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The Trailing Arbutus

Mary Graham Bonner

The arbutus flowers were stirring under their leaves.

"We mustn't wait any longer," whispered one to another. "We're always the first to wake each year. Everyone expects it of us."

"Years ago," said the second arbutus, "some children came looking and nearly gave up — said it was too soon, there couldn't be any yet. But a few of us were already peeping out, as fast as we could manage, because we didn't want to disappoint them."

"They came back every year after that. Now they're nearly grown. They always say: *this is the first place we find the spring flowers*. And so our roots have passed the story down — every year, to every new bloom — so we know what's expected."

The grown-ups and children arrived. The flowers hid their faces under their leaves a little, shy — but they whispered:

We love children. We love the whole beautiful world. Pick us, and we'll be bright and gay.

The children didn't hear the words. They only knew that the flowers smelled very sweet, and that finding them meant spring had truly come.



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