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Opening extract from

The Tale of the Castle Mice

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The Tale of the Castle Mice

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THE BODLEY HEAD

LONDON

ONCE UPON A TIME there was a family of mice who lived in a doll's house. There were fifteen of them: Mr and Mrs Perk and their thirteen children.

Their house was owned by a rich earl who lived in a castle, and apart from having one wall missing it was very grand.



There were two bathrooms, both with running water.

Mr Perk slept in the
larger of the two baths





and his wife occupied
the other.

The children made do on shelves
in one or other of the many rooms.



Being unusually large, the doll's house was full of nooks and crannies and could have taken many more children. But Mrs Perk decided to stop at thirteen.



"Enough is enough," she said.

The Perks rose early every morning and

polished
the silver,





shook the rugs,

and swept up
after themselves.



Afterwards, when lots of visitors came to visit the castle, they disappeared through holes in the wainscoting and there wasn't one to be seen.



All the visitors to the castle said it was the best-kept doll's house they had ever come across, and many of them took photographs of it.

Mrs Perk was a good cook and she kept a well-stocked larder of leftovers from the castle kitchen, so the mice never went to bed without supper. One way and another they lived a happy and carefree life.

During the long summer evenings they played games on the castle lawn . . .



and in the winter, when it was cold outside, they sat in the lounge and watched television by moonlight. It was a very tiny screen and the picture never changed, but it helped pass the time.



Then one day something happened that threatened to change everything. The family woke to a strange smell.