

Thank you for sharing the *Ace and the Arrow* with me. It was a surprisingly sweet and touching story. You have done a good job balancing the interplay between the two characters and dropping in bits of exposition about the passing of time via the various bits of information that Reelo has shared with Travis.

How much time though? I'm not sure how long a period of time this piece covers. Could there be some change in season, or a second full moon or something to give me an idea.

Is there anyone looking for Travis? If one of the aces go down, do they send out a party. We know that Reelo has lost a community and that Travis lived alone, but was there no one? You can easily dispose of this problem in a line or two. Just have Travis say something like, "We sign an oath to be independent forever." This means he would be violating that oath for Reelo – an even more significant choice.

Where I think this piece could use some more work would be in the physical descriptions, particularly in three places:

- 1) The sacred grove
- 2) The god—the face of the god
- 3) The notebook entries of Travis when he is trying to decipher the glyphs.

So much of the story relies on these glyphs and the god and I really don't get an idea what they look like. How big is the god? What is it made of? Travis sees that one stands for farmer, one for potter. What do these look like? How are they made – carved or painted somehow? How big is the field he's standing in? How high are the poles? I think the story could easily bear one or two paragraphs of pure description of each of these without losing its momentum. This description will underscore to the reader that these objects (or symbols) are really relevant so pay attention. If done well, they will allow the reader to make a few connections for themselves. So, if we see Travis have an "aha" moment when he figures out the symbol for farmer, then you could describe another symbol giving a reader a chance to make a guess before resolving it and saying "I see! That must mean potter!"

I have a similar response to the scene where they fix the fertility goddess. I have no idea what they're going to do with those vines and stones, but as I do not see that scene as so very crucial to the understanding and drama of the story, I'm not that concerned.

I also wish I had just a moment or two where I could see Travis falling for Reelo a bit. Perhaps before Reelo falls sick you might have Travis admire his skill at something, or be surprised how he finds looking at Reelo climb a tree moves him. But it would also make sense if Travis did not understand how much Reelo meant to him until Reelo got sick. I wish I could see Travis panic a little at the thought of losing him. Right now it reads as if Travis feels guilty about bringing illness to the tribe and to Reelo. What may have started with guilt becomes something else once he understands what Reelo has come to mean to him.

The ending is completely satisfied as we believe, along with Reelo, that Travis has gone. But when we learn that Travis is staying suddenly everything before makes so much sense. That's a good feeling to leave a story with.

In December and January there are often calls for submissions for anthologies of love stories to be published around Valentine's Day. I would think this would make a unique contribution to such a collection and I encourage you to send it out to several.

I want to thank you again for trusting me with *The Ace and the Arrow*. I hope I have given you some thoughts you find helpful.