

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts.

“As You Like It”, William Shakespeare

To some degree all human beings are actors, and the play they act out is a family drama. No matter what role you play in your family, it’s a vital one, particularly in the resolution of issues and conflicts that inevitably arise. The ability to collaborate to solve problems has a tremendous impact on a family’s ability to reach long term goals and leave behind a desired legacy.

At FUTR, we help families address their issues – whatever they might be – by instilling tool sets that foster agreement and seek the truth. Without agreed-upon guidelines, it’s difficult to measure what constitutes success ... and feuds can ensue. It can be a set of metrics, or a description of what an acceptable outcome would be. It can be standards for measuring financial performance or for tracking planning or consulting. It can entail the simple delineation of a means to handle the management of a particular family asset. Every family we work with at FUTR anticipates its unique future problems in this way.

The following story illustrates that family problems should be addressed sooner rather than later. The parable uses common animals, each playing a role, and it illustrates the bittersweet entrances and exits of a barnyard drama. The mouse’s conundrum shows that if one family member has an issue, the entire family may soon have an issue. It’s a cautionary tale . . .

### **Mouse in the House**

A mouse peered from his crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife opening a package. “What food might the package contain?” the mouse wondered. He was devastated to see it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard the mouse cried: “There’s a mousetrap in the house!



The chicken clucked, "Mr. Mouse, I know this gravely concerns you but I cannot be bothered by it." The pig sympathized, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse. There is nothing I can do about this but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers." The cow answered, "I'm so sorry for you, Mr. Mouse. But it is no skin off my nose."

Dejected and down the mouse returned to face the farmer's mousetrap alone.

That night in the house, a noise went up: the clattering of a mousetrap catching its prey. The farmer's wife rushed to see what happened. In the dark she did not spy the tail of a venomous snake caught in the trap. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed his wife to the doctor. She returned home with a fever.

You treat fever with chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard in search of the soup's main ingredient. Exit the chicken. The wife's malady persisted, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed his guests, the farmer butchered the pig.

The farmer's wife did not recover. Indeed she died. Many attended the funeral. And the farmer slaughtered the cow to provide meat for them all.

The mouse watched in sadness from his crack in the wall.

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Postscript: Although dejected by the loss of his barnyard colleagues, the Mouse ends our tale happy about life, liberty and happiness in the pursuit of prosperity (wealth).

*"Mouse in the House" courtesy of Boy Scouts of America*