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JESSIE LOYER

PIMÎHKÂN

Here's how you make pemmican
1. wiyâs
2. pânisâwân
3. kâhkêwak
4. yîwahikanak
5. pimîhkân
Here's how you make pemmican
1. meat
2. meat that's been sliced for drying
3. dried meat
4. pounded dried meat
5. mix with pimiy and mînisa to make pemmican
Here's how you make pemmican
1. The deer stands in the poplars; she breathes out and squeezes. The shock of the recoil after stillness still hasn't gone away. The sounds of death aren't as bad anymore, though she wouldn't tell her university friends about the smell of steaming guts in the afternoon light.
2. Her biceps strain and the fleshy parts underneath her arm jiggle as the knife slides in. She pauses and looks at her hands. Did the skin at the base of her thumb always bunch like that? Thirty-five was old to her mother's generation; ancient to her grandmother's generation. But no. That's a lie. Her gran was only married at thirty. Don't believe every claim they make about the old days, late bloomers have always been around.
3. The smoker in his city backyard made the neighbours complain. "What is that guy doing back there? Some old Indian ritual?" She just said, "yes." Because she was tired and it was briefly worth it to see their faces spasm in terror as their weirdest fears were confirmed. She wonders what kind of relationship he has with these neighbours anyway. As he ages, he's getting meaner. He was yelling at a magpie in his raspy Cree when she'd arrived, saying just some awful shit, and she was embarrassed as she laughed and let herself in.
4. She has the thought that she could pitch this as a meditative retreat, spout some words about quieting your mind while you repeat this same aching action over and over. Charge $200 per person, be able to fix the brakes on her truck, maybe. There are definitely students in her sociology class who would be enticed, if the font was right and the background pastels just so. Last week, she'd overheard them talk about the great deal they'd found on a farm work retreat: only $350 per person. To haul bales and shovel manure. They were delighted: "Good cardio?" one had asked. "GREAT cardio," the other had asserted.

5. Her one wild aunt brought over the berries, hard and black and wrinkled, in the morning. "They have prunasin in them, you know," the auntie had whispered before creeping quietly back to her truck. She picks one up and rolls it between her fingers. She likes the drying taste of chokecherries. She likes the feeling of peeling them off the branch and the sound of them plunking into a pail. They're a satisfying berry and it's a satisfying thought to her, those trace amounts of cyanide.