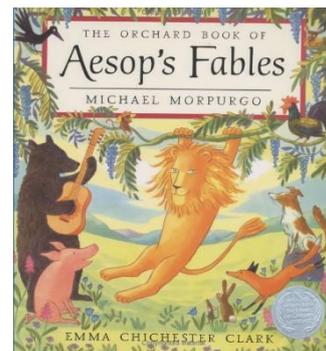


## The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse



Town Mouse decided one day that he would visit his cousin who lived way out in the countryside. Country Mouse greeted him warmly and sat him down to a great feast of corn and hazelnuts and berries. "Help yourself, she said. "You've come a long way and must be very hungry."

Town Mouse didn't much like this plain country food. He did not want to upset Country Mouse so he nibbled a little bit here and a little bit there and said how nice it was.

After lunch Country Mouse proudly showed Town Mouse over the fields and woods around her home. Town Mouse thought it very dull and ordinary but he did not say so. Instead, he talked all the while about how much fun it was to live in town, how exciting it was, and how you could eat any food you wanted. As he talked Country Mouse listened, thinking how wonderful it must be to live in the town.

All night long as they slept in her snug little nest in the hedgerow, Country Mouse dreamed of life in the big town.

Next morning, Town Mouse was still bragging about how much better it was to live in the Town. "You should come home with me," he said. "I'll show you things you never even dreamed of." Country Mouse HAD dreamed of them and she wanted to find out if her dreams were true.

"I'll come," she said, and off they went to town that very day.

At first it was even better than Country Mouse had dreamed. Town Mouse clearly lived in great style, exactly as he had said. When they arrived at Town Mouse's house, lunch had just finished and there were plenty of leftovers on the table: any amount of scrumptious cheese and yummy cakes and succulent jellies. "Help yourself," said Town Mouse.

Country Mouse, thinking that she had come to Mouse Heaven said, "This is the life for me."

Just as she said this, the house cat sprang up onto the table and came skittering after them. In and out of the dishes they went, the cat close behind. Town Mouse cried, "Follow me!" They ran for their lives. They only just made it too, darting down the table cloth and running helter-skelter across the carpet towards the mouse house in the skirting boards.

It was some time before even Town Mouse dared to venture out of the hole again. Still Country Mouse did not want to leave. She was terrified. "It will be fine now," said Town Mouse. "The cat has gone." Country Mouse followed Town Mouse across the carpet, hoping against hope that he was right, that the cat would not be waiting to pounce on them again.

The cat didn't come back...but the dog did. He came bounding after them, hackles up, barking his head off. He sent them both scampering back to the hole for safety. He frightened them so much that neither dared to come out again until the following morning.

"That's it," said Country Mouse. "I'm off. You may have all the goodies a mouse could ever want in your town house, but I'm off back to the country for the quiet life."

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Retold by Michael Morpurgo