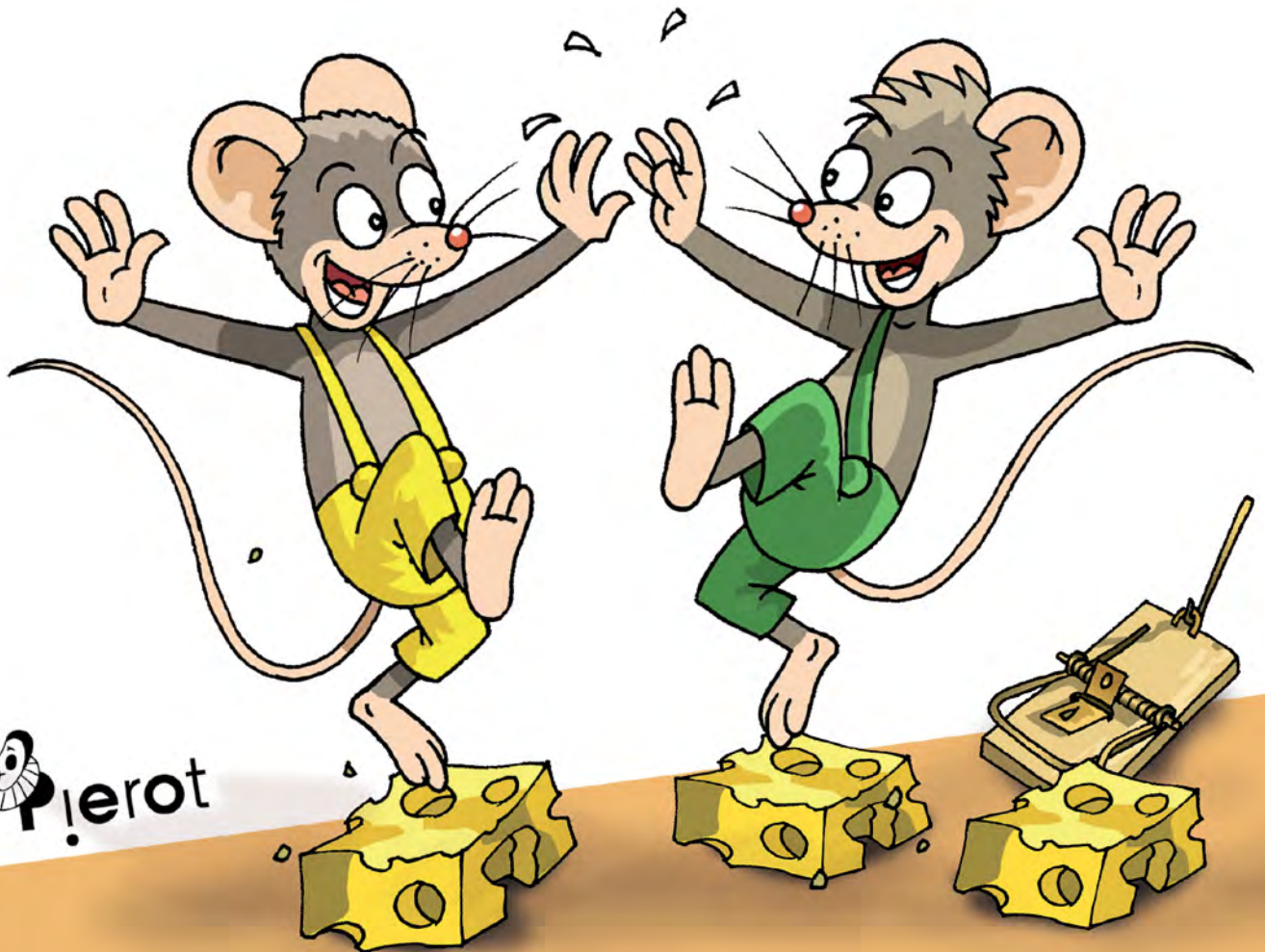




PETER S. MILAN

JOSEF POSPÍCHAL

THE MOUSE BROTHERS



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AN EXPEDITION INTO THE UNKNOWN

Today is a very special day for Rowdy and Randy, the Mouse Brothers. At last they will explore the unknown on their own!

Just as they were ready to set out, their dad warned them, "Be careful, my boys. You know that Mr. Bumbler doesn't like mice. And be extra cautious of Mike the Tomcat! Just because Mrs. Bumbler lets him sleep in her bed doesn't mean that YOU can trust him. He is, after all, a tomcat."

The Brothers were sharing a piece of gum they had found on the floor. Their parents had taught them that sharing is caring.

"Wow, this is going to be such a blast!" thought the Mouse Brothers, both quaking with anticipation and wishing that their dad would stop lecturing them. "Why is he holding us back? Doesn't he know we're big boys now?" Still chewing their gum as if it were the last piece on earth, they replied absentmindedly, "Yes, Dad, we'll be super careful."

They had more important things on their minds.

So eager to finally set out on their own, they barely heard their dad say, "I saw Mr. Bumbler setting the mousetraps with cheese this morning. It smells delicious, but don't even think about taking a bite!"

You do know what mousetraps look like, don't you?" He went on, without waiting for an answer, "They are those wooden rectangles with springs on the top. I saw Mr. Bumbler bring home a whole bag of them from the store."

Although they were barely listening, the boys kept on nodding in agreement. "Okay, Dad. We will watch out for Mr. and Mrs. Bumbler, Mike the Tomcat, AND the mousetraps! Can we go now?"

What an adventure this will be! No more "Don't go there, Rowdy! Don't touch that, Randy!" Maybe they'd even find some crumbs along the way. Just the thought made them jump for joy!

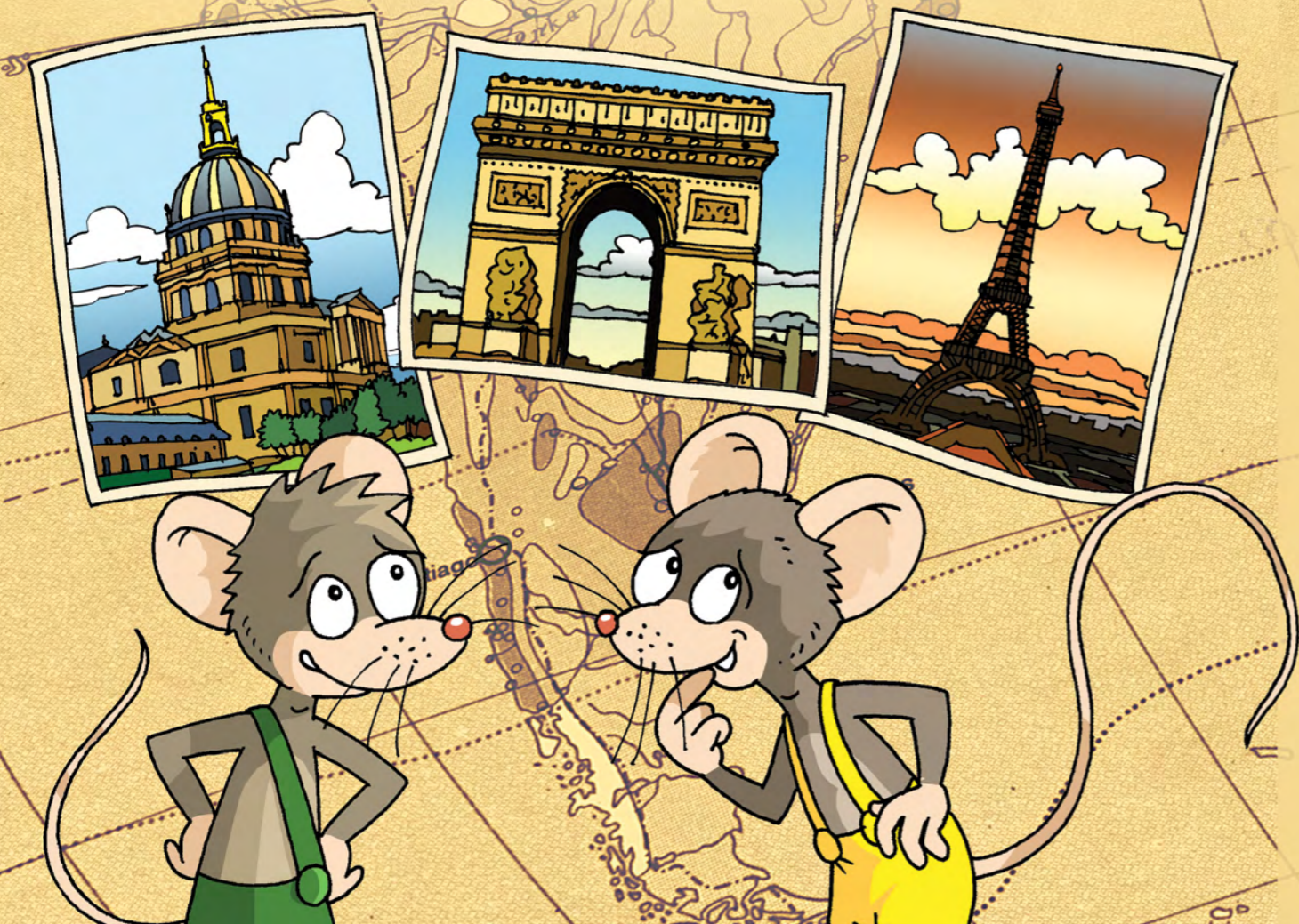
The Brothers had been waiting their whole lives to wander beyond the mouse hole behind the bookcase.



Sometimes when Mr. and Mrs. Bumbler would go out in the evening, Papa Mouse would take the boys to the living room to look at the enormous book of maps, which he called an "atlas". It was important to him that his sons get a good education. There, father and sons would spend the whole evening, dreamily admiring the colorful, exotic pictures; there, they could travel from Africa across the ocean to Europe then on to the snowy North Pole where, oddly, they had not felt the cold.

"How I wish to travel! I'm sick and tired of being stuck behind a bookcase in the middle of nowhere!" Randy whispered.

Mama Mouse was very worried about the boys' big expedition, but Papa Mouse had insisted, "Honey, the boys can't stay in here with you forever. They are growing up...and the kitchen isn't that far."



And so he set off to the pantry to get a bite to eat while Rowdy and Randy ran around the stove, explored the narrow space behind the cupboard, and headed for the kitchen table.

Randy's whiskers bristled.. "Something smells awesome!" That's when he noticed a plate of leftover sausage. Slowly, warily, and with Rowdy close behind, he slinked along the wall, ready to flee at a moment's notice. What if Mike the Tomcat suddenly sprang out of the darkness?

Could their very first expedition be successful?

The savory, juicy, spicy sausage, just sitting there waiting for them, was beyond their wildest dreams! Yum!



When they could eat no more, the Mouse Brothers carefully climbed back down, avoiding all of the mousetraps, and hid in a pot under a lemon tree. There, on their backs, legs dangling over the edge, sighing with great pleasure, they enjoyed the final moments of their first, and very successful, expedition before heading home.

CAUGHT IN A TRAP

Papa Mouse was searching the pantry thoroughly. Suddenly he squeaked, "Ouch!"

He examined his tail carefully. "I think it's broken! It could have been a paw and that would have been a lot worse! I'll get home all right." he reassured himself bravely. "But what a shock! Who would have expected to find a mousetrap here, of all places?"

