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How The First Mayflowers Came

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Once upon a time everything in the woods was covered deep with snow, the berries, the juicy young bushes, and the roots. The animals had stowed themselves away for the winter to sleep; the bear in a deep cave, the chipmunk in a hollow log, and the wild mouse in a cozy hole beneath the roots of a tree. The wind sang a high, shrill song in the tops of the pine trees, and the doors of the wigwams were shut tight.

But the door of Son-of-a-Brave's wigwam suddenly opened a little way and the Native American boy, himself, looked out. He had his bow and a newly tipped arrow in his hands.

While the snow and the ice had been piling up outside in the village, Son-of-a-Brave had been very busy. He had been working beside the home fire making his new arrow head. First, he had gone to the wigwam of the village arrow maker to ask him for a good piece of stone. The arrow maker had been good enough to give Son-of-a-Brave a piece of beautiful white quartz. Then Son-of-a-Brave had set to work on it. He had shaped it with a big horn knife and chipped it with a hammer. He had polished it in a dish of sand until it shone like one of the icicles outside. Then he had fitted it to a strong arrow and wished that he had a chance to shoot. That was why Son-of-a-Brave stood at the door of the wigwam, looking out across the snow. Not even a deer had tracked it because the winter was so cold.

All at once Son-of-a-Brave saw something. An old Hare came out of a snow bank and limped down the path that led by the wigwam. In the summer the Hare was gray, the color of the trees among which he lived. But in the winter he turned white so as not to be seen by hunters when he went along through the snow. He did not care now whether any one saw him or not. He was a very old Hare, and the winter was too hard for him. He was lame and hungry and half frozen. He stopped right in front of Son-of-a-Brave and sat up on his haunches, his ears drooping.

"Don't shoot me," he was trying to say. "I am at your mercy, too starved to run away from you."

Son-of-a-Brave slipped his newly tipped arrow in his bow and aimed at the old Hare. It would be very easy indeed to shoot him, for the Hare did not move. The

boy thought what a warm pair of moccasin tops his skin would make. Then Son-of-a-Brave took his arrow out again, for another thought had come to him. He knew that he would be a coward to shoot a Hare that was too weak to run away.

The boy stooped down and picked up the old Hare. He wrapped him close up to his own warm body in his blanket. Then he went with him through the snow of the woods until they came to a place where a stream ran. There were young willow trees growing along the edge. Here he set down the Hare. He began to dig away the ice and frozen earth with his new arrow tip, until the roots of the trees and the soft bark could be seen. How the Hare did eat these! Son-of-a-Brave left him, still eating, and went home.

The boy did not see the Hare again that winter. He knew that he had dug a large enough hole so that the Hare could find shelter and have enough food. His bow and arrow were hung on the wall, and Son-of-a-Brave sat by the fire with his mother and father until spring came.

One day a bird sang out in the forest. Then the streams began to sing. The moss made a carpet all over the ground outside of the wigwam. Son-of-a-Brave felt like running and shouting. He left off his blanket and went out into the woods to play.



He had scarcely gone a rod from the wigwam when he saw a large gray Hare following him. This was strange for hares usually ran away. Son-of-a-Brave waited, and the Hare came close to him. Then he saw, because it limped, that it was the old Hare that he had befriended in the winter. He was now fat and well fed, and dressed in his summer coat.

The Hare flopped his ears to Son-of-a-Brave and hopped a little way ahead, so the boy followed. The Hare went on, without stopping, until he came to the very spot beside the stream where Son-of-a-Brave had dug away the snow to give the Hare food.

Oh, what did the boy see there!

Blossoming out of the bare earth were beautiful flowers, as white outside as a hare's ears in the winter time, and pink inside, like their lining. They had a sweet perfume, different from anything that had grown in the woods before. The grateful Hare stood beside them. He seemed to say that these new flowers were his gift to the boy who had helped him.

The Native Americans say that those were the first Mayflowers. They say the Mayflowers have been blossoming in the woods ever since because the Hare brought them out of thankfulness to Son-of-a-Brave.

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