How the Elephant Got Its Trunk

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I have often wondered why elephants have long trunks? To that end, I’ve searched textbooks, notebooks, e-books and checkbooks, but I’ve never been able to find a satisfactory answer. So I decided to do the one thing no one else thought to do. I asked an elephant. Actually, that part isn’t as hard as you’d think. But finding an elephant who could answer... that part was tricky. Nevertheless I persevered, and finally found an elephant who could talk. And do you want to hear what he said? Don’t bother responding, because even though you can hear me, I can’t hear you. Huh? What’s that you say? You’re begging me to tell you? Well, okay then.
Millions of years ago, back when your parents were just children, there were no elephants at all. Just mice. And lots of them. If I tried to count them all, it would take me 10 years. If I counted by 2’s, it would take me 5 years. But if I counted by 3’s, which theoretically should be faster, it would actually take me longer because I’m not good at counting by 3’s.

Here’s the same picture turned upside-down… Just in case you’re reading this while standing on your head. Are other authors as thoughtful as I am? Probably not.
The point is, there were lots of mice. Most of these mice enjoyed gnawing on things. Twigs, straw, toilet paper rolls... they just loved to nibble! Often, they would turn their nibblings into cozy little beds for themselves. Isn’t that interesting? A mouse sleeping on a chewed up roll of toilet paper! That doesn’t sound sanitary, does it? If for some reason I found myself chewing on an old toilet paper roll, I certainly wouldn’t sleep on it!

But I digress. Which means, I stray from the topic. Which means I wander. Which means I... wait, where was I again? Oh, yes. The mice. Of all the millions of mice, one little mouse was different. She looked the same, but was different in other respects. Whereas most baby mice instinctively nibbled on things, Ellie-Fant preferred to smell things. So whenever her mother gave her a treat to gnaw on, Ellie would simply sniff it.

Ellie’s the one who’s just sniffing: The odor from this cheese is so strong, you can actually see the smell waves!
I wonder what Ellie’s dreaming about. *Eh, it’s none of my business.*

This drove her mother crazy. You might say, the problem “gnawed” at her. Do you get it? “Gnawed at her.” If you don’t get it, ask someone to explain it to you. But don’t bother me. I’m busy right now. And besides, as I stated earlier, I can’t hear you. What’s that you say? No, it’s true. I really can’t hear you.
Getting back to our tale, it didn’t matter how rubbery the copper wiring was, or how crunchy the piece of foam insulation was. It was the aroma that Ellie savored. And oh, how the odors danced upon her nose.

“Mother, this wiring is exquisite! It must be from a home theater, because I detect oaky hints of drywall with strong undertones of fiberglass insulation.”

Poor Ellie’s mother. The tribulations she had to suffer through.

Ellie and her mother: The mother is the one shaking her head. That’s something moms do.
As Ellie grew older, her sense of smell became even keener. Whenever Ellie’s mother came home with a fresh treat, before she unwrapped it, Ellie would guess what it was.

“Oooh, I know that smell!” Ellie would say. “That’s freshly cut grass after a lightning storm!”

“Yes, dear. Now please, nibble.”

“Oooh, I know that smell! That’s a piece of bicycle tire that rode through a puddle full of spoiled milk.”

“Yes, dear. Now nibble.”

“Oooh, that’s rubber cement rolled into a ball that someone’s been keeping inside of an old bowling shoe.”

“Yes, dear. I’m begging you. Just nibble!”

Ellie’s mom gave her this treat. She recycles wrapping paper from the Holidays to be environmentally responsible.
Can you believe the things that mother mice have to worry about? Someone should write a story about her. But not me. I have my hands full with this story. If you wanted to tell the story of Ellie’s mother, I certainly couldn’t stop you. I doubt anyone could.

Of course, Ellie did more than just sniff her objects. She put them in her collection. A collection of smells. A “smellection.” And she had quite a selection in her smellection. At first, she kept every item she found in a small treasure box. Pencil erasers, a piece of dashboard from a new car, soap from a motel room, kitty litter left in a garage, cigar ash in a glass of orange juice, mint gum attached to an earphone. She carried this box with her everywhere, always on the lookout for something to add to it.

Soon, Ellie had so many smells, she needed an even bigger box. Then a bigger box, and a bigger box! Finally, she needed the kind of box that people store clothes in it. Not quite a box, actually, but more of a “trunk.” Do you see where I’m going with this? I do!

Ellie’s first “trunk”: This is where she kept her smell collection when she ran out of room in her box.
Ellie-Fant took her trunk with her everywhere, and that wasn’t easy for a mouse. All that carrying made her muscles strong.

Ellie carried her trunk everywhere: *No wonder she grew so strong!*
Her legs grew massive. Her arms grew powerful. And her skin grew thick. Why did her skin grow thick? Well, lots of mice thought Ellie was weird for collecting smells, so they teased her.

These mice are teasing Ellie: *But she grew a thick skin to protect herself from their taunts.*
This made Ellie very sad, but deep down, she knew there was nothing wrong with her love of smells. She knew it was better to ignore them. So in response to their teasing, she grew a thick skin. Not surprisingly, all the sniffing and smelling also made Ellie’s nose grow. First it grew a little. But then it grew a lot. A whole lot.

Ellie carried her trunk everywhere: No wonder she grew so strong!
And a funny thing happened. As Ellie’s nose grew bigger, it could hold more smells inside. Soon she no longer needed a trunk on her back to catalogue her smells. When she found a new smell, she simply took a long whiff and laughed, “I’ll just keep it here inside my trunk.” Today, we call Ellie-Fant’s descendants simply, “elephants.”

This is what elephants look like today. You can see the resemblance!
And that, my friends, is why elephants have trunks. And that’s also why, despite being such large creatures, elephants have tiny mouse tails.

The End
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