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Opening extract from

Jumping Mouse

Written by

Brian Patten

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Jumping Mouse



Retold by Brian Patten
Illustrated by Mary Moore

HAWTHORN PRESS

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For Angela
who introduced me to this tale



Introduction

Roger Ridington, an American anthropologist, told the story of Jumping Mouse to a meeting of the American Anthropological Association over forty years ago in the United States, in order to illustrate a lecture on the American Indians. He went into the story's meaning and suggested the symbolic qualities of the creatures in the tale. The story, a folk tale, was told to him by Chuck Storm (Hyemeyohsts). It was told to me by a friend one evening when we were riding through Dublin on the top deck of a Corporation bus. Stories, like buses, travel...

Here it is retold again, in simple yet I hope clear language that will make the story easily accessible to adults and children alike. Perhaps one of its 'lessons' is that all creatures are part of a whole, that they interact, give to and take from each other no matter how important or insignificant they might at first appear. Another is how we can all grow and fulfill our potential by overcoming fear. Several versions of this story exist. The original author probably told it round campfires centuries ago, and has since entered whatever Heaven he believed in, along with a most amazing and innocent mouse.

Brian Patten



In the roots of a giant tree there once lived a family of mice...

IN the roots of a giant tree there once lived a family of mice. It was a huge family and they lived in semi-darkness, for the tree's thick branches hid the sunlight from them. They went about their business hardly ever venturing out into the world. When the stars appeared they slept, and when the sun tried to light their gloomy home they worked, poking their tiny faces into holes to see if there was anything edible there. They gathered seeds and bits of fluff and twigs, which they moved from one place to another. They were always rushing about.

Among these mice was one who kept hearing a roaring noise. When he asked the others what the noise was they always said, 'It must be your imagination. We can hear no noise.' The more he asked about the noise the more the other mice insisted that no noise existed. The mouse would then go back to his work among the tree-roots. He would try to forget about the noise. But it was difficult. At night he would lie restless on the moss under the tree and look up at the stars