

Gluscabi and the Magic Game Bag

NORTH AMERICAN EASTERN WOODLANDS—ABENAKI



Gluscabi walked quietly through the pine forest, his bow and arrow poised to shoot a small animal for dinner. Although his moccasins made no sound, the animals sensed his coming and hid silently in the woods. Gluscabi searched everywhere but could not find any animals to hunt.

"Hunting takes too long!" said Gluscabi. He strode directly to Grandmother Woodchuck's wigwam beside the river.

Gluscabi lay down on his bedding and began to sing, "I wish I had a game bag to make hunting easier."

Grandmother Woodchuck heard Gluscabi singing and wove some deer hair into a fine, strong bag in which to keep his catch. She tossed it to him, but Gluscabi kept singing.

Grandmother Woodchuck took moose hair and wove an even larger bag for Gluscabi. "Here is your bag," she said, tossing it to him and hoping that he would be pleased.

But Gluscabi kept singing.

Grandmother Woodchuck finally plucked the hairs from her own belly and made a magical game bag that could keep stretching larger and larger.

Gluscabi was very pleased when he received the magical bag. He set out at

once for the forest. As he walked through the trees, Gluscabi shouted, "Animals everywhere! Hear my words and listen to my warning! The world is going to be destroyed! All of you will perish! I have come here to help you."

Slowly, anxious animals crept into the clearing and moved toward Gluscabi. "How will you help us?" they all asked.

Gluscabi held up his game bag and proclaimed, "This is a magic bag! If you will climb into it, you will not see the world end."

One by one, all the animals hurried to the bag and climbed inside as Gluscabi held it wide open. Rabbits, muskrats, porcupines, deer, raccoons, squirrels, and bears came in great numbers. The bag continued to stretch. Moose, sables, and partridges arrived. More and more animals came and climbed into the bag until all the animals were there. Gluscabi closed the bag, tied it, and ran all the way home. He shouted with joy, "I will never have to hunt again!"

Grandmother Woodchuck came out of the wigwam to greet him. "Why are you shouting?" she asked.

"Look, Grandmother!" cried Gluscabi excitedly. "Look what I have done! I was clever enough to trick all the animals into climbing in this bag. Now whenever we want some meat to eat, we can just reach into the bag and take some out."

Grandmother Woodchuck looked into the bag and saw that what Gluscabi said was true. The forest was silent as stone, for all the animals in the world were in the magic game bag.

Grandmother Woodchuck was not pleased. "Gluscabi, the animals cannot live in this game bag without food, water, and air. They will soon die, and then there will be no animals left. Is a world without animals the gift you would give to those who will live after you are gone?"

Gluscabi thought about the silent forest. He shook his head and said, "No, I want my children's children's children to live with the animals too. But it is hard work to hunt for food."

Grandmother Woodchuck said, "The hard work will make you clever and strong. The animals must become wiser, too, in order to escape your arrows and

traps. There will be a good balance this way."

Gluscabi agreed. He took the magic game bag back to the forest and opened it. He shouted into the bag, "The danger is over! It is safe to come out now!"

All the animals climbed out of the bag and scattered through the forest. To this day in certain places, you can see rabbits, raccoons, wolverines, deer, bears, and many other animals too. They are still here on the earth, everywhere, because Gluscabi listened to the wise advice of Grandmother Woodchuck and did not lazily try to make life easy by hoarding all the animals for himself.