

*Chichén Itzá, Yucatán Peninsula, June 24, 884 A.D.*

## SPOT OF THE CAT

It is nearly noon and, as predicted by the priests,  
 The Giant Jaguar spirit has begun to pass in front of the sun.  
 There for all to see in the waxing ringed spot is the powerful  
 And terrifying alliance of Jaguar and Sun God,  
 Masters of death in the underworld and the overworld,  
     Sharing the path of a celestial journey.

At the high edge of the Templo de los Jaguares,  
 In the midst of carved eagles and jaguars devouring heads,  
 And the Feathered Serpent and Venus God Quetzalcoatl,  
     Five jaguar priests stand alert.

Shadows strike stone columns and the crowd in the courtyard.  
 Eyes on the priests and the advancing spot on the sun,  
     Warriors gather for sacrifice.

First priest, Thirteen Jaguar, speaks to invisible projects  
     On this day of great fear.

Spot of the cat takes half the sun and a cool breeze arises.  
     Birds alarm in noisy circles overhead.

Serpent Jaguar, second priest, speaks as sky diver Venus,  
 Lying in hiding, emerges in the darkness,  
 Brighter in fraternity with the diminishing sun,  
     Revealing new wind, new needs.

Jaguar spot takes two thirds of the sun. Third priest,  
 Jeweled Jaguar, speaks with the wave of a dagger—  
     1366 human beings must be sacrificed immediately.

Some are speared as they stand.  
 Some are dragged to the platform  
 On top of the most ancient temple.  
 Backs slammed against the *chacmool* slab,  
 Black obsidian knives cut beating heart after beating heart,

And the universal blood runs colder in the retreating  
Sun.

Jaguar spot inches toward the remainder,  
And a flint spark strikes the sky into total darkness.

Fourth priest, Bird Jaguar in mask, speaks to the heavens,  
Gestures to the crowd, ten thousand weepers gathered below,  
And the universal blood runs colder in the spot of the  
Cat.

Then, cued by another priestly slash in the air, the Sun God  
Renews slowly, Venus disappears, and Giant Jaguar carries  
Night in its mouth and slips silently  
Over the green edge of the world  
Into white tousled sea.

Fifth priest, Twenty Jaguarthroats, leads a woeful procession  
North to the *cenote* where twenty pregnant women in  
Elaborate dresses, jade necklaces and ear plugs, an eight year  
Old boy in copper rings, twine apron and a crowning eagle  
Mask, stone knives with carved wooden handles, copper bells,  
Engraved gold discs, wing-tied parrots, a whistle, incense pots,  
Aromatic resin, a dog in coyote skin, clay figurines, turquoise  
Toucans, quartz crystals, and countless jars of precious stones  
Are thrown one at a time from a platform  
Into the huge shadowy well.

Bird Jaguar in mask speaks to the heavens and the massive  
Crowd below,  
And the colder blood of the universe rivers itself in  
Ritual  
Over the green edge of the world  
Into reddening sea  
And great caverns  
Of the black ringed  
Spot of the cat.