

Appendix C

The Story of Jumping Mouse¹

There was once a mouse. He was a busy mouse, searching everywhere, touching his whiskers to the grass, and looking. He was busy as all mice are, busy with mice things. But once in a while he would hear an odd sound. He would prick his ears and lift his head, squinting hard to see, his whiskers wiggling in the air, and he would wonder.

One day he scurried up to a fellow mouse and asked him, "Do you hear a roaring in your ears, my brother?" "No, no", answered the other mouse, not lifting his busy nose from the ground. "I hear nothing. I am busy now. Talk to me later." He asked another mouse the same question and the mouse looked at him strangely. "Are you foolish in the head? What sound?" he asked and slipped into a hole in a fallen cottonwood tree.

The little mouse shrugged his whiskers and busied himself, determined to forget the whole matter. But there was that roaring again. It was faint, very faint, but it was there! He decided to investigate the sound just a little. Leaving the other busy mice, he scurried a little way away and listened again. There it was! He was listening hard when suddenly, someone said "Hello."

"Hello, little brother," the voice said, and Mouse almost jumped right out of his skin. He arched his back and tail and was about to run. "Hello," again said the voice. "It is I, Brother Racoon." And sure enough, it was! "What are you doing here all by yourself, little brother?" Asked the racoon.

The mouse blushed, and put his nose almost to the ground. "I hear a roaring in my ears and I am investigating it," he answered timidly.

"A roaring in your ears?" replied the racoon as he sat down with him. "What you hear, little brother, is the river."

¹ This story has been shared with non-Native American cultures by Hyemeyohsts Storm in his classic book of the Plains Indian People, *Seven Arrows* Storm, H. (1972). *Seven Arrows*. New York, Ballantine Books.

"The river?" Mouse asked curiously. "What is a river?"

"Walk with me and I will show you the river," Racoon said.

Little Mouse was terribly afraid, but he was determined to find out once and for all about the roaring. "I can return to my work," he thought, "after his thing is settled, and possibly this thing may aid me in all my busy examining and collecting. And my brothers all said it was nothing. I will show them. I will ask Racoon to return with me and I will have proof." "All right Racoon, my brother," said Mouse. "Lead on to the river. I will walk with you."

Little Mouse walked with Racoon, his heart pounding in his breast. The racoon was taking him upon strange paths and Little Mouse smelled the scent of many things that had gone by this way. Many times he became so frightened he almost turned back. Finally, they came to the river!

It was huge and breathtaking, deep and clear in places, and murky in others. Little Mouse was unable to see across it because it was so great. It roared, sang, cried, and thundered on its course. Little Mouse saw great and small pieces of the world carried along on its surface. "It is powerful!" Little Mouse said, fumbling for words.

"It is a great thing," answered the racoon, "but here, let me introduce you to a friend." In a smoother, shallower place was a lily pad, bright and green. Sitting upon it was a frog, almost as green as the pad it sat on. The frog's white belly stood out clearly.

"Hello, little brother," said the frog. "Welcome to the river."

"I must leave you," cut in Racoon. "But do not fear, little brother, for Frog will care for you now." And Racoon left, looking along the riverbank for food that he might wash and eat.

Little Mouse approached the water and looked into it. He saw a frightened mouse reflected there. "Who are you?" Little Mouse asked the reflection. He looked up at Frog. "Are you not afraid being so far out into the Great River?"

"No," answered the frog, "I am not afraid. I have been given the gift from birth to live both above and within the river. When Winter comes and freezes this Medicine, I cannot be seen. But all the while Thunderbird flies, I am here. To visit me, one must come when the world is green. I, my brother, am the keeper of the water."

"Amazing!" Little Mouse said at last, again fumbling for words.

"Would you like to have some Medicine Power?" Frog asked.

"Medicine Power? Me?" asked Little Mouse. "Yes, yes! If it is possible."

"Then crouch as low as you can, and then jump as high as you are able! You will have your Medicine!" Frog said.

Little Mouse did as he was instructed. He crouched as low as he could and jumped. And when he did he saw, far off, the Sacred Mountains. Little Mouse could hardly believe his eyes. But there they were! Then he fell back to earth and landed in the river! Little Mouse scrambled back to the bank. He was wet and frightened nearly to death. "You tricked me," Little Mouse screamed at the frog!

"Wait," said the frog. "You are not harmed. Do not let your fear and anger blind you. What did you see?"

"I," Mouse stammered, "I, I saw the Sacred Mountains!"

"And you have a new name!" Frog said. "It is Jumping Mouse."

"Thank you. Thank you," Jumping Mouse said, and thanked him again. "I want to return to my people and tell them of this thing that has happened to me."

"Go. Go then," Frog said. "Return to your people. It is easy to find them. Keep the sound of the Great River to the back of your head. Go opposite to the sound and you will find your brother mice."

Jumping Mouse returned to the world of the mice. But he found disappointment. No one would listen to him. And because he was wet, and had no way of explaining it because there had been no rain, many of the other mice were afraid of him. They believed he had been spat from the mouth of another animal that had tried to eat him. And they all knew that if he had not been food for the one who wanted him, then he must also be poison for them.

Jumping Mouse lived again among his people, but he could not forget his vision of the Sacred Mountains. The memory burned in the mind and heart of Jumping Mouse, and one day he went to the edge of the place of mice and looked out into the prairie. He looked up for eagles. The sky was full of many spots, each one an eagle. But he was determined to go to the Sacred Mountains. He gathered all of his courage and ran just as fast as he could onto the prairie. His little heart pounded with excitement and fear.

He ran until he came to some sage bushes. He was resting and trying to catch his breath when he saw an old mouse. The patch of sage Old Mouse lived in was a haven for mice. Seeds were plentiful and there was nesting material and many things to be busy with.

"Hello," said Old Mouse. "Welcome."

Jumping Mouse was amazed: such a place and such a mouse. "You are truly a great mouse," Jumping Mouse said with all the respect he could find. "This is truly a wonderful place. And the eagles cannot see you here, either."

"Yes," said Old Mouse, "and one can see all the beings of the prairie here: the buffalo, antelope, rabbit and coyote. One can see them all from here and know their names."

"That is marvellous," Jumping Mouse said. "Can you also see the Great River and the Sacred Mountains?"

"Yes and no," Old Mouse said with conviction. "I know there is a river. But I am afraid that the Sacred Mountains are only a dream. Forget your passion to see them and stay here with me. There is everything you want here, and it is a good place to be."

"How can he say such a thing?" thought Jumping Mouse. "The Medicine of the Sacred Mountains is nothing one can forget." "Thank you very much for the meal you have

shared with me, Old Mouse, and also for sharing your home," Jumping Mouse said. "But I must seek the mountains."

"You are a foolish mouse to leave here. There is danger on the prairie! Just look up there!" Old Mouse said, with even more conviction. "See all those spots! They are eagles, and they will catch you!"

It was hard for Jumping Mouse to leave, but he gathered his determination and ran hard again. The ground was rough, but he arched his tail and ran with all his might. He could feel the shadows of the spots upon his back as he ran. All those spots! Finally he ran into a stand of chokecherry trees. Jumping Mouse could hardly believe his eyes. It was cool there and very spacious. There was water, cherries and seeds to eat, grasses to gather for nests, holes to be explored and many, many other busy things to do.

He was investigating his new domain when he heard very heavy breathing. He quickly investigated the sound and discovered its source. It was a great mound of hair with black horns. It was a great buffalo. Jumping Mouse could hardly believe the greatness of the being he saw lying there before him. He was so large that Jumping Mouse could have crawled into one of his great horns. "Such a magnificent being," thought Jumping Mouse, and he crept closer.

"Hello, my brother," said Buffalo. "Thank you for visiting me."

"Hello, great being," said Jumping Mouse. "Why are you lying here?"

"I am sick and I am dying," Buffalo said, "and my Medicine has told me that only the eye of a mouse can heal me. But little brother, there is no such thing as a mouse."

Jumping Mouse was shocked. "One of my eyes!" he thought. "One of my tiny eyes." He scurried back into the stand of chokecherries. But the breathing came harder and slower. "He will die," thought Jumping Mouse, "if I do not give him my eye. He is too great a being to let die." He went back to where Buffalo lay and spoke. "I am a mouse," he said with a shaky voice. "And you, my brother, are a great being. I cannot let you die. I have two eyes, so you may have one of them."

The minute he had said it, Jumping Mouse's eye flew out of his head and Buffalo was made whole. He got to his feet, shaking Jumping Mouse's whole world. "Thank you, my little brother," said Buffalo. "I know of your quest for the Sacred Mountains and of your visit to the Great River. You have given me life so that I may give-away to the people. I will be your brother forever. Run under my belly and I will take you right to the foot of the Sacred Mountains, and you need not fear the spots. The eagles cannot see you while you run under me. All they will see will be the back of a buffalo. But I cannot go further. I am of the prairie and I will fall on you if I try to go up the mountains."

Jumping Mouse ran under Buffalo, secure and hidden from the spots, but with only one eye it was frightening. Buffalo's great hooves shook the whole world each time he took a step. Finally they came to a place and Buffalo stopped. "This is where I must leave you, little brother," he said.

"Thank you very much," said Jumping Mouse. "But you know, it was very frightening running under you with only one eye. I was constantly in fear of your great earth-shaking hooves."

"Your fear was for nothing," said Buffalo, "for my way of walking is the Sun Dance way, and I always know where my hooves will fall. Now I must return to the prairie, my brother. You can always find me there."

Jumping Mouse immediately began to investigate his new surroundings. There were even more things here than in other places, busier things, and an abundance of seeds and other things mice like. In his investigation of these things, suddenly he ran upon a grey wolf who was sitting there doing absolutely nothing. "Hello brother wolf," Jumping Mouse said.

The wolf's ears came alert and his eyes shone. "Wolf! Wolf! Yes, that is what I am, I am a wolf!" But then his mind dimmed and it was not long before he sat quietly again, completely without memory as to who he was. Each time Jumping Mouse reminded him who he was, he became excited with the news, but soon would forget.

"Such a great being," thought Jumping Mouse, "but he has no memory." Jumping Mouse

went to the centre of this new place and was quiet. He listened for a very long time to the beating of his heart. Then suddenly he made up his mind. He scurried back to where the wolf sat and he spoke.

"Brother Wolf," Jumping Mouse said. . . .

"Wolf! Wolf," said the wolf. . .

"Please, Brother Wolf," said Jumping Mouse, "please listen to me. I know what will heal you. It is one of my eyes and I want to give it to you. Please take it." When Jumping Mouse stopped speaking his eye flew out of his head and Wolf was made whole. Tears fell down Wolf's cheek, but his little brother could not see them, for now he was blind.

"You are a great brother," said Wolf. "Now I have my memory. I am the guide to the Sacred Mountains. I will take you there. There is a great Medicine Lake there: the most beautiful lake in the world. The whole world is reflected there: the people, the lodges of the people, and all the beings of the prairies and skies."

"Please take me there," Jumping Mouse said. Wolf guided him through the pines to the Medicine Lake. Jumping Mouse drank the water from the lake and Wolf described the beauty to him.

"I must leave you here," said Wolf, "for I must return so that I may guide others, but I will remain for as long as you like."

"Thank you, my brother," said Jumping Mouse. "But although I am frightened to be alone, I know you must go so that you may show others the way to this place."

Wolf left and Jumping Mouse sat, trembling in fear. It was no use running, for he was blind, and he knew an eagle would find him there. He felt a shadow on his back and heard the sound that eagles make. He braced himself for the shock.

The eagle hit!

Jumping Mouse went to sleep.

Then he woke up. The surprise of being alive was great, for now he could see! Everything was blurry, but the colours were beautiful.

"I can see! I can see!" said Jumping Mouse over and over again.

A faint shape came toward Jumping Mouse. He squinted hard but the shape remained a blur.

"Hello, brother," a voice said. "Do you want some Medicine?"

"Some Medicine for me?" asked Jumping Mouse. "Yes! Yes!"

"Then crouch down as low as you can," the voice said, "and jump as high as you can."

Jumping Mouse did as he was instructed. He crouched as low as he could and jumped! The wind caught him and carried him higher.

"Do not be afraid," the voice called to him. "Hang on to the wind and trust!"

Jumping Mouse did. He closed his eyes and hung on to the wind and it carried him higher and higher. He opened his eyes and they were clear, and the higher he went the clearer they became. Jumping Mouse looked down and saw his old friend upon a lily pad on the beautiful Medicine Lake.

"Is that you, Frog?" he called.

"Hello Jumping Mouse," cried Frog. "You have a new name. You are Eagle now. Look... look at yourself."

Jumping Mouse looked. Where his hindlegs had been were sharp talons, where his forelegs had been were wing feathers, and where his nose and whiskers had been was a great curved beak.

He spread his wings wide... and he flew... and he flew... and he flew.

