

# TOTO

**THE NINJA CAT**

**AND THE  
GREAT SNAKE  
ESCAPE**



**DERMOT O'LEARY**

ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EAST

# CHAPTER 9

It was the strangest day in Ratborough's history. The good rats of the town were just a bit confused. On the balcony of the palace, their king was parading his son – who was supposed to be banished – plus two cats and two snakes, as heroes!

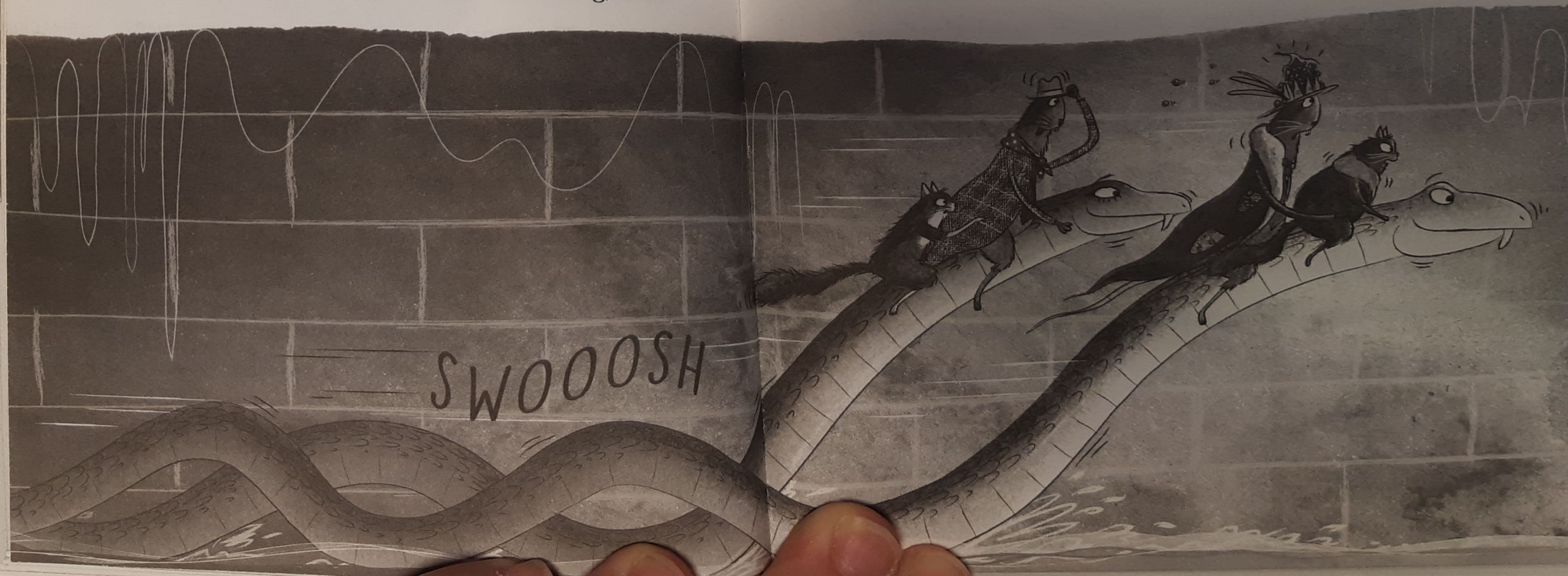
It was Brian of all people, or of all snakes, who had suggested it in the sewers on the way home.

'Your Highness,' he'd said to the king, who was riding on his back through the tunnels, 'when we get to Ratborough, it might look a little odd to your folk that we're now friends, seeing as the last they heard you were about to take me on with a toothpick. I just wouldn't want you to look ... well ... silly. Unkingly. Weak. Dare I say, *an idiot*—'

'Yes, yes, I see,' interrupted the king, 'that

is a good point. What do you suggest we say?'

'How about that you, your son and I fought, and that you two were so good, I admitted defeat. And then in my exhausted state you took mercy on me and, together with the cats, helped me rescue my true love, thus cementing an eternal friendship between rats and snakes ... **TA-DA!**'



'I like it, and it's almost the truth,' said the king.

'Apart from the quite important bit about you and Catface *not* defeating him,' said Silver. 'I seem to remember you lasted approximately ten seconds—'

'Yes, yes, well, we can gloss over that ... What they won't know won't hurt them!' said the king.

'What about me, Father?' said Catface. 'Am I welcome home?'

'After all we've been through tonight, my boy, I've never been more proud of you. I'm sorry for everything. I was just jealous of you, at home up there on the streets, with all those surface dwellers. Tell me, are cats as cool as they look?'

'Father,' Catface said, smiling at Toto and Silver, 'cool doesn't even come close.'

The town square had been decked out in all its ratty finery, and was filled with rats cheering and dancing and waving flags with the Rattinoff coat of arms.

Rat trumpeters were tooting a jaunty tune, while little rats played games in the park surrounded by delicious-smelling food stalls.

'You have to hand it to rats,' said Silver to Toto, as they gazed over the scene from the balcony of the cola bottle palace, 'they know how to throw a party ... I HAVE to get myself one of those scrap burgers before we leave.'

'Today marks a brave new day in the history of rats, cats and snakes,' proclaimed the king to his people. 'From this day forth, we are no longer enemies, and our friends Brian and Brenda are awarded the keys to the city!'

'Not your father's brightest idea,' whispered Brian to Catface. 'I've gone right off rats, but Brenda loves them. She won't need feeding for a while, but I wouldn't exactly invite her to visit!'

'Right,' said Catface, looking pale. 'I'll ... er ... mention it to Father later.'

'And for the mighty Toto and her brother, Silver,' continued the king, 'we accord them the highest honour in the kingdom of the rats: **THE CROWN OF CHEESE!**'



A couple of the King's Guard brought out a crown made of really stinky cheese – a combination of Camembert, Stilton and Red Leicester, from what Toto could smell.

'WHAT?' whispered Toto. 'I'm not wearing that!'

'You have to!' said Catface. 'It's the greatest honour in our kingdom. It means you go down in history as a friend of the rats.'

'And that you look like a muppet!' said Silver, chuckling.

'I don't know what you're laughing at,' said Toto. 'There's one for you too!'

'WHAT?'

They could only stand there as they were both adorned with their crowns and the

town applauded, while they felt ... well ... a little bit silly ... and very smelly.



'And lastly,' said the king, 'to my son, Catface. Yes, he may look like one of our sworn enemies, the cats—'

'Hey!' exclaimed Toto and Silver.

'I mean, our *old* enemies, the cats,' corrected the king, 'but the bravery Catface showed today in saving me and, indeed, the whole town from Brian the King Cobra was nothing short of heroic ...'

'Laying it on a bit thick, isn't he?' hissed Brian.

'Catface, or Alex - as your mother and I named you,' said the king, 'you are the rightful heir of Ratborough, and you are welcome back any time.'

'Thank you, Father,' said Catface, hugging his dad. 'I think I'll stay topside for now though. Like you said, cats are cool!'

**'AND NOW,'** proclaimed the king, **'LET US PARTY LIKE RATS ON A HOT TIN ROOF.'**

## **CHEESE ALL ROUND!**

The town square erupted with cheers and clapping. The music and dancing started up again, with rat-sized violins, accordions and flutes playing the latest rat hits. It was going to be one big party!

'Brian, I'd like to thank you for everything,' the king said, turning to him.

Brian smiled his goofy grin. 'No problem at all. Thanks for helping me rescue my one true love! And listen, if you ever have any trouble with bigger rats from out of town, you know who to call. We can take care of them, if you know what I mean,' said Brian with a wink.

'Er, thanks for the offer,' the king said, looking a bit flustered.

'Well, you know where we are,' said Brian.  
'See you soon!'

With a nod of thanks to the cats, the two snakes slithered off, tails entwined, back towards the zoo.

Meanwhile, yellow cheesy stuff was flying from all of the food stalls. 'This is going to get messy,' said Catface, leading Toto and Silver from the balcony. 'Let's get you home before the sun comes up.'

'I could sleep for a week,' said Silver.  
'Let's go.'

'No argument here,' said Toto, yawning.  
'Tell me, when is it *not* considered rude to take these cheese helmets off?!'