

Son

My son, it is too late to find yourself without in the Hunter's Moon!

You have known the preciousness of light is scant between the Harvest Moon and the Hunter's. This should not have not been a fastness coming upon you. This state you protest is one of your own making.

Throughout the bitter bite of the Wolf and Snow moons, that's when we set to making our bows, layer up the bone, join with pine pitch, soak the hide strips & strap, touch and watch them dry tighten. Wedge your shortbow between rocks, steam it over the fire. Strain its arch with your weight & bicep, see if it takes.

Don't tell me that your sight failed you with the narrowed light. That the firesides were too crowded, their glow too smoke clouded. These are not excuses. Our ancestors have only had the same place, same chance and they all managed. You should have done what they have done - pushed to the front. Accepted no block. Scraped and bound. Cut the notches. Take the guts and meld in fat between your palms, platted. Held it up to the cracks where the shelter gasps against the snow. Checked its promise.

You have known the seasons through, have you not? You left the shelter & witnessed over and over the Worm Moon's glow, those days that soil is warm enough to be broken, when the littles test the sod between finger and thumb, show the elders who nod, agree. You've heard the call to the women and the young, seen the seeds shared out. The slaps when dropped early. Watched the sowing and the hoping-not-knowing that the land would take it and rains would give it back.

You are not a planter or a harvester, are you? But you know that when the Flower Moon opens, time grows near. Yes, you have chores, but when it comes to it you are a hunter. So when the others put to till and place, water and weed, that was your cue to prepare. Then you had the clear and pluck to do your readying. As the Hay and the Barley Moons bled towards the Harvest, that was your time - getting your arrows and eye straight as we gathered the straw and corn.

And no - I won't accept the idea that your daylight was stolen by the axe. That being on the teams that took to the forest, chopped the dead wood down, freed the giants from the loam, halved and hauled, that this in some way took your practising, weakened your skills. That was only for a turn or two. That has no standing with me. All the others coped. That, that, my son, is a paucity of truth.

After Harvest Moon comes the Hunter's. So it was and is and will be. Your time was nigh. The run of the deer soon with us, the flushing of the bird breaking out. To say you were not ready, hinting that you had no time to dryshoot a stump, to strike a haywheel or a bucket from the distance, to get your eye in, is a falsehood. You disrespect your clan. Disrespect and deceive. Why try this lie? Why?

So came the Hunter's Moon - as ever. You should have been gone. Out of here. Been ash dusted. Mudwiped. Stemmedup. Down wind. Poised. Behind a fat trunk on a clearing's edge. Hinted in bush, bramble, arm at peak. Descended & still as a pine. With the patience that sitting out the darkness every year gives. With the months of inside, of tapering out hot roots and dried meat so we have enough till the light comes again. Did all those days of biding time with tales and pasts and hopes not teach you anything? The very how of what we are? Nothing? Or all those turns of everyone else's plant, hoe, pluck not give you a sense that your turn would soon be upon you? Your time to shine?

The eyes we gave you, strong bow and power string that was all you needed. That and the want. The want to provide for others. To pull your weight, do your job. This was your turn, your role. That should have been enough! But no - you missed. And missed. And missed! Days and days out there and you come back no sweat-wetter, no more blooded than before you left. Moon-downs and sun-ups over and over and what do you bring back, but your sorry hide? Not one feathered breast, one haunch, one punctured flank. I would even have understood if you'd taken the heart for yourself. Trophy ate it before you were seen. But no. Not one red arrow head - just no arrows left.

A man with empty arms entering camp is no man at all. No man. That's what they're saying, you know? The rest? Asking of me, "What are we now? Root diggers? Bush scrapers? Bulb eaters? Back to being the thinners, scavenger fingered and carrion beaked?" That's the word. Not a fire tale but a tick, burrowing in, eating away. It will eat through and spread until there's just a corpse of us left.

Take the Oak Moon, Son, and the Cold Moon. Go away and think about this. this ...? Wrap yourself and start a fire and think about whether you are one of us. Whether - you want to be.