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Origin of Indian Corn

Unknown writer

Once, a chief sat alone in his lodge, thinking about what his people needed. For more than a year food had been scarce, and they were getting by on thin meals of roots, herbs, and berries. Many of them had come to him in their hunger.

"Help us, chief," they said. "Will you ask the Great Spirit to send us some of the food that grows so plentifully in the spirit world? Look how weak and thin our young hunters have grown. Help us, or we will not survive."

"I will go into the depths of the forest," said the chief. "I will stay there until the Great Spirit tells me how to ease my people's hunger."

He left his lodge and walked far into the forest, and there he waited for several days. At last the Great Spirit spoke to him:

"In the Moon of Rains, bring your family to the open land beside this forest. Wait there until I send you a message."

The chief went back to the village and told the people what he had heard. When the Moon of Rains came, he gathered his wife, his swift-footed sons, and his graceful daughter. "Follow me," he said, "to the open land beyond the forest."

When they reached the great plain, they stood together, waiting. For three days they stood patiently, without moving once.

Back in the village, the people grew anxious about their chief and his family. Some of them slipped through the woods to the plain. There they saw the family standing with their hands lifted and their eyes closed, and they were filled with awe.

"The Great Spirit is speaking to them," they whispered, and they went home quietly.

A few days later they returned, and a marvelous sight met their eyes. The chief and his family were gone. In their place stood tall, straight green plants with broad, flat leaves. Where the raised hands had been, ears of corn hung with silken fringe.



"The Great Spirit has called our chief and his family to the spirit world," the people said, "and has sent us this food in their place, a gift from them."

They saved some of the kernels and planted them in their fields. Every year, as they gathered a golden harvest, they remembered the chief whose care had brought them the gift of corn.

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