

THE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Start of the Day

Red Woman was up early feeding the fire hearth in her cozy pueblo home. The day was a big day for the whole village. Soon, many friends and relatives would come to visit. They came to celebrate the successful harvest, trade for wonderful things, and compete in special games. Red Woman already had been preparing food for several days. Everything was stored in sealed pottery jars and on large woven trays. She also needed to finish weaving the cotton blanket she hoped to exchange for a soft deer hide and a willow basket from her Yavapai visitors.

“Yellow Moon, get up! The sun is already high, and we have much to do before our guests arrive.” Yellow Moon smiled brightly at the thought of the food, the excitement, and seeing her friend, Bobcat Boy. He always came with his parents to the Harvest Festival. Last year, Bobcat Boy brought her a shell pendant that he had carved just for her. Later that day, he and his team had won the foot race between her village (Tuzigoot) and the big village of Ha-ta-lac-va to the north. Yellow Moon also wondered if he would be as happy to see her as he was last year...



Food for the feast is stored in ceramic pots. Corn cakes are cooling on the wicker tray.

Breakfast and Chores

The fire took the chill out of the cool October morning. Yellow Moon helped her mother feed her little brother corn-meal *porridge* and berry tea. After he had finished, she ate the same breakfast herself and did her chores. Everyday, Yellow Moon went down to the *bosque* next to the river to fetch small sticks for her mother's cooking fire. She also had to bring back a jar-full of cool, clear water. Her little brown dog, Pooko, always went with her.

Even before Yellow Moon and Pooko reached the river, she could hear a group of men working together. They were busy cutting fresh cottonwood and willow branches. The wood would be used to build *ramadas* (sun-shades) in the big central open area in the village. The Sinagua elders and most

important guests would sit under the ramada and oversee the events. Her father, Bear, her older brother, Eagle, and her favorite uncle, Mountain Lion, would get to sit with others under the ramada.

Yellow Moon quickly gathered the wood for the fire and dipped her big pottery jar (*olla*) in the stream. Her father and uncle spotted her and came to help. Mountain Lion adjusted her basket full of sticks, and Bear helped her lift the heavy water jar onto her head. She would balance the jar there for the steep hike up to her hilltop village. They warned her to walk slowly up the trail to the village because her load was heavier than usual. She thanked them and told them goodbye. She and Pooko turned and began the half-mile walk back to the village.

The Visitors Arrive

Close to the riverbank, Yellow Moon stopped to rest and Pooko began to bark. Yellow Moon turned and saw about 25 Yavapai men, women, and children starting across the river from the south. The men were working in pairs, carrying long poles covered with hides. The women had large, cone-shaped baskets on their backs. The baskets were so full they nearly overflowed! Even the children carried leather bags full of food and supplies for the day-long event. “Better hurry,” she told Pooko, “our guests will be here soon!”



Yellow Moon and her dog Pooko see the Yavapai visitors crossing the river.

By the time Yellow Moon and Pooko returned to their house, the sun was high overhead. Yellow Moon climbed up the ladder to the roof leaving Pooko to stay below. She climbed down another ladder into her house. Carefully, she set down the olla in a cool corner of house. She placed next to it a black-on-red painted scoop that was used for dipping out the water. Red Woman had reheated a large pot of beans and another pot with corn and rabbit stew. The food smelled wonderful!

Special Clothing for a Special Day

Yellow Moon went to the store room, a small dark back room attached to the living room where her family slept and ate. She retrieved her special clothing that she would wear to the festival today. She put on the pure white cotton *manta* with the red edge. Her mother had made this special dress for her last winter. With it was the beautiful belt with the red and black designs. Hanging from a peg on the wall, were the white, high-legged moccasins that Uncle Mountain Lion had given her. They were a gift when she completed weaving her first really good blanket this past summer. Yellow Moon couldn't wait to show the blanket to Bobcat Boy. She also couldn't wait to give him the soft cotton cloth she wove for him.

When Yellow Moon came out from the dark storage room she was fully dressed. Her mother looked up from her work. She smiled as she saw how nicely Yellow Moon had dressed. It would not be many years before she and her clan members would have to find a good husband for the girl. But with Yellow Moon's good looks and growing talent as a weaver, there would be many interested boys. Of course, like all Sinagua men, he would have to be a good and hard-working farmer. He would need to raise lots of corn, beans, pumpkins, and cotton. But he also he must be a good hunter. "Never mind," she thought to herself, "there will be plenty of time to worry about that later. I must help her get ready for today's visitors and the feast!"



Yellow Moon folds the cloth she has woven.

Something Special from Red Woman

With that, Red Woman called Yellow Moon to her side and began combing and styling her long black hair with a *yucca* brush. Finally, Red Woman walked over to a storage area in a corner of the front room. She removed the soft leather pouch made from prairie dog skin. From the pouch she removed her turquoise earrings. The little bag had been a gift to her from Bear when they were both children in the village. From the small pouch she took two pair of flat, tear-drop shaped turquoise earrings. Each one had thin cord looped through a small hole. One pair she would let Yellow Moon wear today. The other would be for her.

Yellow Moon wiggled a little when her mother pulled the thread through the holes in her ears. She wasn't used to wearing these earrings, but my, how beautiful they were! She had seen her mother wear them but never dreamed that she would also be allowed to wear them. Today, she would wear them to greet her family's guests and serve the food. Turquoise jewelry was always one of the items that the Yavapai women wanted from the Sinagua people. It was important to look good and behave well for all the guests, but Yellow Moon wanted to look nice for Bobcat Boy, too.

Bobcat Boy's Family is Here

Pooko, started to bark. The Yavapai visitors had entered the village. They split up into smaller groups to visit various homes. Yellow Moon came outside and told Pooko it was okay, and the bark turned to a wagging tail as he greeted the visitors.

At last, Bobcat Boy and his parents stood below Yellow Moon's home. They had all kinds of gifts and things to trade. Bobcat Boy was barefoot, but he wore an animal skin cloth around his waist. He had a string of red stone beads around neck and he carried a deerskin bag over his shoulder. His father wore a similar cloth and red beads, but he also carried a *quiver* of arrows, a bow, and had a piece of leather wrapped around the wrist on his left arm. Bobcat Boy's mother wore a buckskin wrap-around skirt, a buckskin poncho, high-top moccasins, and red and black beads around her neck. A thick cotton strap stretched across Bobcat Boy's mother's forehead. The strap was attached to the huge basket on her back. Yellow



Red Woman's
turquoise earrings.

Moon immediately recognized this *tumpline* as having been made by her mother. Everyone stood still; quietly waiting the signal to continue.

As if by magic, Bear, Eagle, and Mountain Lion appeared from the dust. Bear recognized his Yavapai guests, smiled broadly, and said, “Alaiksai!” (Attention) “You have come on a lucky day to share with us the foods of Mother Earth! You are welcome in our home!” To which Bobcat Boy’s father, Big Deer, responded with a look of happiness and a long speech in the Yavepe language. Even though the Sinagua and the Yavapai did not know many words of each other’s language, they all understood that this was peaceful and welcoming event.

The Women Show, Tell, and Trade

After the greetings were finished, Bobcat Boy’s mother, Coyote Woman climbed the ladder to Red Woman’s house and began unpacking her basket. First out were two soft brown tanned deer skins. Then came a strong basket made from willow bark and two woven seed-parching trays. After that she pulled out a pine pitch-covered olla and a hairbrush made of *mescal* fibers with a buckskin handle. She laid down a large block of roasted and dried mescal and a small block of dried saguaro fruit. Then she pulled out a small pouch. Yellow Moon couldn’t see what was inside. Finally, Bobcat Boy’s mother pulled out another cone-shaped basket from the larger one she had been carrying. The bottom of the basket was covered with tanned leather, to protect it from being crushed when it was set down on the ground.



Coyote Woman laid out trade goods for Red Women.

Red Woman emerged from the roof entry carrying a tray of corn cakes for the guests. She greeted her Yavapai friends with a smile and put the tray down. Then she climbed down the ladder into the house to pick up her younger son, her woven cotton goods, and a bag of turquoise beads. Red Woman tried to hide her excitement. Coyote Woman brought along the very things she wanted. But how much would she have to trade to get them? She hoped that she had made the things that Water Woman wanted and needed this year. It was too late to worry about it, the *bargaining* would begin soon.

The Men Share and Trade

While the women were doing business on the roof, Yellow Moon's father, brother, and uncle were down below on the cool side of the house, setting out their own things for the visitors to look at. Bobcat Boy was sitting next to his father. Big Deer had placed on the ground two finely made buckskins. He carefully laid out one mountain sheep hide that still had the hair attached. He also set out two fist-size cobbles of blackish stone. Each had been chipped on one side to show the shiny black inside of the rock. Yellow Moon watched from the roof as the men looked at all there was to trade. Yellow Moon knew that this stone was really good for making small arrow points and sharp knives, and her father would be happy to trade for such a big piece.

Bobcat Boy looked up to see Yellow Moon. They saw each other and waved a greeting. Since her mother was now back with Rabbit Skin



Big Deer laid out trade goods for Eagle and Mountain Lion.

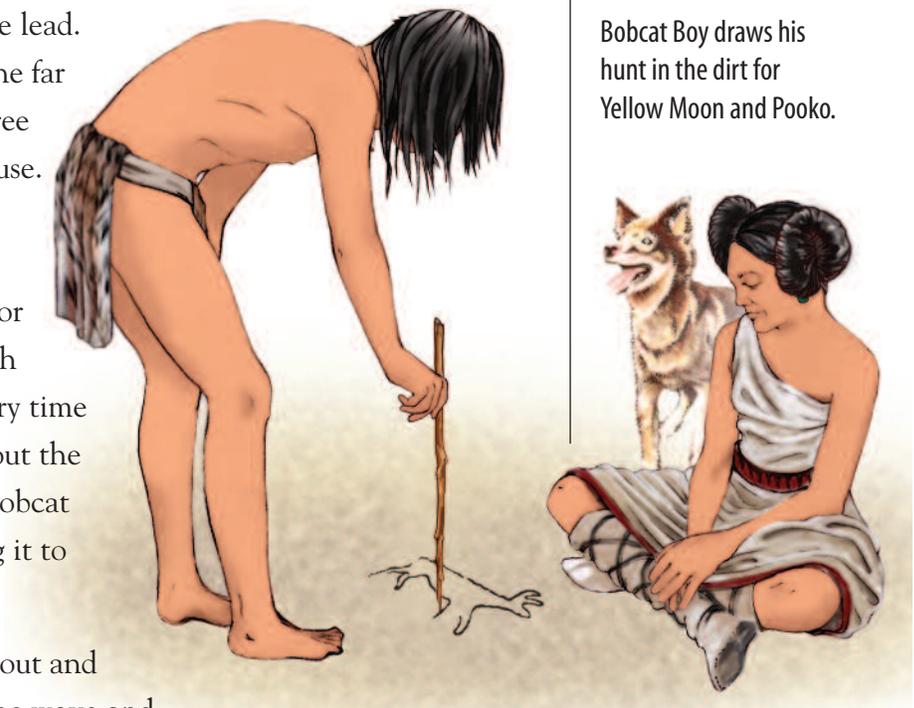
Blanket, her little brother, Yellow Moon knew she could ask to go visit with Bobcat Boy. She couldn't wait to see her friend and learn of his travels since the last Harvest Festival. She loved his stories. But since they spoke different languages, they told stories using sign language and drawing pictures in the sand.

Yellow Moon and Bobcat Boy

Bobcat Boy was taller and stronger this year. His hair now was cut like his father's, with long bangs and straight sides. Besides these changes, he was, however, the same boy she knew from last year's Festival. He had the same grin and black sparking eyes.

Both Yellow Moon and Bobcat Boy knew this was a good time to walk away from the crowd. Everyone was busy. Yellow Moon, with Pooko at her heels, took the lead. They walked down the trail to the far south end of the village. The three sat in the shade of a deserted house. Bobcat Boy picked up a pointed stick and began acting out and drawing the story of his first major hunt. Yellow Moon squealed with laughter and the dog barked every time Bobcat Boy stood up and acted out the hunt. It was a funny story, and Bobcat Boy had a wonderful time telling it to Yellow Moon and her dog.

In turn, Yellow Moon acted out and drew a story about the blanket she wove and the praise she received from her mother and other relatives. Then, Bobcat Boy told another story about their family's travels that year. He said that they moved at least 40 moves since the leaving the winter camp. He drew images of mountains and hills; valleys and streams; animals like deer, rabbit, and bighorn sheep; and plants of various shapes and sizes. Yellow Moon could not believe how often the Yavapai moved. She and her



Bobcat Boy draws his hunt in the dirt for Yellow Moon and Pooko.

females relatives hardly went anywhere beyond the fields and the river. Only the men left the village and its immediate territory. When they did go, it was only a few days at a time to hunt, collect stone or salt, or to visit the religious places of her people.

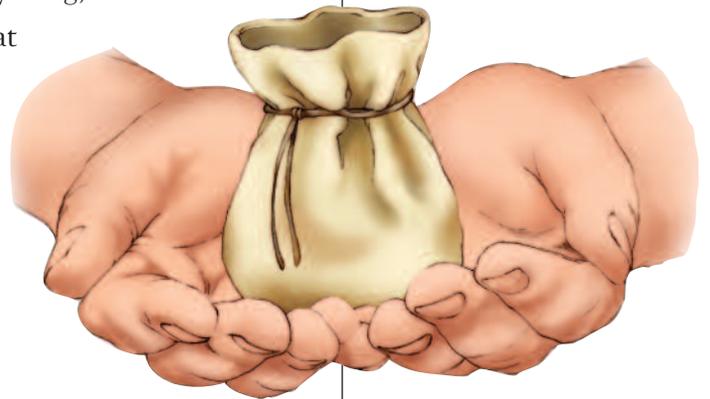
The Yavapai Winter Village

Finally, Bobcat Boy made Yellow Moon stand up and look south to the black hills. He pointed to a place on hill far, far away. She could see golden-leafed cottonwood trees, suggesting that a spring was nearby. He drew a picture of three rounded stick houses with low doorways, pointed in the direction of his family, and pretended to go to sleep.

“So,” she told Pooko, who was watching everything, “this is where his family will spend the winter, in a camp at foot of the hills. Probably there is a good crop of pinyon nuts this year, and his family will have plenty of fire wood. He and the other Yavapai will be able to see our village, but we will not see them. I am glad we are friends not enemies, aren’t you Pooko?”

The Gift

Pooko turned his head to the side, trying to understand what Yellow Moon asked. But it was no use. Pooko once again settled down in the cool earth next to the deserted house. Yellow Moon turned to look at Bobcat Boy, who shyly stretched out his arm toward her. There was a small bundle in his hand. It was a surprise! He had a gift for her. She carefully pulled back his folded fingers. In his hand was a soft pouch made of prairie dog skin, tied with a thin deerskin cord. She could tell by the look of pride on his face that he had made the pouch especially for her. She smiled and put her forehead against his to thank him for his kindness. For sure, he was glad to see her this year. She could hardly wait to give him her surprise, the soft cotton wrap that she wove last summer. But that would have to wait until after the feast and the foot races...



Bobcat Boy presents
Yellow Moon with a gift.