

[A crackling hearth fire]

Midsummer, Last Quarter Moon

It has been nearly a year since Jamie's death. The hole he left in my heart, in our home, is ever-so-slowly becoming less tender, though the sting remains whenever it's touched. The coming of spring, of Beltane, of the Solstice, did warm my heart. Yet a dark shadow lies on the horizon--the passage of my husband on the eve of Mabon. The children pass through town as they are able--my dear Ryder, and Bandon, and Eolie. They've moved on to greener hills, to their own lives, and all have invited me to come join them. Yet something in me feels that it is not time. I know I am older, but I have not yet accepted that I am too old to be on my own. Jamie died far too young. I am determined to not cut my losses too early.

After all, there are still small surprises here, ready to be discovered. On my walk in the Edgeriver's woods this evening I spotted a long knife, in surprisingly good condition. I would have passed it by except for a small trickle of recognition in the back of my mind, almost like Jamie's voice. I felt it call to me. "Aleithia..." So you see, I had no choice but to take it into my possession and give it a good look. The blade is perhaps three handbreadths long, the hilt of steel and wrapped leather. It looks too short to be a sword, though perhaps it could be used for such purposes in a pinch. Mostly, it struck me as a rather good replacement for the knife I recently lost--the one that used to be my mother's. The one I used to roast chickens for my family, the one that sliced bread every morning and evening for years on end. It looks to be a fine tool. Perhaps this is the goddess offering me a small token in exchange for what has been lost. I will take it as a good omen, and use it this evening.

[The hearth fire fades]

[The sound of early morning air--birds chirping, something like fog lifting off the grass]

[Aleithia comes back to narrate her entry]

Midsummer, Waning Crescent Moon

The long knife is not in the place where I last left it. I cleaned and dried it after dinner last night, and hung it in the spot where my old knife sat. But this morning, it was not there. I looked underneath the table, I looked all around my woodstove, but it was nowhere to be found. I suppose a neighbor's cat may have snuck in and made off with it (or a neighbor's child), but I didn't find any windows or doors open. It's a shame. I grew rather fond of the knife as I held it last night, skewering it with a bit of meat and vegetables left over from my last stew. It made me feel like an adventurer, to eat off it in such a manner. I suppose I'll have to go into town and buy a new one after all.

[The sound of the morning air fades]

[A soup bubbles on a crackling hearth]

Midsummer, Waning Crescent Moon

I have found the knife! (And decided to call her Echo!) It's been two days since her disappearance, but there she lay once more, in the same spot where I originally found her. Echo looked untouched by the woods, same as before. For a moment I hesitated, afraid that this was some trick of the fae that I had unwittingly already welcomed into my home. But as I stood there, observing her, I felt an unmistakable sense of peace and... dare I say, excitement?

Is it a betrayal of Jamie for me to feel this now? A betrayal of my children? I gave so many years to the service of their happiness and health, tending them, but in my solitary life I have suddenly found a new character entering the scene. And not a person. A tool. Something that makes me think...

[The soup and the hearth fire fades]

[The sound of a rumbling summer thunderstorm is heard in the distance]

Midsummer, Waning Crescent Moon

Echo has disappeared again. I suppose it's only right. I kept trying to use her as a cooking tool, and she wants nothing to do with that. With a bit of sharpening, maybe a bit of tighter wrapping on the leather around the hilt, she would be fit for adventure. And she has decidedly rejected my peaceful home.

It's not the right fit, I suppose. I have my garden to tend, bread to bake, and a home to prepare for the harvest...

[Gently, then suddenly, warm rain begins to fall]

...For the next winter.

My first winter without Jamie was only last year. It was tortuous. I didn't have much time to prepare, either. We always got through it together--he fending off the ravages of the cold outside, insulating our home, chopping our wood, keeping a watchful eye for bears and other creatures that roam these woods. And I kept us safe inside. I made it a home, for us and our children. A warm place to rest.

I suppose I shall have to make do without him, once again. I only wish the memory of him wasn't quite so strong in this house... In here, it feels stifling. It's too quiet. Perhaps I should take an extra long walk tomorrow. Remembering him in the woods, at least, feels right.

[The summer thunderstorm and the rain fade out]

[We are immersed in a lively, warm wood: the buzz of insects, flutter and call of birds, and distant sound of running water]

Midsummer, New Moon

Well, dear journal, it seems our plans have changed. Do you fancy a bit of an adventure?

I took the long walk in the woods after all. And as you may have guessed, Echo was still there. Glinting up at me like she had a twinkle in her eye. I stood there for a while, caught breathless by this odd little sword. And I realized suddenly, that must be what she really is, after all. A sword. Not a knife, or a tool, but a thing built for adventure.

I stood puzzling over this little sword for what must have been half an hour. I couldn't make sense of my own thoughts. Why was I so glued to my spot? The summer's heat played on the back of my neck, and my ankles ached, but I couldn't make myself return home.

Finally, I held her.

The glint off her edge sparkled in the midday sun. It reminded me of babbling brooks, of the spark of camp fires, of sea foam, of glittering jewels, and of the twinkle in the eyes of vagabonds and adventurers and knights and ladies. And finally, I understood her. She was asking me to join her. To be at home in the trees, the mountains, and the far fields of the world. And holding her there, my realization dawning, I felt Jamie's spirit surround me in love. And I knew, then. He and the goddess had conspired to set me out on a journey.

I came back home to grab you, dear journal. For what is an adventure without a record? I tore one of your pages out (my apologies) to leave a note for my neighbor. His daughter and her children barely have enough space in the home they share, and I hope my well-loved home can be a haven for them. My children may be upset with me for giving away my home, but I imagine I'll have much time to make it up to them and travel their way for a visit... eventually. I've worried for them long enough.

[Beat; we hear the lively quiet of the woods again as she pauses and considers]

But for now, dear journal, you and Echo are my most important companions.

I've always meant to see the ocean. Now, I count on it.

This episode, Echo, was written by Virginia Spotts and performed by Virginia Spotts. Audio editing and sound design by Brad Colbroock. Produced by Ezra J. Wayne and Tal Minear.