

THREE

Part 3: Ritual

Noku screamed alive mighty prayers for the ahsey tree. Fifty-nine seconds: an eternity.

Cradling Papaí's drum as Zhey-zeus commands, he prayed that it guide his milky white hands.

First light tapping. Then with thund'rous booms. He pount out rhythms of his madre's womb. Louder n louder. Faster n faster. He prayed:

“Heil Aya o'the Wood,

Espírito of forest creatures.

May Thy psychedelic vines be me teacher!

Come down now with Thy Transcendent Children.

Take ye pity on this beggarly child,

Quickened by brush n serpents wild.

Thy bonded thrall entreats Ye accept,

Deadwood n flame n yielding respect.

Pray guard us from malice n temptation

I offer this wren. May't ward daím-Satan.”

The roasting bird whetted Noku's appetite. A fragrance refreshing as pure Sol's light.

“As a token of open loyalty, please accept this rosary.”

Count the shells enshrined n say: "He is my Brother!" times fifty-nine. And the flames consume her.

"As a sign of humble humility,

Grount cedar from bygone civility."

He chuffed the incense. The fire blazed green, growing beards of flame like whispers of dreams.

And he gave of his fruits voluntarily. Spitting in flame septenarily.

Firestorms erupted from far away. From up or down-mountain? Noku could not say.

"May Thy thrall, obedient e'rmore be:

Sword fodder of Thy Right n Chaste Army,

A spark fer Thy Arrow's incendiary,

A fatted sloth 'pon which Thou feasts.

The maid Ye take fer joyless mirth,

N the dirt ye crushed into this earth."

The seasloth broke and it spasmed and pitched. With anguished spasms, it jerked and it twitched.

Losing himself to ideations of victuals; light-headed n weak, Noku closed the ritual.

“Upon this scorched altar, blameless and true, I consecrate my unjust flesh to You, may
You taste my murm'ring, fleeting breaths, and crown my prayers with a martyr's true death.
Introibo Adaltare Dei Amen.”

He blew out the candles and packed up his spread. Aya's Clam, just the thought filled him
with dread. His foot blindly shuffled the forest bed. There must be some alternative instead. He
imagined the sloth butchered and dead, and himself feasting on its roasted sweetbreads.

The poor sloth crapt shrill misery and dread.