



FACTS & ARGUMENTS

# A mouse, a trap and me

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A mouse recently moved into my house.

I had not seen a real live mouse since my formative years in Montreal. In the 1950s, a mouse in a downtown Montreal tenement was about as commonplace as a smoked meat sandwich. You wouldn't think of complaining to the landlord. The answer would be: "Why are you telling me? Am I a cat?"

This uninvited guest did not sit too well with my wife Shoshana or my daughter Natalie. Upon seeing the mouse running across our kitchen, Natalie discreetly brought the incident to my attention.

"Eee! A mouse!" she screamed.

This was followed seconds later by Shoshana pointing at me and shrieking: "Do something, now!"

I was at a total loss. This was certainly not something they had taught me to handle in law school. I pleaded for sanity. "Relax, we'll go to Home Depot and see what's available."

I urged my wife and daughter to be calm, aloof and methodical. That worked perfectly. Seven minutes later we were at Home Depot.

We examined the options. When I was a kid there was one mice solution: a wooden mousetrap. You'd insert a piece of cheese and pull back the bar. If a mouse approached and so much as sniffed the enticing cheese, the bar would come down on its head with a force rivalling the impact that hit Marie Antoinette.

This same trap is still on sale. But now you don't need the cheese. The package, in fact, boasts, "Never needs cheese." Instead there is a yellow, plastic-looking square that resembles a luscious piece of Emmenthal.

My daughter had different ideas. "This is violent. That bar can smash the poor mouse's neck."

I realized I was dealing with a closet member of PETA. "Okay," I said, "let's look for something more humane."

I asked a clerk: "Have you got something in a poison?"

The clerk showed us pellets that contained an anticoagulant, which thins the blood, causing the mouse to hemorrhage to death.

Shoshana interjected. "No way, Jose; that's too cruel."

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I was on the spot. What did the ladies expect? Maybe I should just buy a bullhorn and try to negotiate. "Hey mouse, you have 60 seconds to come out. If you don't we send in Felix."

Had I bought those pellets, I am certain that in addition to any other sanctions my wife would have imposed on me, both she and my daughter would have initiated steps to have me tried at The Hague.

Natalie then picked up something interesting - an ultrasound device. You plug it in near the mouse hole and it makes some type of pitched noise that only mice can hear. It's supposed to drive them nuts, and they flee.

Natalie was all for it, but I vetoed the idea. For years, my kids have driven me crazy with their loud music. Now I empathize with the mouse. Furthermore, I had no doubt this form of warfare was banned by the Geneva Conventions.

As we were about to leave in frustration (I was, anyway), we noticed something called a live trap. It was a device whereby you catch the mouse, then release it alive.

The trap was an oblong box. You open a little door, put in some real bait and wait. The vote was unanimous.

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We set up the apparatus that night. I figured I would get a good night's sleep. Then again, the Titanic figured it was unsinkable. At 2:30 a.m., Natalie woke me up saying: "I think there is a mouse in that trap."

"That might not totally surprise me," I retorted. "I'll inspect it in the morning, and if we have a guest I'll release him then."

It was not so simple.

"No way," Natalie said. "You can't just leave it stuck there all night. It'll get scared."

I realized I was dealing with a female Gandhi. Natalie was giving me that look, that "I hope you can sleep well, Slobodan Milosevic" look.

Suddenly I had to worry about that mouse getting a neurosis. I was drawing the line here. There was no way I was going to deal with this creature now.

I was outside my house in my bathrobe at 2:45 a.m. There was definitely something alive in that box. I walked to the nearby park, bent down and opened the little door. Out shot a mouse like a speeding bullet. Mission accomplished.

I sauntered back into the house.

"Aren't you happy you didn't kill it?" Natalie said.

I didn't think about what I had done one way or the other. I just wanted to get some sleep. I did, however, ponder whether there was this happy mouse out there asking for directions back to my house. How could he resist our five-star hospitality?

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