

High Hills Hunt

by Tony Graham

The boy watched the man sit on the bank of the stream and wash the red blood from his hands. It was early morning. The mist still lay on the hillside, flooding the low valley and the stream bed where they sat.

The man pulled off his boots to dangle his feet in the water. The boy pulled off his own boots, dipped his toe into the surface of the stream. It was cold.

“Will you give the deer to the Tahon stading?”

The man nodded, still quiet from the kill.

“Why do you thank the deer after you have killed it and ask its pardon? You did not thank the raider you killed.”

The man handed his knife to the boy. It was almost the length of the boy’s arm and heavy. The boy began to carefully clean the blood from the blade.

“The deer dies so that we and those we protect may eat. In its death, the deer gives us life. That is a gift and requires thanks. We must be polite so that the deer will return to this world.”

“But the men?”

“The raiders came to steal. They would have taken from the people of the stading without offering anything in return. Our hills are rich. There is no famine, no disease. Corvus and Lucan, the Great Houses that lead us, have taught the people of the hills how to live. These raiders, they attacked their own kind where there was no need.”

“Mama says the raiders are animals.”

“No, she is wrong. The raiders are men.”





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Illustration *High Hills Hunter* by Andy Underwood.

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