

## The Douglas Fir Tree And The Mouse

The Douglas Fir is a large evergreen tree. It is very, very, tall, almost reaching the clouds in the sky. It has huge branches that hold lots of small pine cones.

On the ground below the tree, many small animals make their home. A sizeable number of plants grow strong under the wide spreading branches of the tree.

The winters in this part of the country are long and very cold.

The snow sometimes reaches 500 inches.....  
that's a lot of snow!

Long, long ago the wind began to blow and the snow grow deep. It was very cold, but the tree stood proud and strong.

A little mouse lived under the tree in a small snugly hole he had dug. He had worked hard during the summer to store extra food he would need for the long winter. But this was a very bitter cold winter. The mouse nibbled away at his food as the cold days and cold nights continued and soon he had no food left.

What was he to do?

He dug his way out of his snugly hole  
and wandered around looking for seeds to eat.  
He found nothing.

The mouse went from tree to tree in the  
forest asking if they could spare some seeds  
or berries. The Holly tree said she was keeping her  
berries for the birds that lived in the forest.....  
the Juniper tree said he was short of berries  
this year and had none to spare.....  
the Pinion Pine said the pine martin and the  
ermine had taken all the pine nuts.

The mouse was so sad.....he shuffled back to his  
snugly hole at the bottom of the Douglas Fir tree.....  
his tail dragged along the snow, his head drooped down.  
Some of the other mice came out of their holes  
to make sure he was OK. They asked him if  
he had found any food because they too  
were running short of winter supplies.

"No," he said. "I haven't had any lucky." He invited  
them into his snugly hole to keep warm  
and discuss what they should do.

As they sat there thinking what to do next, the great Douglas  
Fir tree began to shake and the wind began to rattle the  
branches of the tree.

The mice huddled together, very frightened.

Like the snap of fingers, the wind stopped, the tree grew quiet and a soft voice called out, "Come out little mice. I will help you, but first you must make a promise to me."

The mice marched out into the cold, deep snow, and gathered around the base of the tree.

Douglas Fir said, "I have lots of pine cones on my branches, enough to feed all of you for a long, long time. At least until spring comes. You will be safe and warm inside my cones. When spring comes you must promise that you will each take one seed from the cone and plant it somewhere in the forest. In that way when the seeds grow into tall, strong trees there will always be food and shelter for you. I have made the promise to feed and shelter you for all winters to come. Will you promise that you will plant seeds in spring?"

The mice promised as they climbed up into the tree and into the pine cones. Why, it was like living in an apartment.

When spring came, the mice came out of their cones, each carrying a seed to plant. They had kept their promise. All the other trees in the forest bowed their heads to the mighty Douglas.

To this day, if you are in a forest where there are Douglas Fir trees, look up.....the Douglas Fir will be the tallest and biggest tree in the forest. It still stands proud. .... and all the other trees bow to him because not only is he a mighty tree, but a kind one as well.



This is a picture of a Douglas Pine Cone  
Note the little tails of the mice sticking out

This is a Native American Fable  
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