



Son of Sun

A.M. Matte

It looms over us and pounces when we aren't watching. It harms us without being provoked. It sneaks up and destroys everything we have and you ask if I can live without it? Of course, I can! Life without the Son of Sun would be much better for all of my clan. No longer would he threaten us with his scorching, glowing arms, no longer would we have to escape him. No longer would we have to worship and pray to the Sun to appease His anger and make Him forgive us for whatever sins we committed. And no longer would the Sun, in His wrath, send His Son to torture us.

For as long as I remember, my clan has lived in fear of the Son of Sun. We try to avoid him as much as we can. As long as he is not around, we live peacefully.

I am considered the old girl of the clan. At thirteen, I have not yet reproduced, nor have I displayed the same standard telepathic ability that my peers possess. I am quite a disappointment to my producers. But I'd rather chase around for meat and gather roots and fruit than mate and become a producer. I would hate to lose my freedom and be attached to the same people all the time. I must let my spirit roam free and in liberty.

I have followed the same routine for every day of my life now. I wake early with Sun and I incline myself to him. I then wander in the forest,

occasionally searching for tasty berries to feed to my clan. Returning with the berries, I sometimes am lucky and catch an animal for later on. Meat is hard to capture; we have skilled hunters in our clan to provide for us. But even they often come home empty-handed. I have never been fond of meat, it being stiff and hard to chew. And often, the roots and vegetables I bring home are difficult to digest as well.

When Sun is hesitating between staying with us and disappearing behind the hills, I help with the other clan people's tasks. I wash the younger offspring, brush the pelts, prepare the meat and legumes for consumption and most trying of all, keep watch for the sudden arrival of the Son of Sun.

Once Sun has left us as a punishment for our sins of the day, we all hide and huddle together in our caves for protection and warmth. The Cold Days are approaching fast and we must prepare for them. Every Cold Spell we endure steals from us a fraction of our clan and Sun does not grace us with the full strength of His presence as often. At least, neither does His Son.

When the Cold Days are here, my routine stays the same, except that most of the activities are conducted in our caves. And food is much harder to come by during the Cold Spell.

We are always grateful to Sun when He ends our ordeal as He warms us and kills the Cold. But our happiness is never long-lived because He finds wrong in us and in His distress tears roll from His eyes and onto us. Oftentimes, His despair is so great that we are flooded by His tears. And more often than not, His sadness is mixed with anger. Sun then sends us His raging Son.

Son of Sun falls upon us as rays and bolts. The bolts fiercely hit the ground and sparks fly high, scorching and burning everything around. Son of Sun appears out of nowhere, startling the clan, and seems to go on a mad rampage. He seeks to harm, to kill.

He is not happy with what we sacrifice to him: leaves, roots, legumes, branches... He consumes all with a terrifying gulp. His hunger is limitless. His thirst, however, is easily quenched and he seems to wither away, in a glow of red, yellow and orange, slowly vanishing, diminishing in size, if we give him all of our drinking supplies.

These past few days have been more hectic than usual. The whole clan is preparing for the arrival of the Cold Days. We half wish Sun

would spare us the Cold this time, but we know we pray in vain. Tonight, it is my turn to keep watch for any sudden change in nature.

I actually enjoy keeping watch alone. Of course, there is the constant gnawing dread I will be caught off-guard and the clan would be set on the course of disaster, but I've always found night peaceful and silent. Sun is not present, but He is graceful enough to let His sister, Moon, glow overhead.

This evening I am left to myself and I take advantage of my solitude to reflect. From the beginning of my existence, I have been taught to be in awe of our Master, the Sun. We are subject to His every whim and are forever punished for our sins because our Master is all-powerful and ever-vengeful. But no matter what I have been taught to believe, I have come to question our faith.

I witness my clan's daily activities and devotion to Sun and see no crimes being committed, yet Sun somehow finds a way to spite us.

Whenever a change in nature occurs, the entire clan believes Sun is sending us a warning message. Being high above us, Sun sees all and knows all. No sin can escape Him. Yet it seems to me we are punished for no reason at all! None of us has sinned nor caused trouble

and we still must endure the wrath of Sun. What have we done wrong to merit Cold Days over and over again? What problems do we cause which bring us sickness and desolation? What trouble have we started to deserve the hiding of our food? If Sun is such a benevolent Master, why do we seem to suffer so?

Wait! I hear a crackling sound – I seem to be surrounded by a smoky haze. I smell a foul odour – I see it! It is Son of Sun! Sun must have heard my reverie questioning His powers and capabilities and has sent me His Son as a punishment!

But I must not panic, nor wake the others. If they see Son of Sun, they will be frantic and cause more confusion than help. Fortunately, my lack of psychic link to the clan ensures I don't alert them to the terror I feel.

Think! I must think! I remember I must feed Son of Sun, but feed him what? I have no water and the source is far from here. And I am not about to sacrifice myself for the sake of the clan – I am more useful to the others alive.

My coat! It is of bear fur; perhaps Son of Sun can eat it! His arms and his head are bobbing up and down, trying to frighten me. But I will not be impressed. I must keep my wits about me.

I hear a sharp shriek. A small animal has been captured by Son. He feasts on it, but is not satisfied for long and heads for me. I am ready for him. With a leap, I pounce on Son, covering him with my furs. Consuming them should occupy him long enough for me to think up a new plan.

But... I may not need to... Son seems to have vanished! Except for little sparkles of him on the ground, Son has completely disappeared. I pause for a moment... steal up the courage to look closer. As I do, my breath causes the little embers to glow, for Son of Sun to flare up. I jump back. Son of Sun reduces to little sparkles again. So I lean forward and blow. Again, Son of Sun grows due to my action.

Everything is finally clear. Son of Sun is no Son at all! He is merely a phenomenon of nature, not controlling us, but we controlling him! I wonder if, having established a proper psychic link with my peers, my mind would have been free enough to come to this conclusion.

A sweet aroma replaces the odour of smoke. What is it? ...The meat! The animal caught by Son! Meat suddenly seems more appetizing... What a taste! No longer stiff, but soft and juicy. And the little pieces of Son left behind, when I blow on them, radiate warmth and comfort. By

experimenting, I come to realize as well that the branches on the ground keep the piece of Son alive.

The clan members remain asleep. Again, I am thankful for not having developed the mental link that my peers have. It allows me the ability to experiment with Son of Sun, to learn, to explore. As the night passes, and I learn how to manipulate Son of Sun, it becomes clear to me. Son of Sun can be controlled, and if we do it right, Son of Sun may become our ally.

I rush back to the caves to alert my clan. I need to wake them physically and with shouts in order to show them the little Son I am holding on a branch in my hand. At first, they all are afraid, but soon fear gives way to curiosity. As dawn breaks, I show my clan the capabilities of a controlled Son of Sun. Once I make one of them understand, the rest can see clearly what I mean.

The leaders of the clan then approach me and declare me a sorceress. They reason that my perceived lack of telepathic ability must be superseded by a higher ability; my ability to control and teach others to control Son of Sun. After years of being shunned and thought an outcast, I am revered by all! My producers finally understand the reason for my not

mating – I have been selected for a different task in the path of life.

In the crisp morning air, my people have their first taste of no longer raw food. They all love the heat Son of Sun brings to them. Life will never be the same again.

As I look up at the radiant Sun, I can't help but think with pride, "You, mighty Sun, may be an all-powerful conqueror, but I managed to conquer and control a piece of You... Maybe You are not as powerful and as mighty as You believe you are..."

I expect a furious reaction from Sun as I ponder this, but no change in nature this time. I am master to Son of Sun. I am goddess to the clan. I am no longer in fear of Sun.

I glance at my delicious meal, at my happy, content clan people. Son of Sun enables us now to eat tender, cooked food, helps us in our hunts and keeps us forever warm. You ask, "Can you imagine life without Son of Sun?"

My answer, in all humility, of course I can't.

About the author



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A.M. Matte was first published at the age of 11 and has since won many writing prizes, including the 2008 O'Neill-Karch award for her play *Les murs ont des yeux*. A produced playwright by the age of 12, she achieved notable attention for *Slipping Mind*, a play about a family struggling with Alzheimer Disease, which was produced in Ottawa, North Bay, Gravenhurst, Bracebridge and Parry Sound. Her homage to French playwright Molière, *Les fourberies de Molière ou Le Molière imaginaire*, won a Best of Venue crowd favourite award at the 2004 Ottawa Fringe Festival and was produced to public and critical acclaim in Toronto in 2008. Recent publications include the short stories *Secrets*, *À l'air* and *Sur le seuil* in *Virages*.

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