JUMPING MOUSE

Many years ago, as many years as there are grains of sand, there lived a small community of mice on the edge of a meadow. The mice were very busy doing busy mice things. They searched for seeds with their heads close to the ground to prepare for the long winter ahead.

Now in this mouse community there was a mouse that was different from all the other mice in that he heard a great roaring in his ears. He would ask the other mice, "Do you hear a great roaring in your ears?" The other mice would say, " I hear nothing. Go about your work or you will starve this coming winter."

The little mouse went back to his work searching for seeds close to the ground. Now one morning the little mouse went out to search for seeds and the roaring was louder than he had ever heard. He decided to leave the mouse meadow in search of the roaring. As he left the meadow he began to see strange new sights and smell new smells and hear strange new sounds that he had never heard before. It wasn't long before the mouse came to a mighty river. He looked down into the water and saw his reflection. He had never seen himself before. Suddenly he was surprised by a voice.

The voice said, " Greetings Brother Mouse." The little mouse jumped backward. "Who are you?" asked the mouse. "I am Brother Frog." "Greetings Brother Frog." said the mouse, "I am seeking a great roaring that I hear in my ears. I have found it. It is this mighty river." Brother Frog laughed, "This is not the great roaring that you seek. This is the Great River of Life which flows through all things. The roaring that you hear in your ears is much farther beyond this place. Bend down as low as you can and jump into the air. Tell me what you see."

The mouse bent down as low as he could and jumped into the air. As he looked off into the distance he saw the most beautiful thing he had ever seen; it was the Sacred Mountains. But when the little mouse jumped, he leapt too far out and he landed in the water with a big splash. He swam back to shore mad at Brother Frog.

The little mouse yelled at Brother Frog, " Brother Frog you tricked me to land in the water." Brother Frog said, "Don't be blinded by your anger, what did you see when you were up there." The mouse said, "I saw the Sacred Mountains. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen." Brother Frog said, "That is the great roaring that you hear in your ears. Your quest is for the Sacred Mountains. You must leave this place in search of what is at the top of the Sacred Mountains. You have a new name now, it is Jumping Mouse." Jumping Mouse said, "Thank you Brother Frog." as he ran back to the little mouse meadow.

When Jumping Mouse arrived at the meadow he began to tell everyone what had happened. "I saw the Sacred Mountains. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen." The other mice said, "You are talking crazy. You will not have enough seeds for the winter. "I have a new name now, it is Jumping Mouse." The other mice said, "You are all wet. Perhaps a coyote tried to eat you and found you poisonous and spit you out of his mouth." Jumping Mouse realized that he would have to look for the Sacred Mountains on his own.

The next morning he rose early and headed to the Great River of Life. Brother

Frog helped Jumping Mouse across the river to the wide open prairie country. The roaring in Jumping Mouse's ears was louder than it had ever been before. He could see the Sacred Mountains far off in the distance. He knew it would be many days journey, but he gathered up his courage and began to walk. As he left the river he began to see strange new sights and smell new smells and hear strange new sounds that he had never heard before.

As he walked he could see little circling black dots in the sky. He knew that one could easily come down and make him a meal, so he started to run. He ran and hid beneath a clump of sage and caught his breath. He ran again until he got to a bunch of sweet grass and there he gathered his breath. He ran again until he came to a black cherry tree and there he stopped to catch his breath. As he lay there resting, he heard a great wheezing, a great heavy breathing. At first he thought it was himself, but he looked over and he saw a great black mound of fur moving up and down very slowly.

Without thinking he spoke, "Great beast, what are you that you make this sound?" The beast spoke, "I am Buffalo. I am very sick and will die soon. The only thing that can save me now is the eye of a mouse. I do not know of any mice so I am destined to lie here and die."

Jumping Mouse thought to himself, "I have two eyes. Perhaps if I give Buffalo one of my eyes I will make him whole." Jumping Mouse spoke, "Brother Buffalo, I have two eyes. Perhaps if I ..." And with that the eye left him.

Brother Buffalo stood up. "Thank you Jumping Mouse for making me whole. I know of your quest for the Sacred Mountains. Walk underneath me and the circling black dots will only see the back of a Buffalo. Jumping Mouse walked under Buffalo. He was frightened as Buffalo's hooves made a tremendous thundering, but he knew that Buffalo knew where his hooves fell.

At last they reached the base of the Sacred Mountains. Jumping Mouse said, "Thank you Brother Buffalo for giving me safe passage to the Sacred Mountains." Brother Buffalo said, "Thank you Jumping Mouse for making me whole. My hooves are unable to climb these hard rocks so I must leave you." With those words the two of them parted.

The roaring in Jumping Mouse's ears was louder than it had ever been before. He knew it would be several days before he reached the top of the Sacred Mountains, but he gathered his strength and begin to walk. As he left the prairie he begin to see strange new sights and smell new smells and hear strange new sounds that he had never heard before.

It wasn't too long before he ran into Brother Bear. "Greetings Brother Bear." said Jumping Mouse. "A Bear? A Bear! Yes, that is what I am!" said Bear in a confused voice. Jumping Mouse thought to himself, "How sad that this great animal doesn't know who he is. I was able to heal Brother Buffalo with my eye, perhaps I could..." And with that the eye left him. Brother Bear stood up. "Thank you Jumping Mouse for making me whole. I know of your quest for the Sacred Mountains. Crawl up on my back and I will give you safe passage to the top."

Jumping Mouse climbed on to the back of Black Bear and hung on to his thick black fur. As they started up the mountain, Jumping Mouse began to smell new smells and hear strange new sounds that he had never heard before. His sight was gone but he could feel the sun on his back and felt branches as they swept past his face.

It wasn't long before they reached the top of the Sacred Mountains. Jumping Mouse said, "Thank you Brother Bear for giving me safe passage to the top of the Sacred Mountains." Brother Bear said, "Thank you Jumping Mouse for making me whole. I must return to bring others to this sacred place." And with those words, they parted.

Jumping Mouse was alone at the top of the Sacred Mountains. The roaring in his ears was louder than it had ever been before. As he sat at the top he began to smell new smells and hear strange new sounds that he had never heard before. The roaring began to beat in his heart like a drum, and he knew it wouldn't be long before one of the circling black dots would come down and make him a meal.

And now the roaring beat louder and louder until it was all that he could hear. Suddenly, there was a loud roar and the swoosh of wings. Jumping Mouse had been hit.

He didn't know if he had been killed or in a deep sleep or a heavy dream, but after a long period of time, he began to awake. With each breath he took he grew stronger and stronger until he could sit upright. He began to blink his eyes until he could see faint light. With each blink his vision grew more and more keen until he could make out fuzzy shapes. Now his strength had returned to the power he had as a youth and his vision was better than he had ever remembered.

From the top of the Sacred Mountain he looked down and he could see Brother Bear walking down to bring others to this sacred place. He could see Brother Buffalo going to join the rest of the buffalo herd. He could see far, far off into the distance the mice in the little mouse meadow doing little mouse things with their heads still close to the ground. And through all these things he saw flowing the Great River of Life. Jumping Mouse looked down and saw his old friend Brother Frog.

Brother Frog looked up and saw Jumping Mouse and with all of his breath he yelled, "Jumping Mouse, you have a new name now! Your name is Eagle!"