



CHAPTER 9

TWO TIMID PERSONS MEET



*Thus always you will meet life's test—
To do the thing you can do best.
—Whitefoot.*

Jumper the Hare sat crouched at the foot of a tree in the Green Forest. Had you happened along there, you would not have seen him. At least, I doubt if you would. If you had seen him, you probably wouldn't have known it. You see, in his white coat Jumper was so exactly the color of the snow that he looked like nothing more than a little heap of snow.

Just in front of Jumper was a little round hole. He gave it no attention. It didn't interest him in the least. All through the Green Forest were little holes in the snow. Jumper was so used to them that he seldom noticed them. So he took no notice of this one until something moved down in that hole. Jumper's eyes opened a little wider and he watched. A sharp little face with very bright eyes filled that little round hole. Jumper moved just the tiniest bit, and in a flash that sharp little face with the bright eyes disappeared. Jumper sat still and waited. After a long wait the sharp little face with bright eyes appeared again.

"Don't be frightened, Whitefoot," said Jumper softly. At the first word the sharp little face disappeared, but in a moment it was back, and the sharp little eyes were fixed on Jumper suspiciously. After a long stare the suspicion left them, and out of the little round hole came trim little Whitefoot in a soft brown coat with white waistcoat and

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with white feet and a long, slim tail. This winter he was not living in Farmer Brown's sugarhouse.

"Gracious, Jumper, how you did scare me!" said he.

Jumper chuckled. "Whitefoot, I believe you are more timid than I am," he replied.

"Why shouldn't I be? I'm ever so much smaller, and I have more enemies," retorted Whitefoot.

"It is true you are smaller, but I am not so sure that you have more enemies," replied Jumper thoughtfully. "It sometimes seems to me that I couldn't have more, especially in winter."

"Name them," commanded Whitefoot.

"Hooty the Great Horned Owl, Yowler the Bob Cat, Old Man Coyote, Reddy Fox, Terror the Goshawk, Shadow the Weasel, Billy Mink." Jumper paused.

"Is that all?" demanded Whitefoot.

"Isn't that enough?" retorted Jumper rather sharply.

"I have all of those and Blacky the Crow and Butcher the Shrike and Sammy Jay in winter, and Buster Hear and Jimmy Skunk and several of the Snake family in summer," replied Whitefoot. "It seems to me sometimes as if I need eyes and ears all over me. Night and day there is always some one hunting for poor little me. And then some folks wonder why I am so timid. If I were not as timid as I am, I wouldn't be alive

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now; I would have been caught long ago. Folks may laugh at me for being so easily frightened, but I don't care. That is what saves my life a dozen times a day."

Jumper looked interested. "I hadn't thought of that," said he. "I'm a very timid person myself, and sometimes I have been ashamed of being so easily frightened. But come to think of it, I guess you are right; the more timid I am, the longer I am likely to live." Whitefoot suddenly darted into his hole. Jumper didn't move, but his eyes widened with fear. A great white bird had just alighted on a stump a short distance away. It was Whitey the Snowy Owl, down from the Far North.

"There is another enemy we both forgot," thought Jumper, and tried not to shiver.