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The Jaguar's Den

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The Jaguar’s Den

At the edge of the mountains I meet a cave
That to me looks like the Devil’s den
Into the entrance of the dark cavern’s face
Past its veil of blackness I proceed and descend
The noise beyond me is that of a furious battle
That rages deep within
There my hounds have found him
The jaguar king that today contends
I strike a fire to a pine stick torch and
Inside the cave I recognize the remains
Of the Mayan people whose civilization
Has long since come to its end

Six hundred feet before me the cave opens
To a sacred room with an altar
Where once people sacrificed even their kin

Before me a jaguar king sits high up in a cathedral corner
Perched the god of ages the Mayas wondered
His imaged carved on the cave walls all around him
Put there by Mayan priests who feared and revered him

Even through the darkness
I can see determination staring at me
Determined to keep his kingly status
As ruler of the earth and Mayan heaven
Now I see him clearly perched
High on a ledge looking down upon me
Looking staring glaring through maddened eyes
He challenges me from where he sits
Enthroned upon his altar

The torchlight illuminates his challenging face
That stares in defiance as his shadow looms upon the
Holding a sacrifice in one hand suspended he shows me
that he holds my blue hound in his grasp
With one thrust he thrusts his claws into Blue’s ribs
And holds him there suspended in the open to show me
That death awaited all the rest that
Dares to challenge the kings
Of the rainforest

With all Blue’s breath he bawls for mercy
But truly there is nothing that I can do for Blue
And the god before me knows its true

Now in defiance he flashes his fangs whipping them as a show
And swiftly flays Blue’s neck in an instant
Leaving him limp and lifeless on the altar
Blood draining down the altar to the ground
It cries out to me for vengeance
Quickly he released the limp bloodless body
And glances glares and disappears before us
Gone for the moment deeper within
The bowels of the earth

Just as quick, the rest of my hounds
And dip into the darkness below with cries
Shaking the wall of the caverns within
Sounds of a horrible bloodletting battle
Into the bowels of earth’s passages which descend
To Dante’s hell where suffering gods of old are held
Waiting for the end to ascend for another
Possible showing of false glory

Today the challenge is mine in the game of gods and men
To retrieve this jaguar from this pit
To claim his crown to be mine own
To rise from Dante’s hell and wear my crown
Even as Roman conquerors returning home
Were hailed and glorified in their hour
Now is my day and my hour
To rise above this jaguar god
And show my manly valor

Now he stands just before me
Snarling flashing his long white teeth
His voice, rough rasping rolling like thunder
Then I raise my pistol to his head.
With one fiery blast I bring this jaguar god
To his knees and his end

Now silence I feel
For there is nothing left
To confront my challenge
Of being a god upon the land
In this day and hour

—Tim Tanner

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