



Though it was near freezing, and Roh the Rabbit's fur coat was dusty with snow,  
he sat quietly on a stump of oak, shivering and alone.

"Why do you sit here by yourself, young man, don't you have a family for a home?"

An old withered hare shouted above the wind as the wind only blew both high and low.

"Sit with me, old withered hare, keep me company a while," said he.

"Just a moment of your time, that is all it needs to be."

The old withered hare stopped and stared and stared a little longer.

There was time to give this rabbit, time she did not have when she was younger.

She said, "I am the Withered Hare called June, young sprite,

I was born at dawn when the sun kissed the moon goodnight.

Tell me what ails you, what sickness your heart has weathered.

Tell me all the years you've burdened and where your happiness was tethered."

Roh the Rabbit moaned aloud and his ears fell flat against his head,

“I dearly loved once. I loved my wife, my children,” he said

“At this time of Christmas, I would watch as they slept in bed.

I could not afford them presents for the morning some years, so I gave them hugs instead.”

“My wife, oh my dearest one, with the little white spot upon her ashen face.

Many moons ago, I remember I saved up enough to buy her a bit of lace.

But my children, my wife, they were gone within a daylight.

I searched, I searched, I searched, I searched for them a fortnight.

I came upon them in the woods, near the road the wolves would travel.

I saw them near the road, lying near the gravel.”

“They had once broken our floorboards with their rambunctious little feet.

They’d drag in so much snow and so much icy sleet.

It was never quiet in my house, and I had grown used to all the noise.

But now it is more silent than I, filled with silent floorboards and their dusty, silent toys.”

In tears Roh the Rabbit shook, his eyes wide with grief,

“I can not stay in my home at Christmas anymore, it is too quiet for me.

It is why I’m here in the snow, why I sit upon this stump of a tree.

That is the sickness my heart has weathered, dear old withered hare,

Thank you for the time you’ve given me, for the story you’ve let me share.”

June the Withered Hare struggled against the cold, but she smiled at the rabbit  
she smiled as she gently gripped his shoulder to hold.

“Come inside my home with me, dear child, I live alone myself.

I do need some help, after all, I’ll need you to help me reach my shelf.”

“My children have shed their youth and left me to pave through old age in these woods.

My husband has passed on from this earth, as all things will, as all things should.

Though your heart has been whittled down and your eyes have seen such horrors,  
my house has open doors for you, my house would love to give you warmth.”

Roh the Rabbit, frozen in his place and his tears frozen in his fur,

the kindness of this old hare had such heartbreaking allure.

He held out his forearm and touched her forehead sweetly,

“I enter your household meekly, I shall enter it with all humility.”

“Do not bow your head, Roh child, you are not less than me.

Love does not cost to give, so I give it to you freely.

I do not have much to feed you with, and Christmas will be empty,

but will you keep this poor old withered hare company?”

Roh the Rabbit shivered to his feet, and with his fur coat dusted with snow,

he held June the Withered Hare hand in hand to bear against the cold.

They walked a breadth’s away, where old wooden doors creaked open,

June shook the snow off of her and helped to brush off Roh's, though no words were spoken.

In the corner of the room resided a dried-up pine tree, with ornaments dusty and old.

Entwined in the brittle branches were wound three scarves, green, red, and rosy gold.

The tree looked as if none had touched it in a century, it was a grand sight to behold.

*It is a house as empty as mine, thought Roh the Rabbit, but I hope my presence consoles.*

June the Withered Hare then offered him a mug, a mug full of carrot pie.

The warmth of it slid down his throat and new tears began to bubble high.

Suddenly kind hands were near him again and he felt he wanted to cry.

No more was Christmas Eve alone in lonesome silence, no more would it ache his bones.

How soft this kind old hare's eyes fell on him, as if he were a child she had loved.

How full his heartbeats filled his chest, how light his sorrow felt on his shoulders.

Roh the Rabbit smiled at the withered hare, his countenance as tender as a mother dove.

"Tell me where your shelf is, dear old withered hare, I am no longer any colder."

"I stored some Christmas stockings high up on the fourth shelf," said she,

"My eldest daughter stuffed it there for me because for them, I had no need.

My children have their own families to spend the holidays with, but I only have my tree."

She sighed and rested her chin upon her forelimb and from afar stared ruefully.

"'Twas my husband's last gift to me. He nurtured the sapling himself and tendered all its leaves."

Roh the Rabbit did not know what to say, for he knew the feeling well to be.

Empty comfort others felt the need to provide, it did not quell his sadness.

“Why do you want the stockings now?” he asked, “is it because of me?”

June the Withered Hare nodded and Roh thought his heart as fragile as a chalice.

“You will spend Christmas with me and for the years to come hopefully,” said she.

And so, Roh the Rabbit leapt to his feet to do as the withered hare asked of him.

The brightness in his heart, the brightness in the room, the brightness that could not dim,

a love so singular, a love so lost and found within a tumult of snow,

both hare and rabbit felt a joy and thankfulness they thought they’d never know.

Roh the Rabbit’s house spent Christmas in the darkness, but it was still so full in his heart,

his children and his lovely wife had their own share of it and they had their own part.

Somewhere in there, all of them were dancing. Somewhere in there, all of them were singing.

The lights in there were Heaven’s rays and his children held Heaven’s bells ringing.

The cracks in the wood were silent in the world of the living,

but Roh the Rabbit knew somehow the creaks were still loud and thriving.

Christmas would be spent in June the Withered Hare’s home, he decided,

until he could wish his family in the clouds good cheer and glad tidings.