

## The Tortilla Chip People

by Fantino Durante

CRACK!

I hit the ground hard, unable to think of anything other than the pain that flows through my crunchy, com tortilla shell of a body.

*Be tough, Chip.* The words of my tortilla chip father echo through my head.

I wiggle my hurting tortilla chip legs on both corners of my triangle-shaped body as I see a tall, stocky person walking past me with a confident strut.

"Help us, please!" I hear a voice trailing away that is coming from the plate that the person is holding, and from which I fell. I recognize the voice immediately. It's my friend Tort, short for tortilla. I named him myself, since I was made two minutes earlier than him. The thought brings my pain-filled body to its feet. *Tort, I can't let him get eaten! Not today! Not ever!*

I run as fast as I can with my stubby, triangle legs that are cracked and bruised. But it makes no difference. The distance from me and the person that is holding my tortilla friends hostage is getting farther.

The person stops at a table and places the plate down on top of it.

"For your appetizer, chips and salsa," the person says in a calm voice. "Enjoy," they add as they hurry off.

*Do they not know what is going on? I think to myself. Do they not know they are feeding people innocent tortilla chips?*

Now that the plate is resting atop the table, I am able to close the gap between me and my chip friends in no time. But when I get to the table, I am confronted with an even bigger problem: I can't get up to the table with only my two legs.

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I look around, hoping to find something that might help, but I find nothing as I hear voices speaking around the table.

"These are good chips," one voice says, as I hear one of my companions screaming as they get chewed.

"They sure are," another adds, munching down another lost soul. "I hear they're handmade." I slump down on the floor, shedding tears for my lost friends, thinking all is lost. But then I hear another voice, and not just any voice. It's the voice of Tort!

"I'm gonna jump!" he says.

I jump to my feet again and look up to find Tort staring down at me from the edge of the table.

"You'll die!" I scream back up at him.

"If you can survive a fall from this high, so can I!" he replies, jumping off the edge of the table.

That's our friendship for you. If I can do something, then Tort can do it too. But if Tort can do something, he claims that I can't. How unfair is that? He always thinks he is destined to be the hero, and I'm always destined to be a soul to be saved.

Tort lands with a *KERSPLAT* and gets up right away.

"I'd like to see you do that," Tort says to me proudly.

"I already did," I reply. "I fell off that plate. And that was from higher up."

"I remember," Tort says admittedly. "But that wasn't intentional, so it doesn't count."

"I lost a piece of me from my fall," I spit back. "So my fall was harder to survive."

"That's not true," Tort counters. "Your head's chipped because your shell isn't tough like mine."

"So what?!" I reply. "This chipped part of my head is now sharp enough to cut through plastic. Plus, it goes with my name."

"First off, there's no way your chipped head can cut through plastic," Tort says. "Also, I'm pretty sure you're named Chip because you're a chip."

"Alright fine," I agree. "We don't have time to argue. We have to get out of here!"

"We can't just leave the others!" Tort responds with emotion.

"Look up, Tort. They're being eaten," I remind him. "They're beyond saving."

"Yes, but we could save the others," he responds. "The ones that aren't being eaten."

"How?" I ask. "Sure, we could save the few that are already made. But what's gonna stop this place from making more?"

"What are you talking about?" Tort replies. "Did you get amnesia from when you fell off that plate? This place doesn't make their own chips. Those dummies don't know what they're talking about. They fall for anything. We are made in a chip factory far away from here in Mexico."

"What?!" I shout, surprised. "But even still, what are we gonna do about it?"

"I have a plan," Tort says. "But it's gonna require a lot of stealth."

Tort runs me through his 'stealthy plan,' which consists of running into the kitchen, opening the bags where the others wait hoping for help, then making a break for the door to the outside world.

"What are we going to do, and where are we going to go once we make it outside?" I ask.

"We'll figure that out once we make it," Tort replies. Without time to waste, we make our way to the kitchen, trying to be quick but stealthy. We make it there in a matter of minutes. Tort and I both look around, searching for the bags of chips.

"There's the chip bags," Tort says, pointing his right leg at a cabinet very close to the ground and opened slightly to reveal several chip bags. We creep towards the cabinet cautiously, worrying that this is too good to be true. Once we make it to the cabinet, we hop inside, feeling relieved. I look ahead of me to see hundreds of chips imprisoned in plastic chip bags.

"How are we supposed to open these bags?" I ask.

"I didn't think of that," Tort admits. "But now would be a good time to prove that that chipped part of your head can really cut through plastic."

I hesitate a second. I made that up to sound cool, but I can't tell Tort that, so I nervously walk up to a chip bag in front of me and put the chipped part of my head against the plastic. I know it will do nothing, and Tort will be proven right, but it's worth a shot.

Slowly, I run my head against the plastic. To my surprise, it works! The bag slices open, leaving a large opening along the front of the bag.

"You know," Tort says. "I thought you were lying about the 'cutting through plastic' part."

I don't tell Tort that I was lying, so that I can keep the bragging rights.

"Hello," a voice coming from the bag says.

"Come with us if you want to live!" Tort replies.

"Ooo-kay," the voice says. "I'll tell the others to come along."

Hundreds of chips suddenly come pouring out of the bag, all greeting and thanking us for freeing them.

"We are not quite free yet," Tort tells them. As Tort explains the plans to the army of chips, I open the rest of the bags, expanding the army of chips with each bag I open. After about twenty minutes, we have all of the chip bags opened, and Tort steps out of the cabinet alone, giving us the 'all-clear' sign, signalling that it's safe for us to follow him out.

It turns out Tort didn't do the best job checking, as we discover two tall people standing on either side of us, staring down at us.

"Ummmm, Tort," I say, staring up at them. "What should we do now?"

"I have a good idea," Tort responds. "RRRRUUUUUNNNN!"

Instantly all the chips run, including me and Tort, towards the door. As I run, I look back, surprised to see the two people just standing there in shock as they watch us run away. We round the corner, exiting the kitchen, entering the final stretch toward the outside world. We sprint as fast as we can as the people sitting at the tables stare down at us, as in shock as the others, as if they've never seen chips run away before.

After a few stressful minutes, Tort and I lead the way outside, followed by the army of chips.

"Free at last!" we all say happily.

"But where should we go?" I ask.

"I don't think we have much time to decide," Tort replies, as he stares off into the distance.

"Why's that?" I respond.

"See those crows over there," Tort says, pointing over to the parking lot where two crows fight over a piece of cookie. "I don't think they're going to ignore us for much longer."

"Yes, but those crows are dumb," I tell him, trying to soothe his worries. "See how they're both fighting over a cookie when there's a whole bag of potato chips right next to them."

"Sounds like you and me," Tort jokes, still worried. "Choosing to fight over something dumb instead of admitting how lucky we are to have each other."

I laugh. He is right, we do fight over lots of random, stupid things.

"We don't have time to bond," says a voice from among the crowd "I think the crows see us!" Things go from bad to worse as both crows start flying towards us at a fast speed.

"Run towards the forest!" Tort yells.

"There's no way we can all outrun the crows," another voice from the crowd says.

"You're right," Tort replies. "We aren't all going to be able to make it."

"Tort, don't tell me you're—" I begin.

"It's the only way," Tort cuts me off. "The crows will fight over me. And by the time they're done with me, you guys will be long gone."

"I'm not gonna just let you die!" I scream back at him.

At this point, the crows are only a few metres away.

"Run!" Tort says, shoving me away from him. "Run towards the forest! And make that my last wish!"

I run away with the others, tears flowing from my eyes as I look back to see Tort being brutally ripped apart by the two crows fighting over him.

"Good bye my old friend," I whisper to myself...

After Tort's sacrifice, we travelled many days and many nights under the cover of long grass, with the glow of the moon to guide us, making it as far away as possible. Legend says, we travelled five-hundred metres (I still don't know how far that is, but it must be pretty far) until one of my comrades (whose name I still don't know) found a rabbit hole in the ground. With great fear but no other choice, we walked inside the hole to discover... a family of rabbits.

It turned out the rabbits were vegan, and since they considered us "alive," they welcomed us with open paws, giving us rooms to sleep and churches to believe in.

This isn't just the story of Chip. This is the story of the Tortilla Chip People, and how they came to live in a rabbit hole.

May we all remember Tort, the chip who gave his life for our freedom.

R.I.P. Tort.