

CHAPTER ONE

A great twittering of birds greeted the dawning.

Soon, the Sun Goddess would begin Her ascent into the sky. As the sky brightened, its color changing from grey to blue, a few clouds stood ready to give battle. Silently victorious, She strode over their blazing red bodies into the brightness of the dawning winter day.

The youth, Deccan, greeted the unconquered goddess—She who brought light and warmth to the world. His game sack was empty, but he'd fill it soon enough. His stomach growled, as a reminder, and he tightened his belt. A hare rustled in the meadow not fifteen feet away.

Unwrapping his sling and taking out a stone from his pouch, he asked the Hunter god's blessing. The stone left his sling, felling the hare and then another. As he emerged from the cover of the oaks, he offered up thanks. He made swift work of gutting them with his flint knife.