

Franziska Gehm/ Heribert
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Chapter 4

The next night the hunters had still not returned. Lynx-Ear and Plucky-Paw keep running to the big rock to look for them, but there's nothing to be seen on the horizon.

When it gets dark, Papu and Paponk Rednose return from their own hunting expedition. All they have to show for it is a small lemming. Mamu cooks it and shares out the meagre pieces of meat among the

infants and the Shaman. He gets an especially big piece. Because of his special magical powers. All the others have to make do with roots.

While the others are busy eating, Papu, Paponk Rednose and Mamu talk quietly amongst themselves. What are they going to do if the hunters don't come back in the next day or so? They might be able to live on roots and grains for a few days. But what then? Perhaps half of them will die of hunger like the winter before last?

Papu goes over to consult the Shaman.

"Build up a big the fire," he instructs him, "and I will call on the gods."

Lynx-Ear, Plucky-Paw and the rest of the children rush around, collecting firewood. Then the whole group gathers together round the fire, which is blazing high into the night sky.

The Shaman is standing close to the fire. He raises both hands up to the sky. In one hand he holds his bone staff with the feathers. Outside the cave all is silent save for the crackling of the fire. The Shaman's eyes are closed. He starts to hum. Very softly at first, then gradually louder and louder. At the same time he sways slowly from side to side. As his humming gets louder and louder, he starts to prowl round the fire like a wild cat. Suddenly his whole body starts to shake, he thrusts his bone staff into the fire and whips it out with lightning speed, spins round and lets out three ear-piercing screams.

Lynx-Ear and Plucky-Paw flinch.

Then the Shaman stops freezes as if he were paralysed, opens his eyes and looks up into the sky above him. It is pitch-black. Only the golden eyes of the gods twinkle down upon them. The small space in front of the fire is deathly silent once again. Shaman Fire-Eyes stretches both hands out towards the sky and calls: "You gods with eyes of gold! You see our misery, our suffering, our hunger. But even in the hour of our greatest need our thoughts turn to you." The Shaman reaches into his leather pouch and pulls out an especially large chunk of lemming-meat. "This offering is for you. May it make you merciful." With these words the Shaman throws the meat into the fire.

Lynx-Ear watches the flames consume the meat and his mouth waters. By now his stomach is rumbling so loudly that even the gods must be able to hear it.

"You gods with eyes of gold!" the Shaman cries out into the inky blackness above. "For several nights you have been looking down on us and seeing us suffering from hunger. For two nights we have been waiting for



our hunters to return. Where are they? Are they on their way back with plenty of meat? Or are they wandering lost in the White Mountains? Have the evil spirits of the dead animals come to haunt them?" The Shaman stares into the night sky. His eyes are glittering. "Are they wounded? Are they still alive?"

Despite the warmth of the fire, Lynx-Ear finds he is shivering. The long, gaunt shadow of the Shaman falls right on his face. He felt as if a ghost had brushed past him. He would like to go and sit somewhere else, but he doesn't dare move.

"Oh Gods with eyes of gold!" the Shaman continues, raising his bone staff to the stars. "You are wise and just and blessed with infinite powers of sight. Surely you must have seen our hunters, accompanied them on their long journey. Do you know how they are faring? If so, send me a sign! However small."

The Shaman starts to hum again and sways gently back and forth, like a thin tree in the wind. His movements get larger and larger, and eventually he starts swinging his arms and lifting his legs. His dance is not energetic or light-hearted, he dances slowly as if he were in a trance and had forgotten everything around him.

Now the Shaman is singing, using words that Lynx-Ear can't understand. It must be the language of the gods known only to the Shaman. Now the Shaman's eyes roll back, so that for a moment all you can see are the whites. Lynx-Ear would really like to look away, but he is under the Shaman's spell. Just like all the others sitting round the fire.

Shaman Fire-Eyes reaches into his leather pouch once more. He throws a white powder into the fire with a sweeping gesture. The flames blaze up. Sparks fly, as though the flames were angry. The members of the group back away a little. The Shaman continues to dance round the fire, his face shows no emotion. He starts to sing, his voice echoing across the darkness, louder and louder.

Suddenly a yellow light flashes across the sky.

"There!" cries Plucky-Paw, who is the first to see it. "The gods are sending a sign!"

Lynx-Ear can just make out the shape of a shimmering tail before the strange light is swallowed by the inky darkness.

The gods have answered the Shaman.

Shaman Fire-Eyes is standing quite still, his head thrown back, looking into the sky. Then he closes his eyes. His hands are moving, as if they were forming a shape in the night air. He murmurs to himself quietly, then he screams, making Lynx-Ear wince once again, and finally he whispers, his eyes closed: "I can see our hunters. They look exhausted, but they're alive."

Mamu moans quietly.

Shaman Fire-Eyes continues his urgent whisper: "But they are in danger. In mortal danger."

Mamu and the other members of the group hardly dare breathe. "Our hunters are standing huddled together.



Their eyes are full of fear. They are looking around them, their spears raised, ready to attack.”

“What are they afraid of?” whispers Papu, looking at the Shaman in desperation.

But his eyes are still closed. “They are surrounded. By wild animals.” Some of them cry out. Mamu clutches her chest.

“He hasn’t finished“, whispers Paponk Rednose, pointing at the Sha-man, who has his hands stretched out in front of him as if he were attempting to shield himself from their voices.

“I see misfortune, starvation and death”, whispers the Shaman. “But I see something else, too. I see a saviour”.

There was a murmuring round the fire. “Who is the saviour? Is it one of us?” asks Tiger-Tooth.

The Shaman nods.

“I can barely make out his face. But I think it is ...“

“Papu!“ cries Plucky-Paw.

Shaman Fire-Eyes shakes his head. “No. He is smaller and younger.“

Tiger-Tooth sticks out his chest. He looks at the Shaman hopefully.

“It is ...“ The shaman frowns. “It is...“ The shaman hesitates. ”It is....“ The Shaman shrugs his shoulders. Then he opens his eyes, takes a deep breath and proclaims: “Our saviour is Lynx-Ear.”

As is the case with the Native Americans and many African tribes, it would appear that Stone Age man may also have had shamans. This shaman combines the functions of doctor, priest, magician and judge. He communicates with the gods to ask for success when out hunting, is well versed in the uses of healing plants and the associated rituals, and conducts tribal ceremonies.

English sample translation by Ruth Feuchtwanger