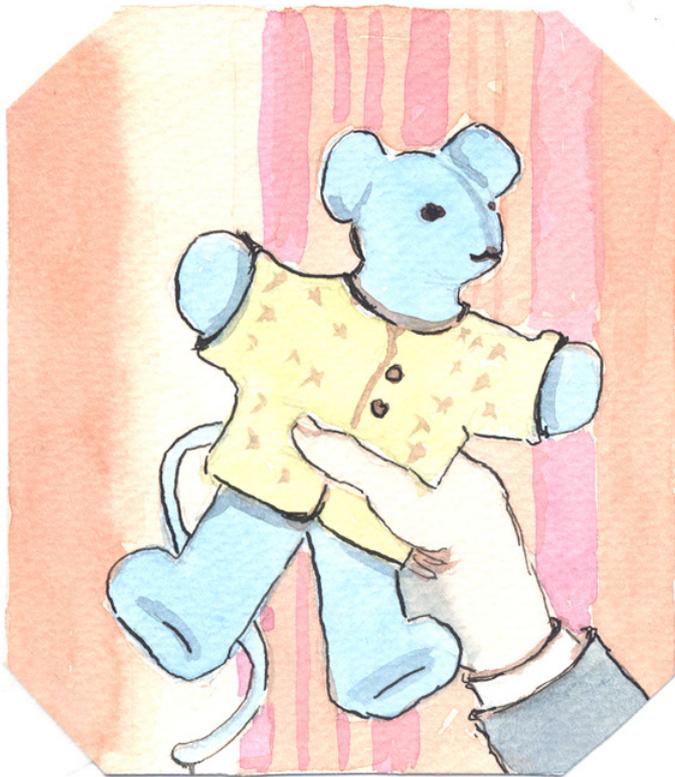


Someone New Appears

Squeaky, a small brown mouse and Hoppy, her brother, live in the Unitarian Church in Cambridge. They are very helpful mice, picking up crumbs from the carpet, cleaning between the organ pipes with their tails, chasing beetles away from the hymn books and doing all kinds of useful things.

They like living in this church because many exciting things happen here. On Sundays lots of people come to sing songs called hymns and a very cheerful man makes lovely music on the organ and the piano. Sometimes there are special concerts with lots of people making music, and sometimes, children act in plays. Squeaky and Hoppy like to watch the children, from a safe distance of course, because they are very small and afraid people might not see them and step on them. You see, it is a secret that they live in the church but I think that Reverend Andrews, the Minister knows about them.



One Sunday morning, as Squeaky and Hoppy sat in a corner watching the service, Reverend Andrews held up a very strange creature. He said it was a church mouse, but it was very big to be a mouse and, strangest of all, it was bright blue and had a beige cardigan on. Reverend Andrews said that a lady who couldn't see very well had knitted the mouse and she used such a bright colour because it was easier for her to see. "Oh, exclaimed Squeaky, isn't he beautiful!" Hoppy thought a moment and then agreed that this was the most beautiful mouse he had ever seen.

After the service when everyone had gone into the church hall for coffee, Squeaky

and Hoppy crept up to the new blue mouse who was sitting on some steps. "Hello, what's your name?" asked a curious Squeaky.

"I don't know," he replied, "I've just been knitted and no one has named me yet." "Well, it's nice to meet you," said Hoppy, who loved meeting somebody new. "We find lots to do here to help the minister and I'm sure you'll soon find ways to be helpful too."

"How can I do anything useful?" asked the blue mouse, "I don't think I can even move by myself."

"Don't worry," said Squeaky comfortingly, "My mother says that everyone is useful in their own way."

Just then an elderly lady and a young man walked quickly into the church. “Oh dear, oh dear,” said the lady, “I must find my car keys. They probably slipped out of my coat pocket while I was walking out of the church. You see I was carrying it over my arm and talking to Jennifer, so I didn’t notice when they fell out. Oh, Robert, what shall I do?”



“I’ll help you find them, Mrs Jenkins,” said Robert, and they both began looking for the keys. Soon they became quite upset because the keys just weren’t to be found.

The blue mouse whispered to Hoppy and Squeaky “I know where the keys are, I was watching and saw them fall out of her pocket when she was talking to her friend. They’re on the floor, halfway down the church on the left, among all those chairs. Can you see them?” Hoppy and Squeaky squinted down the church and soon spied the keys. “But how can we let Mrs Jenkins know where they are?” Hoppy asked.

Blume saw that the chair beside the keys had big blue hymnbook on it. “You could climb onto that chair beside the keys and push that blue book onto the floor. It would make a loud noise which would attract attention and then they might see the keys.”



“Great idea!” replied an admiring Hoppy, scurrying swiftly along the floor, followed by a slightly less eager Squeaky. They climbed up the chair leg and bravely pushed and tugged the heavy hymnbook until it toppled onto the floor with a loud bang. Mrs Jenkins and Robert were startled by the noise and looked across the church to see what had made it. They saw the hymnbook on the floor and when Robert went to pick it up, he saw Mrs Jenkins’ car keys. “How wonderful!” she cried “Now I can drive home. Goodbye Robert, thank you for helping me.”

Hoppy and Squeaky went back to talk to the blue mouse. “Look how useful you have been already,” Hoppy exclaimed with a smile. “We’re going to love having you for a friend. And I think you should have a name right away”.

“Hmm, how about Blume – it sounds like a short version of blue mouse,” suggested Squeaky.

“It’s a perfect name for me,” said Blume excitedly “and I feel different now that I know who I am.” Leaning back against the steps, Blume said contentedly “I’m going to be very happy here with you as my friends.”

