

# Aesop's Fables

## 35. THE TOWN MOUSE AND THE COUNTRY MOUSE

By Nicky Grischotti

Town Mouse was very fond of his own appearance. 'I shall visit my friend, Country Mouse,' he announced one morning, waxing his whiskers with a dab of butter and admiring his reflection in the teapot. 'And he shall see what a very fine mouse I am!' And with a hop and a skip he straightened his bow tie and scurried off to catch the 10.17 packing crate bound for Paddington Station.

Meanwhile, deep in the trunk of an old chestnut tree, Country Mouse was busy dusting and tidying, cleaning and sweeping and cooking an extra special hotpot of beans and corn to welcome his cousin from the city. He had been collecting food all week to celebrate.

There was a loud rap at the door and Country Mouse took off his apron and scampered over to greet his friend. There on the doorstep stood Town Mouse looking very smart indeed in his pin-stripe suit and bowler hat.

He handed Country Mouse his gloves and bag, looked down his long nose and said, 'What a very small house you have dear cousin...no chandeliers, no Persian rugs...no velvet cushion to rest upon?'

Country Mouse smiled. He was very fond of Town Mouse and he ignored his snooty remarks - he knew that he didn't mean to be rude.

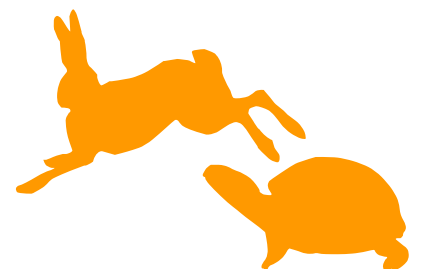
'Come and sit down, dear cousin. You must be tired and hungry from your journey,' he said pulling out a little acorn stool for him to sit on.

'What no napkins? No silver service?' sniffed Town Mouse. 'No scented bowl to wash my paws?'

Country Mouse smiled again and served up the hot soup and barley-seed bread.

'What is this food?' scoffed Town Mouse. 'No caviar, no steak tartare? No pickled herring and horse-radish sauce? Come, my friend, this instant! We're off to the city and I shall show you how to live!'

It was late that night when they arrived at Town Mouse's house and as they crept along the hall to the grand dining room Country Mouse felt the soft wool carpet under his tired little paws and the warm glow of the fire and he remembered the cold, bitter wind that blew through his country tree cottage.





And how his little eyes beamed and his whiskers twitched at the sight of the left over feast that was laid out on the table for them to gobble up!

There were soufflés and sandwiches, savoury flans and pastries. There were jellies and trifles and fresh cream cakes and a MOUNTAIN of meringues...

‘Couthin...!’b neber seen such a banquet as thith!’ cried Country Mouse.

‘But this is how you could feast EVERY night my friend!’ laughed Town Mouse.

The two little mice had a very merry time. Then all of a sudden there was a thunderous ROAR!

‘Wwwwwwhat’s that terrible noise Cousin?’ stammered Country Mouse. ‘H-h-h-hoover!’ cried the terrified little mouse.

‘Yes...oh and the Humans!’

And just at that moment the door burst open and in marched a team of kitchen staff with brooms and mops.

‘WHAT EEZ ZEES!’ shouted the French chef. ‘MEESES! Quick hoover zem up!’

‘Yikes!’ squeaked Country Mouse as they scampered down the table leg and through a crack in the floorboards. ‘I’m off!’ he cried as he scurried off under the door.

‘So soon?’ called Town Mouse. ‘No fabulous food? No smart city life?’

‘No, no, dear cousin,’ called Country Mouse over his shoulder. ‘And no loud scary monsters to gobble me up! It’s the simple, safe life at home for me...not the rich, dangerous, high life!’