

Tiny Tale #4

Tiny Bugs, Big Laughs in London

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Nelson was in a panic. It had been hours since he'd last seen his best friend Buz, and now he was lost. Worse, he was alone in the strange city of London. Struggling to face his fears, the tiny flea clutched his *Book of Plans* and paced the busy sidewalk.

A true homebody, Nelson had never meant to travel, never meant to leave home. The only reason he'd boarded an airplane in the first place was to save Buz's life. His friend, an adventurous travel bug, had found trouble during his voyages and pleaded for Nelson to come save him. Reluctantly, the skittish flea made it to Paris with no intention of going any further.

Overwhelmed, Nelson sat with his head between his knees, trying not to hyperventilate. The concrete made him cold. The city sounds made him shiver. His only comfort was the sight of an English bulldog sitting nearby.

Fortunately, the dog didn't appear to be going anywhere for a while. Leaning against his owner's leg, his large body slumped heavily to one side. Nelson took full advantage of the situation and hopped onto the pooch's solid back.

Enjoying the warmth, Nelson grabbed clumps of fur between his toes. Nibbling his fingers, he fretted about what to do next. If he could find an airport, he'd figure out how to get home. Maybe it was time to let the travel bug fend for himself. Buz was supposed to be travelling alone, after all. Unable to form any better ideas, Nelson opened up his *Book of Plans*. The book served as a guide for life, and it was something he'd referenced since he was a wee flea.

Flipping the pages, Nelson found instructions for what to do when lost. The page was titled: *Small Bug, Big Snowstorm*. It wasn't snowing, but some of the ideas looked good. *Climb a tall object to get your bearings*, the first instruction suggested, followed by, *look for a familiar location*. While the directions weren't created for the busy city, they'd have to do.

Reluctantly the cold flea hopped onto the pavement just as the bulldog started to stretch. With the sun close to setting, Nelson needed a tall object that was nearby. Fortunately, a London

Guard stood just feet away. Although Nelson wasn't fond of hopping onto people, this guard seemed harmless. As a matter of fact, he didn't move – not even when kids wiggled their tongues at him or adults waived their hands in front of his face.

Taking a deep breath, Nelson slipped his book under one arm and climbed the scarlet uniform. Near the top, the flea took one giant leap onto the soldier's tall, bearskin cap. There, he clung for a moment before sinking down into piles of fluff. Struggling to breath, Nelson eventually gave up and climbed down to rest on the guard's firm shoulder badge.

Looking around the city, Nelson realized it would be impossible to spot another small bug in such chaos. Sighing, he felt like he might have hit the second lowest point of his life. The first being the time he and Buz were held hostage down in a Parisian sewer. Remembering that occasion, Nelson grew angry at Buz for making him leave home in the first place.

As the air blew colder, the flea tucked his head into his robe and started to cry. Soon sporadic tears were replaced by heavy sobbing. Nelson stopped only to blow his nose into his sleeve. Balling his hands into fists, the distraught bug was about to muster a full blown breakdown when, suddenly, a woman dancing right in front of him caught his attention. Startled, the flea bit his lip and tried not to smile. Surrendering to the moment, Nelson eventually forgot his woes and cracked a wide grin.

The woman, it seemed, was trying to get a reaction out of the motionless guard, doing her best to make him smile. While her friend giggled and took pictures, the woman danced like a chicken and then like a pharaoh. Nelson laughed and placed his chin into the palm of his hand. Sitting cross-legged, he sat up only to holler and cheer, entranced by the hilarious show.

When the performance was over, Nelson stood to applaud. Surprisingly he felt happy, but this happiness was cut short once the woman turned to leave. That's when Nelson noticed another, very small dancer performing right behind her. The tiny dancer was Buz...grinning ear to ear as he performed the cha cha followed by the marimba.



“You are too small for the guard to see you, you know!” Nelson yelled down through cupped hands.

Buz stood still a moment and then looked up. “Nervous Nelly!” he called out, spreading his arms wide. “Finally, I found you! Come on down!”

Nelson scowled, stuck out his lip and stayed put.

“What’s the problem?” Buz shouted.

Nelson stood with one hand on his hip. “Oh, let’s see,” he shouted back. “I’ve been alone in a strange city for hours without my only friend in town.”

“I’ve been looking everywhere for you!” Buz hollered. “Please come down.”

Nelson gathered his book under one arm and hopped down from the guard. Standing next to Buz, he pouted.

“I still don’t understand why you’re so angry,” Buz protested. “Didn’t you like my dancing?”

Jaw clenched, Nelson ignored his friend and marched off. Buz stood a moment then hurried to catch up.

“What’s wrong?” Buz demanded. “I found you, didn’t I?”

Nelson stopped abruptly and turned around. “It’s just that with all that dancing, you didn’t seem particularly upset about having lost me,” he quipped.

Buz leaned back and peered into the sky. “Ohhhh, I see!” he replied. “Did it never occur to you that I was *very* upset?”

“Upset bugs don’t dance,” Nelson scoffed, continuing to walk.

“Sometimes they do,” Nelson explained, “as a way to cheer up.”

Nelson stood still for a moment. Tracing circles in the ground with one foot, he smiled. “Really?” he asked.

“Yes!” Buz enthused. “Plus, I knew this is where I’d left you. I was bound to run into you again at some point.”

“But where have you been?” Nelson asked, looking up.

“Mostly, I’ve been following every dog in London, hoping you were on one of them.”

“I’m glad,” Nelson replied.

“Glad I was upset?” Buz asked.

Nelson nodded and laughed at himself. Both bugs grinned at each other.

“I’m starving,” Nelson suddenly announced. “Let’s tuck into that pub over there. It’s bound to have some good crumbs.” Buz gave a thumbs-up and, with that, the two tiny bugs hustled across the busy street and slipped inside.

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