

## **Touching Spirit Bear**

### **Ben Mikaelson**

THE MOUSE STRUGGLED, biting at Cole's fingers with razor-sharp teeth, its tiny feet clawing frantically to escape. Cole pitied the scared little mouse, but he held on, gripping with all his strength. This mouse was his quarry, like a gull catching a herring or an owl catching a rabbit. He squeezed the mouse but was too weak to stop the struggling.

Cole felt the mouse squirming free, so quickly he brought his fist to his mouth. He pressed his hand against his lips and forced the struggling rodent between his teeth. It kept struggling, biting at Cole's lips and tongue.

Cole bit down, too, and a tiny bone crunched. The mouse spasmed but kept squirming. Cole bit again but his jaw lacked strength. Still the mouse wiggled and twisted, frantically chewing at Cole's tongue.

For a brief second, Cole felt a furry head pass between his back teeth and he willed his jaws together with every ounce of strength he could gather. The small skull crushed, and then the mouse stiffened and quit squirming.

With the dead mouse bunched in his cheek, Cole rested his jaw. Occasionally the tiny body twitched. Gradually, Cole worked his teeth together, gnawing on the body. Salty fluids filled his mouth, and he forced himself to again imagine a baby sparrow with an open beak. Food was energy, and energy was life.