up. Letting out a sad sigh, he allowed his arms and legs to hang limp.

“Buz, I’m going to need your help,” Nelson shouted through cupped hands. A bit embarrassed, he avoided eye contact with Aimee.

“Help me figure out what to do,” Buz shouted back. Even at a distance, Nelson could see the terror in Buz’s eyes. Buz was part travel bug, part fly. Fly paper was his worst nightmare right after spider webs.

“First, you need to catch this,” Nelson shouted, tossing down his *Book of Plans*.

Buz and Annette held out their arms. Running straight into each other, they knocked heads and fell to the ground. The book fell heavily into Buz’s lap.

“I know there are instructions in there about getting unstuck,” Nelson shouted. “I just don’t know if there is anything about fly paper specifically.”

Buz rubbed his forehead and gave Nelson a thumbs-up. Next, he used one finger to skim the pages. “Any day now,” Nelson hollered.

“Aha!” Buz exclaimed. “Olive oil. We need to pour olive oil over you.”

Nelson closed his eyes and groaned. As if the day wasn’t embarrassing enough, now he had to be coated by oil. Feeling his cheeks go red, he watched the activity below. Aimee read the instructions while Buz and Annette collected olive oil. Buz congratulated himself on finding a brown, cupped leaf.

“Okay!” Buz shouted cheerily, holding up his leaf. “It’s full of olive oil, now what?”

“You have the book!” Nelson snapped “You tell me!”

Nelson rotated his ankles and watched the bugs below put their heads together. He heard Buz explain that he wouldn’t be going near any fly paper. Each bug discussed who would toss the oil onto Nelson.

Finally, Aimee stood up. “I’ll do it!” she said. Nelson filled his cheeks with air then released a heavy sigh. “Oh great!” he said sheepishly. Against all odds, the day had just gotten more embarrassing.

It took awhile for the butterfly to lift off, but soon she hovered just over Nelson's head. Nelson heard grunting sounds as she struggled with the heavy leaf. Finally, there was a heave ho followed by thick oil that splashed down over his head, covering his body.

At first, Nelson stayed stuck. Then, after wiping his stinging eyes, the flea felt himself slide down the paper. Next, there was a falling feeling. To slow himself down, Nelson flailed his arms, struggling until he smacked down into a pad of butter. Seconds later, Buz flew over and wiped him off.

"Crisis over," Buz sang, cheerily. "Now come back and join us at the table!"

Using one finger to clean out his ear, Nelson scowled. "No way," he said. "I'm outta here."

Seeing his friend was serious, Buz sighed as each said their goodbyes. Walking up the boulevard, Buz was first to speak. "Let's come back tomorrow," he sang out. "We'll try again!"

"No," Nelson said, tying his robe. "You see? I was right."

Buz stopped walking and tilted his head. He looked puzzled.

"Love is dangerous, and you always get stuck," the flea explained and continued on. After a few steps, he paused and smiled. "Now I'm really ready to return home!"

"I don't think your adventures are over yet," Buz cautioned.

"Yes they are," Nelson said simply. "Pick up the pace, it's getting cold."

As the sun started to set, cars honked and people shuffled by. Amongst it all, a tiny flea and his travel bug friend wove their way through the busy streets of Paris.

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