



# *The Winter Spirit and His Visitor*

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*Intermediate*  
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An old man was sitting alone in his lodge by the side of a frozen stream. It was the close of winter, and his fire was almost out. He appeared very old and very desolate. His locks were white with age, and he trembled in every joint. Day after day passed in solitude, and he heard nothing but the sounds of the tempest, sweeping before it the new-fallen snow.

One day as his fire was just dying, a handsome young man approached and entered his dwelling. His cheeks were red with the blood of youth; his eyes sparkled with life, and a smile played upon his lips. He walked with a light and quick step. His forehead was bound with a wreath of sweet grass, in place of the warrior's frontlet, and he carried a bunch of flowers in his hand.

"Ah! my son," said the old man, "I am happy to see you. Come in. Come, tell me of your adventures, and what strange lands you have been to see. Let us pass the night together. I will tell you of my prowess and exploits, and what I can perform. You shall do the same, and we will amuse ourselves."

He then drew from his sack a curiously-wrought antique pipe, and having filled it with tobacco, rendered mild

by an admixture of certain dried leaves, he handed it to his guest. When this ceremony was attended to, they began to speak.

“I blow my breath,” said the old man, “and the streams stand still. The water becomes stiff and hard as clear stone.”

“I breathe,” said the young man, “and flowers spring up all over the plains.”

“I shake my locks,” retorted the old man, “and snow covers the land. The leaves fall from the trees at my command, and my breath blows them away. The birds rise from the water and fly to a distant land. The animals hide themselves from the glance of my eye, and the very ground where I walk becomes as hard as flint.”

“I shake my ringlets,” rejoined the young man, “and warm showers of soft rain fall upon the earth. The plants lift up their heads out of the ground like the eyes of children glistening with delight. My voice recalls the birds. The warmth of my breath unlocks the streams. Music fills the groves wherever I walk, and all nature welcomes my approach.”

At length the sun began to rise. A gentle warmth came over the place. The tongue of the old man became silent. The robin and the blue-bird began to sing on the top of the lodge. The stream began to murmur by the door, and the fragrance of growing herbs and flowers came softly on the vernal breeze.

Daylight fully revealed to the young man the character of his entertainer. When he looked upon him he had the visage of Peboan, the icy old Winter-Spirit. Streams began to flow from his eyes. As the sun increased he grew less and less in stature, and presently he had melted completely away. Nothing remained on the place of his lodge-fire but the mis-kodeed, a small white flower with a pink border, which the young visitor, Seegwun, the Spirit of Spring, placed in the wreath upon his brow, as his first trophy in the North.

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