

# **The Death in the Mouse Kingdom**

by

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2500 Headwords

**retold by Elizaveta Heinonen**

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## *Characters*

Mouse King

Mouse Queen

Cardinal Mozzarella

Count de Gruyère

Marseille, his servant

Baron Roquefort

Mario, his valet de chambre

Baroness Roquefort

Mathilda Roquefort, the daughter of Baron and Baroness Roquefort

Marie, her maid

Maximilian Pont l'Eveque, Captain of the Royal Guard

Duchess le Petit Swiss

Baroness Dorblu

Bobard, a journalist

Church attendant

Livarot, the Chief of Gendarmes

Marion and Maisy, servants in the house of Baron Roquefort

Mortimer, the Majordomo in the house of Baron Roquefort

**valet de chambre** – a gentleman's personal servant; **maid** – a woman servant

## Chapter 1. Mathilda

That morning, when Mario entered his master's bedroom, he found Baron Roquefort sitting on the edge of his coconut bed with a puzzled expression on his face.

*Mario:* Did Your Excellency call for me?

*Baron:* I did! I can't seem to find my slippers...

*Mario:* You are wearing them, Sir.

*Baron:* Oh? I am, indeed! I'm afraid, I'm quite beside myself today.

*Mario:* No wonder, Sir. On such a day!

*Baron:* Is the Baroness up yet?

*Mario:* Yes, Sir. She is in her boudoir with Marion and Michelle.

*Baron:* Trying on her evening dress for the twentieth time, no doubt.

*Mario:* Women! They are all alike, Sir.

*Baron:* You can say that again! Tell the Baroness that I shall join her in the dining room in half an hour.

*Mario:* Yes, Sir.

**Your Excellency** – the title used to address a person of noble birth; **slippers** – home shoes; **be beside oneself** – not thinking clearly because you are feeling very strong emotions; **No wonder.** – It is not surprising; **You can say that again!** – You're right; I quite agree with you.

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A half hour later, the Baron, now pomaded and verbena-scented, entered the dining room. The Baroness, a plump little mouse lady, was already waiting for him.

*Baron Roquefort:* Good morning, my darling.

*Baroness:* Good morning, dear.

*Baron:* You look very beautiful today!

*Baroness:* Thank you, dear. (*Turning to the majordomo.*) What's for breakfast, Mortimer?

*Majordomo:* Your favorite cheddar cheese, Your Excellency.

*Baron:* It smells delicious!

*Baroness:* You're a true magician, Mortimer. I cannot hope to ever lose weight if you keep on spoiling us like that!

*Majordomo (with a bow):* Always at the service of Your Excellency.

*Baron:* And you certainly need not lose weight, my darling. You are beautiful just the way you are. A mouse lady must be a bit plump around the hips.

*Baroness:* You're such a gentleman, Maurice! You always know how to comfort me. But I don't see Mathilda. Where in the world is our daughter?

*Majordomo:* The Mademoiselle is in her room, Madame. I am afraid, she has come down with a bit of a headache.

*Baroness:* A headache? On her wedding day? On the happiest day of her life? I simply cannot understand that!

*Baron:* Perhaps she is just nervous, my dear. After all, one does not get married every day.

*Baroness:* Nonsense! Besides, she isn't marrying some street bum. She is marrying the Marquis Camembert, the most eligible bachelor in the whole of Mouse Kingdom! If this were my wedding, I would surely be jumping with joy. I certainly wouldn't lose my appetite over it.

*Baron:* Certainly not, dear. Just don't forget that you're already married.

**pomade** – a thick substance that is used to style hair; **verbena-scented** – smelling of verbena (a garden plant with bright flowers), perfumed; **plump** – rounded and somewhat overweight; **delicious** – having a smell that suggests a very pleasant taste; **magician** – someone who has the power to make impossible things happen; **hip** – the part of the body between the waist and legs on each side; **street bum** – a homeless person leaning on the street; **bachelor** – an unmarried man ✧ **the most eligible bachelor** – the one who is considered the best candidate for marriage

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Meanwhile, in Mathilda's room, another conversation took place.

*Mathilda:* What time is it, Marie?

*Marie:* Ten o'clock, Mademoiselle.

*Mathilda:* Ten o'clock... Another eight hours, and I shall become Madam Camembert. Don't I hate this name! Along with the Marquis with his well groomed whiskers and the terrible smell of cheap cologne! I cannot bear to think of him without disgust. But such was the will of His Majesty, and such is the will of my parents. Oh, Marie, I'm so unhappy! I wish I were dead!

*Marie:* Please, don't say that, Mademoiselle. Someone would be even more unhappy if you were dead. Look what I have brought you! Your favorite strawberry cake. Why don't you try some?

*Mathilda:* Thank you, Marie, but I really don't feel like I could eat anything.

*Marie:* Still, I think that you should try this cake. I'm sure that you will like it.

*Mathilda:* I will?

*Marie:* Definitely. It has your favorite filling.

*Mathilda:* It does?

*Marie:* Uh-huh.

*Mathilda:* All right. If you insist, I will have a slice.

*Marie:* I will go now. But I will be around in case you should need me. I will see to it that no one disturbs you.

**His Majesty** – the title used to address or refer to a king; **definitely** – without doubt; **filling** – something that is put inside something else such as a pie, pastry case, or sandwich; **be around** – to be near a particular area or place

Mathilda breaks the cake and fishes out a slip of paper. She starts reading:

“My dearest, my beloved Mathilda! I know, it is madness to write to you, and it is even greater madness to ask you to meet me in the garden, but I *am* mad, mad with despair! I shall be waiting for you at our usual place. Please, come as soon as you can. I have something very important to tell you. Maximilian.”

**slip** – a narrow piece of sth; **despair** – feeling of hopelessness

*Mathilda (having finished reading):* Marie!

*Marie:* I’m here, Mademoiselle.

*Mathilda:* I will step out for a few minutes.

*Marie:* Of course, Mademoiselle. Take your time. I will cover for you.

*Mathilda:* Cover for me?

*Marie:* I mean, if someone comes looking for you, I will say that you are in the garden walking off your headache.

*Mathilda:* How do I look?

*Marie:* You look beautiful, Mademoiselle, if only a bit pale. But it suits you.

*Mathilda:* Thank you, Marie. Thank you for everything.

*Marie:* Ah, Mademoiselle, it is so romantic!

**step out** – to leave a place for a short period of time; **take your time** – to do something slowly or without hurrying, take whatever time is necessary to do something; **cover for sb** – to keep people from learning something about somebody, usually by hiding the truth or telling lies; **walk off a headache** – to go for a walk to make the headache go away

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Mathilda found the captain walking up and down the garden path.

*Mathilda:* What has happened, Maximilian? You don't look yourself.

*Maximilian:* I didn't sleep a wink last night. I thought it over and over, but I just don't see another way out.

*Mathilda:* Neither do I.

*Maximilian:* I'm afraid, you misunderstood me, my dear Mathilda. I want you to run away with me. We shall go far, very far away. We can take a boat and sail to the shores of New Guinea, to the Mouse Island. Or to America. Wherever you wish. I have friends. They will help us. They will arrange it with the ship rats. I'm rich. With me, you shall know no need.

*Mathilda:* Why do you say that, Maximilian? You know that I would marry you even if you were poor as a church mouse. If it were my decision, I would. But they have decided for me.

*Maximilian:* I won't let anyone take you away from me. I will fight to the death. For you, I am ready to do anything, even commit a crime.

*Mathilda:* I must go now. Farewell, Maximilian! Farewell, sweetheart!

*Maximilian (his gaze following her as she left):* I'm not saying goodbye.

**wink** – a very short amount of time; **misunderstand** – to fail to understand someone correctly; **farewell** – goodbye: used to express good wishes at parting; **sweetheart** – used to address someone you love