

The Great Mice Conference



ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

HASIB UR RASHIDIFTI

"We're out of cheese!" shouted Mrs Basil from the kitchen.

"Will you shut up for one moment? I'm trying to hear what's going on," Mr Basil shushed his wife by implying that his affair was more important, a trick he'd learned from the humans upstairs. He had his head poking out of the mousehole with his body still inside so that he can quickly go back inside in case anything goes wrong in the conference. Mr Basil's one of the very few mice supporting the Rat Annihilation Association (RAA). But he understands that in order to maintain peace and teach the rats a lesson, the RAA members have to unleash lawful havoc* once in a while. A few mouseholes getting blown up are unfortunate yet nothing but mere war damages.

The RAA came into leadership with the promise that they'd successfully get rid of all the rats within the basement. After a quarter of the population was found dead within the vicinity in the span of two months, panic spread across the Pritchard household basement like wildfire and the mice needed someone strong to give them hope. And that's exactly what RAA leader Julius Cheeser did. RAA was voted into power unanimously and soon enough, Comrade Cheeser was making all the calls.

RAA was supposed to have weekly elections where the RAA leader could be changed as per association members' votes. Moreover, bi-weekly elections were to be held across the basement where residents could choose either of the three parties as their governing body- RAA, RDA* and MCP*. Six bi-weekly elections have been held by now and RAA has won

by a landslide in all of them. It was the twelfth weekly election for the RAA leader going on that Mr Basil was so eager about.

"My fellow mice," shouted Julius Cheeser to a crowd of his roaring followers as he rose to the stage, "It is my great honour to have been serving you for the past 11 weeks and even more so to have been selected for the twelfth time in a row. As you know, I've always been open to criticism and competition. I've always wanted my party members to stand up, demonstrate their quality as a leader, and replace me. I assure you, no one would be happier than me if any of you took my position because that is the day, I'll be able to retire knowing that the basement is in safe hands! But it is my great privilege that my party members trust my capabilities so much that they've decided not to hold the party elections anymore and have accepted me as RAA leader *sine die*!"

The crowd howled in joy until Julius Cheeser silenced them with a swift motion of his paw, "But let's not forget my brothers, the rats still lurk in the dark. Our sincere RAA agents have been working day and night to make sure you're all safe. Yet, the slanderers dare criticise us! These vile creatures are nothing but agents of the rats themselves. To get rid of the rats, we must get rid of those who vilify us first!"

"Was Geronimo Stilton one of those agents of the rats?" someone heckled from the back of the crowd.

Silence corrupted the floor as all the mice went quiet. "Who said that?" howled Julius Cheeser.

After a minute of chaos and confusion, his followers brought a bruised-up mouse in front of him and put him up on the

stage. It was Timothy Samson, writer for the PH Times*.

"Geronimo Stilton was a victim of one of the attacks of the rats," Julius sounded ever so confident in his reply, "After he went missing, four units of RAA investigators were deployed under my command to look for him, although he was the leader of the opposition party. Yet, you mice harass me like this on your paper and now in my meetings."

"He went missing just one day after the fifth bi-weekly election, just when he was winning. Don't you find that a bit suspicious?" smiled Timothy as he spat out blood.

Shaking in anger, Julius pulled out his sharp claws and scratched Timothy across his body. Timothy's little body shuddered as Julius kept on inflicting pain until his ministers stopped him. After his followers were done cleaning up the mess, a disturbed and furious Julius left in a hurry.

"How dare these mere rodents start questioning me?" screamed Julius as he kept on pacing across his chamber.

"Sire, not just the PH Times, the common mice just have started asking questions too," whimpered his assistant, Jerry, "What if they find out?"

"Find out what, Jerry?" Julius looked at Jerry with bloodshot eyes as he slowly walked towards him, "Go on, say it. I won't hurt you. I just want to hear you say it."

Jerry couldn't look Julius Cheeser in the eye. Shivering in fear, Jerry whispered, "That there's no rat, sire. This entire time, it was just poisoning."

Jerry was thrown across the room against the wall. RAA clean-up crew* had to clean up after Julius one more time that same evening.

Upstairs, Mr Pritchard was dozing off to sleep with his book open when Mrs Pritchard was finally done with the dishes and came to bed.

"Hey, what's the name of that rodenticide you bought a few months back?" asked Mrs Pritchard.

"Mice Master. Why?" he asked.

"Mrs Chopra was asking. She's got mice all across her kitchen. I told her about the one we used 3 months back in our basement and the wonders it did. I haven't seen a single mouse around since then," replied Mrs Pritchard as she tucked herself under the blanket.

*Glossary

Lawful Havoc: Section 244 of RAA Constitution implies that RAA members are allowed to wreak havoc across the Pritchard household basement as long as it is intended for the annihilation of the rats.

RDA: Rodent Development Association, main opposition party of the basement. Established 1 month earlier by ex-RAA member Geronimo Stilton.

MCP: Mice Communist Party, the only communist party of the basement. Pretty much irrelevant now. Julius Cheeser was previously a member of the party before he founded RAA.

PH Times: The leading newspaper of the Pritchard household basement. Labelled 'Anti-Mice' by Julius Cheeser in a speech two weeks back.

RAA clean-up crew: Special force deployed by RAA to sweep out the political mess made by RAA party members to make sure the residents feel safe.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasiburrashidifti@gmail.com