

The City Mouse and the Country Mouse (part 3).

Alistair led Oliver through the dining room. They hid behind potted plants and raced under tablecloths. They waited until the chef went to check something in the dining room, then they scampered across the kitchen and into the dark pantry where Oliver stumbled over something. "Do be careful," said Alistair. Oliver saw what he'd stumbled over. "It's a-a-a..." "A mousetrap," Alistair knocked it under a shelf with his paw. "You will learn to stay away from them." Alistair led Oliver up the shelves to the hors d'oeuvres. Alistair gobbled fancy crackers, nibbled pasta, and even managed to chew a hole in a tin of smoked salmon. "Now this," said Alistair, patting his tummy, "is fine dining." Oliver was still so frightened, that he barely ate a crumb. "Tonight the chef is preparing roast duck with herbed potatoes in a delicate cream sauce." Alistair's mouth watered. His whiskers twitched. "One taste and you'll never go back to the country." The mice crept out of the pantry. The kitchen seemed empty. Alistair rushed about, gathering up bits of duck and potatoes. He didn't notice the chef coming back into the kitchen. But the chef noticed Alistair. "You again!" shouted the chef. The chef chased the mice around the kitchen with a broom. Alistair and Oliver escaped through a hole under the sink. "No main course tonight, I'm afraid," said Alistair. "But don't worry, cousin. We'll make up for it with dessert." Alistair showed Oliver the tarts and pies and cheesecakes. Oliver nibbled the edge of a flaky cream puff. It was so delicious! He leaned forward to get a bigger bite and splat! He landed face down right in it. Alistair helped him climb out, and cleaned him off. "I'm not cut out for life in the city," Oliver said. "You take too many risks for your dinner. A mouse could starve to death here, too. I'm going home to the good life." So Oliver dragged his carpet bag back through the crowded city streets, over fields and valleys, until he reached his hole under the roof of the big oak tree. He ate a late supper of acorns and wheat seeds, then curled up in his leaf bed. He could hear the crickets chirping. Back at his hotel, Alistair curled up in his linen napkin and listened to the orchestra play. Both mice sighed. "I love being home," they said.