

Naming Day

The sun is high as I climb the mountain. Looking over I see a large whitetail deer. It is a buck; its horns are just starting to grow. The season is the sunflower moon, so the summer has just started. I feel great joy in my heart today. My son has seen two winters and now sees his second sunflower moon. Everything is going well today!

This morning I lifted up my son high into the air and as he squealed with delight I told him, "Today you get your name. Today you become a member of the tribe. Today we feast in honour of you and the Creator." Then after a pause I pray, "Creator, I give you my son to use as you see fit,"

The buck looked at me and showed no fear. It is a good sign; looking down at my village, the lake it sits beside and the creek that I followed up the hill I feel everything is going to be just right. Today I fly up the mountain; I did not walk. The deer holds still, watching, waiting; he accepts his honoured place at my son's feast. It is all good.

As I walk over to the deer a small grey owl lights on my spear. It is full daylight so his presence is a message, I feel good. I go to pull the spear and the little creature jumps to my arm. Pausing to look at him; I see his eyes are big and he is quite fearless, just as my young son. Laughing, I pull the spear out and say a prayer, "Thank you Creator for this day and for my young son, and thank you for the deer," now bleeding its life blood onto the ground I again pray, "thank you Grandmother of the deer for your child's gift of his life for my son's feast."

"Humph! I lift the deer up on my shoulders thinking that it's good I go down to my village. He doesn't feel heavy today though. My good feeling is caring much of the weight. I feel it will take no time at all to get down the hill.

Finally, I get home. There at the front of my lodge is my best friend, Crouching Weasel. *He looks sad, I think, that'll never do.* Maybe I can cheer him up; after all it is my son's day. "Crouching Weasel! What is the matter with you? You look like you lost your best friend. I am here!" He smiles but the smile does not reach his eyes. I feel uneasy; a shiver goes down my back.

“Your Mother and Spotted Doe... they need you inside.” He says. His smile vanishes all too quickly.

Need? I think, what a strange thing to say. My mother meets me at the entrance, tears in her eyes, a puffy face full of sorrow. I feel confusion, fear. She speaks to me looking full with concern, “It’s not her fault these things happen, he ran and fell, bumped his head a rock, cried for a while and then went to sleep. We thought he was okay.” She says no more to me.

My eyes get used to the dark and I see my wife, Spotted Doe is holding our son. She is crying. Another shiver passes through me. “What is the matter?” I ask quietly. I already almost know, but I need confirmation.

The Creator loves our son too, and has taken him,” she says through a cracking voice. There is great pain in her eyes as she speaks. I reach for the child but stop... I can’t get myself to touch him. He is gone already. There is a loud animal like scream. I think, *why don’t they tell him to be quiet?* They cannot, they will not. It is I.

I reach out to my son; my tears falling on his now cold face. Holding him next to my cheek, I whisper in his ear, “Your name is Little Grey Owl.”

There is a little gasp of breath next to my ear, followed by a tiny little cry. Scarcely able to believe what I am hearing and not wanting to look for fear of disappointment, I slowly bring my son forward to face me. Still quietly mewling, he looks up to me and blinks. “My boy is alive!” I tell the other disbelieving family.

Suddenly, landing at the entrance a little grey owl hoots and then flies away. Going down on my knees with my son still in my arms, I thank the Creator for more time with my child, Little Grey Owl.

By Gerald Peters