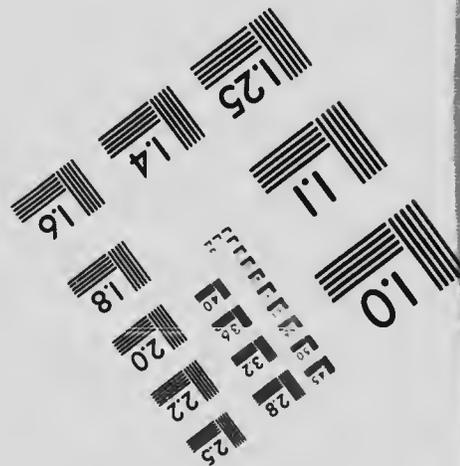
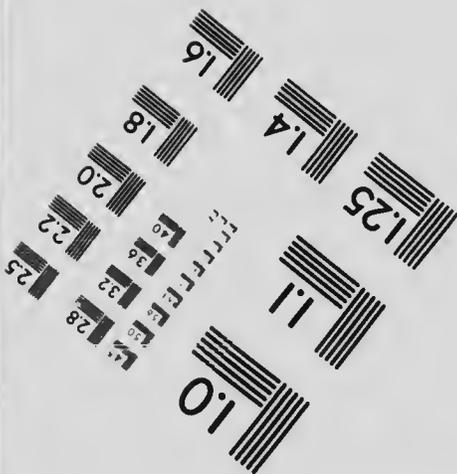
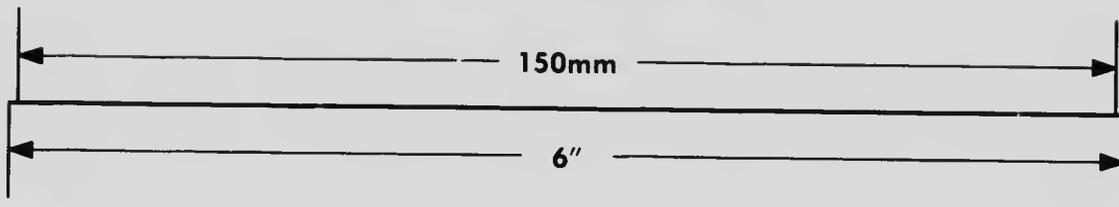
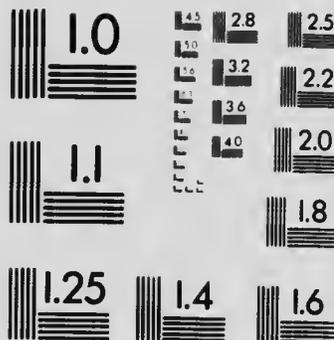
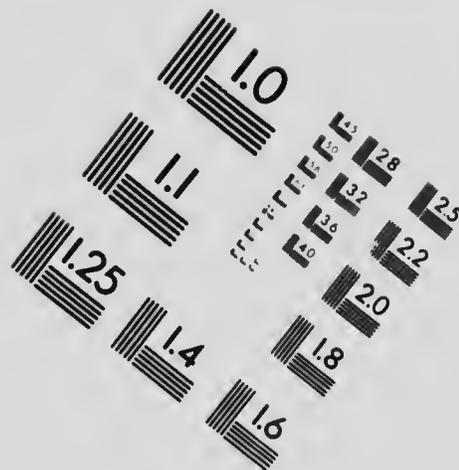
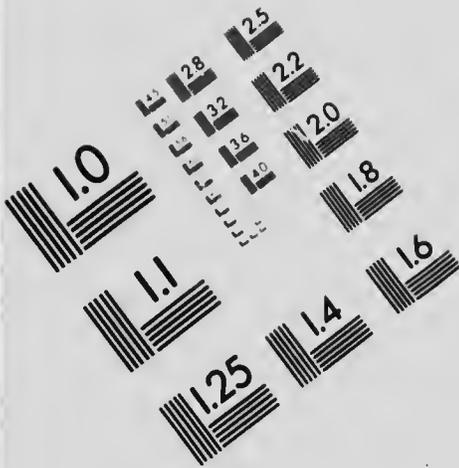


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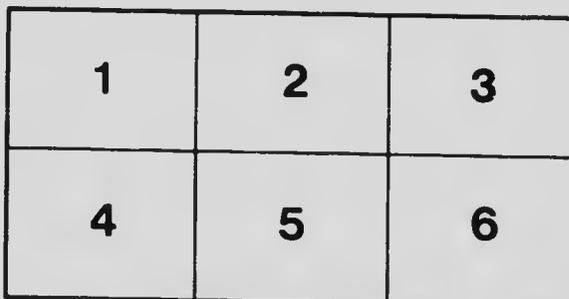
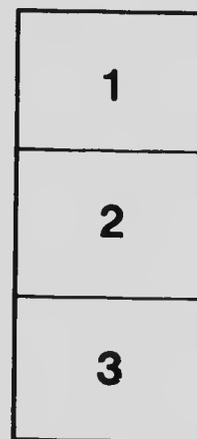
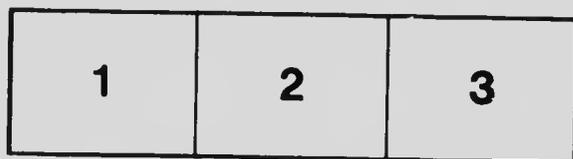
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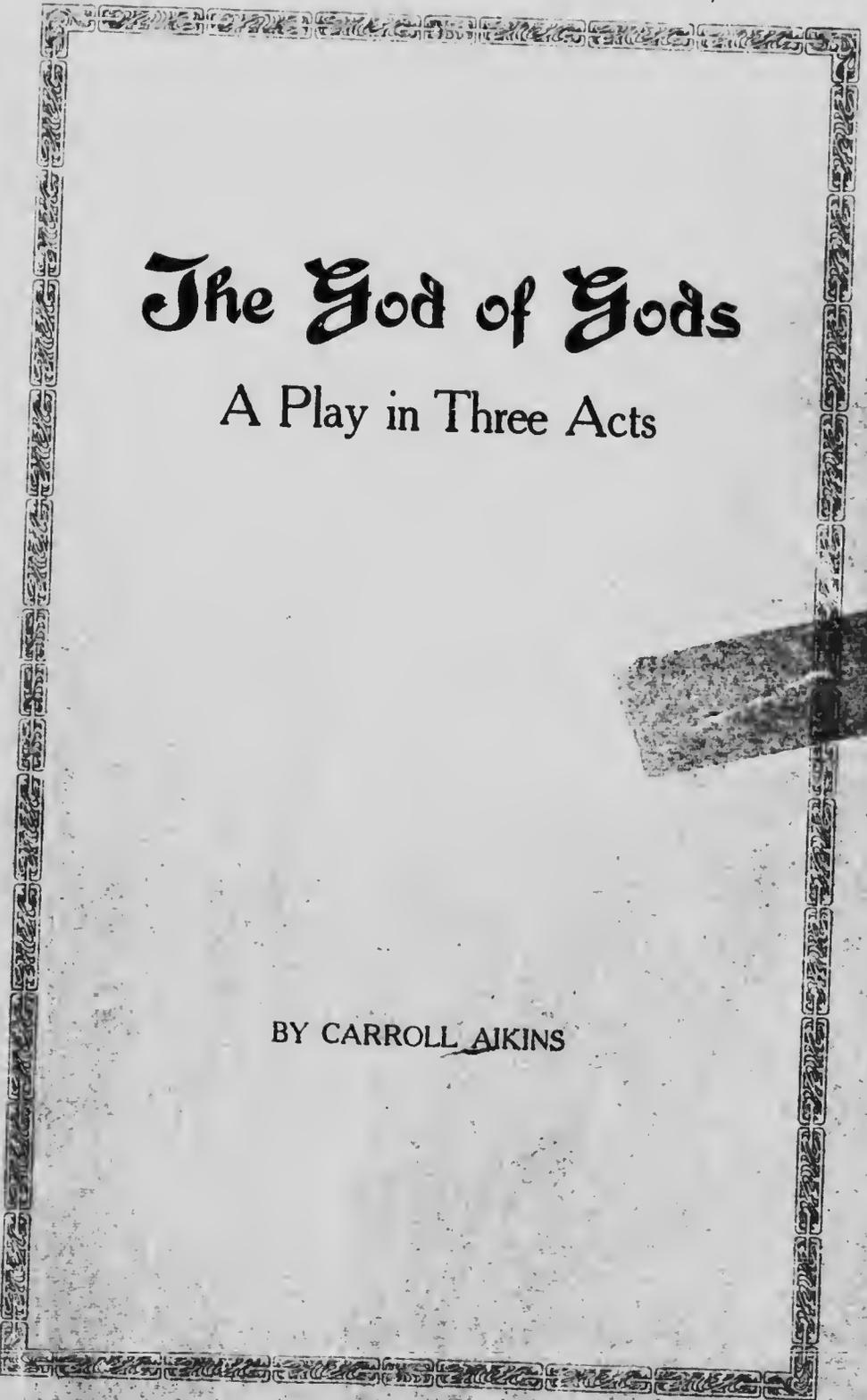
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The God of Gods

A Play in Three Acts

BY CARROLL AIKINS

PS850i
I45G6
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Persons of the Play.

YELLOW SNAKE—A singer.

AMBURI—Chief of the Seven Feathers.

MABLO—His son.

LERII—A mad old man

SUIVA—A girl of the tribe.

KOTWI—Her mother.

WANING MOON.—Priestess to the God of Gods.

Old Men. Old Women.

Act One—A pine-clad plateau.

Acts Two and Three—An altar to the God of Gods.

Time—In the summer of the God.

Place—A mountain valley.

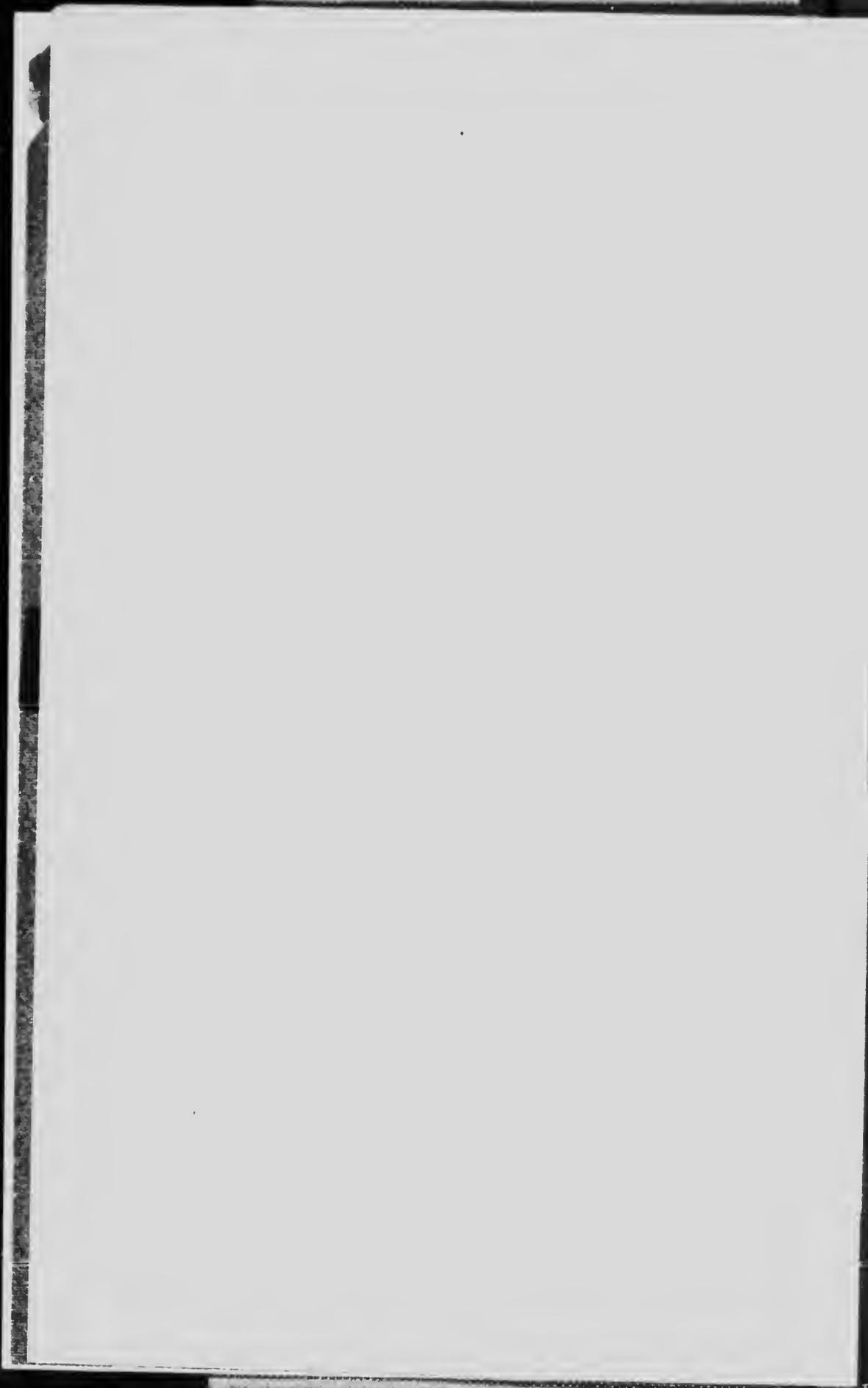
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ACT I.

The scene represents the edge of a grassy pine-clad plateau overlooking a lake and a range of mountains. To the left is a small circular tepee of weatherstained birchbark. To the extreme right is a large rock. The right entrances are before and behind this rock. The left entrance is well forward, screened by small trees. Near the tepee is the cooking oven of blackened stones and beside it an earthenware water pot. To the right-centre is a fallen log. Above it, an old pine with heavy foliage.

The time is before sunrise of a June morning.

The curtain rises and Yellow Snake, a young Indian, steals in from the right. He wears a cougar skin tunic and carries a small bouquet of red berries and white blossoms. He approaches the tepee cautiously and is about to lay his offering at the entrance when he is startled by a loud sneeze from within. He withdraws in a panic and as the sneeze is followed by some further commotion climbs a nearby tree and hides in the foliage.

Kotwi, a fat squaw, dressed in a gaudy blanket, backs out of the tepee and looks about her suspiciously.

KOTWI

Who's there!

(She goes grunting about, looking behind rocks and trees.)

Waning Moon enters from the left. She is a thin old hag of a squaw and wears a ceremonial white garment ornamented with a silver crescent-moon. Kotwi turns and sees her.)

Oh! It's you, is it! I thought it was a hill dog.

WANING MOON (stomily)

Have you forgotten what I am?

(Kotwi comes forward apologetically, inclines her head and clasps her hands behind it.)

KOTWI

The God is great. He giveth us full bellies.

WANING MOON

The God is good to them that love his priestess.

KOTWI

I love you well.

WANING MOON

The God will hear me when I pray for you. And he will fill your belly.

KOTWI

(raising her head)

The God is great. He is the God of Gods.

(Their tones, which have been ritualistic, return to normal.)

WANING MOON

(seating herself on a log)

He gets no older. It's not so with us. My legs are like the willows.

KOTWI

Afe! We're getting on. And soon they'll grind our meat between two stones. Shall I call Sulva? Have you eaten yet?

WANING MOON

Yes, I have eaten. Leave the girl to sleep.

KOTWI

You're up early and far from the God's altar. Is there evil word?

WANING MOON

No word at all. The God is drunk and happy in his dreams. But I wake early and I'm glad to wake. My days are not so many as they were.

KOTWI

You needn't fear. The God will guide you to his Yellow Tent.

WANING MOON

I'm not afraid. But there must be a girl to take my place. Or do you want the holy fire to die?

KOTWI

No! No! How should we eat if the fire died! And the God angry! Ask him to make haste!

WANING MOON

I'm not dead yet. You keep your tongue tied up!

KOTWI

I meant no harm. Who is it he will choose? Is it Water Plume or old Coyote's daughter?

WANING MOON

She must be virgin.

KOTWI

Aie! Then they won't do!

WANING MOON

I thought that Water Plume

KOTWI

She! You might as well believe the world is round like a sheep's bladder! She, a virgin! Pouf!

WANING MOON

The God will know.

KOTWI

He has sharp eyes then. She's a sly one . . . ough! I won't let Sulva fish in the same stream. When will he choose the girl?

WANING MOON

The God is drunk. He bids me choose the girl.

KOTWI

And you've come here! Is it my Sulva that you want?

(eagerly)

Eh, is it Sulva?

(calling)

Sulva!

WANING MOON

Not so fast! You're like the other mothers. They all want their girls to be the young moon. Why is that?

KOTWI

I can't speak for the others. For myself, I fear the God and I will give my daughter.

WANING MOON (knowingly)

Aie!

KOTWI

Why do you say, "Aie"? What is there more that I can give than my own child, my Sulva? The God is great but he is old, and lives in the deep pool. No man has seen him; only his stone image. He is great, but she is young and like the doe in springtime.

It is not sweet to live without a man! And yet I give her!

WANING MOON

Aie! You give her!

KOTWI

Well?

WANING MOON

When the fat deer are brought, and the bears' hearts, and the wild ducks and turtles, and burnt upon the altar, what does the God get of them?

KOTWI

He gets the smell.

And who gets the meat?

WANING MOON

KOTWI

Who should get it, if not the God's own priestess?

WANING MOON

And what does she do with it?

KOTWI

She eats it.

WANING MOON

And what she cannot eat?

KOTWI

She gives to the old and sick and those who cannot see.

WANING MOON

And maybe, her own people? Her own mother, eh?

KOTWI

Maybe. It's not of that I think.

WANING MOON

Old Coyote offered me five cows if I would choose his daughter.

KOTWI

He is a liar and his cows are sick. I'll give you five good cows.

WANING MOON

I am the daughter of the God.

KOTWI

I meant no harm.

WANING MOON

I must have ten cows.

KOTWI

Ten! Ale! But you are the daughter of the God! What do you want of ten cows?

WANING MOON

I want them for my nephew, Shiny Bird.

KOTWI

Your nephew?

WANING MOON

For ten cows he will keep me till I die.

KOTWI (Indignantly)

That won't be long. And now you don't eat much. Ten cows! Bah! He's a tight-skinned ground-hog, Shiny Bird! He wants his meat all fat!

WANING MOON

He won't take less.

KOTWI

Give me but seven and I'll keep you!

WANING MOON

He has a house with stones for a big fire. The stones are warm in winter.

KOTWI

We have dry cedar bought and many deerskins. You would be happy with us, Waning Moon.

WANING MOON

I like to sleep with warm stones in my bed.

KOTWI

You shall have warm stones here.

WANING MOON

No, it's more fit that I should die with my own people.

KOTWI

Ale! That's so. Well, I have asked you. Remember that I asked you.

WANING MOON

The God will thank you. But as I can't come here how would you like your girl to take my place?

KOTWI

Where shall I find ten cows?

WANING MOON

You! You have five times ten!

KOTWI

I had when my man died. But now the most are stolen

WANING MOON

Is that truth? I hadn't heard it.

KOTWI

Stolen, or died of the mouth sickness. It's hard to be a widow!

WANING MOON

That's so. That's so. Well, if you haven't ten cows (She rises painfully.) Anyway, I doubt that Sulva would have pleased the God. The girl must be a virgin.

KOTWI

She is that! If any gabbling squaw has told you that she's not, she lies, she lies!

WANING MOON (sardonically)

Ale! Ale!

KOTWI

There's never a man has touched her ankle-ring!

WANING MOON

Not Yellow Snake, the singer?

KOTWI

Not he, or any other. I watch her like the motaer-grouse her chick.

(Yellow Snake follows the various turns of their conversation with an interested but restrained pantomime.)

WANING MOON

How old is she?

KOTWI

The fingers of four hands.

WANING MOON

And has not tried her wings?

KOTWI

I swear she has not! You should not listen to such evil tongues!

WANING MOON

They swim together by the salmon traps.

KOTWI

Maybe they do. Cannot a virgin swim?

WANING MOON

Not with Yellow Snake. He has wild ways and does not fear the God.

KOTWI

Ale! But she fears the God. Every day she prays to him when the sun comes and goes. She fears him so I'd rather die than tell her all that we've been saying. Your ten cows and all! It's a hard life for widows. (She begins to sniffle.)

WANING MOON

You're a good woman, Kotwi. And now I'll tell you something that you'll like to hear.

KOTWI

What's that?

WANING MOON

You know the chief's son, Mablo

KOTWI (sharply,

Ale!

WANING MOON

He wants your Sulva for his woman.

KOTWI

How do you know?

WANING MOON

He told me so himself.

KOTWI

The God he praised! You're a good woman, Waning Moon. I hope you get your ten cows.

Mablo! There's a man! With his own house and cattle! You don't catch Mablo swimming by the traps. And when Amburi dies, he'll be the chief. Chief of the Seven Feathers! He'll smoke the silver pipe and wear the yellow on his cheeks! And Suiva, my little Suiva will be his woman! The God be praised!

WANING MOON

Yes, if she'll have him.

KOTWI

Have him? Of course, she'll have him! There's not a girl in all the world who wouldn't have him! When is he going to ask her?

WANING MOON

Pretty soon. He's afraid that Yellow Snake will get her.

KOTWI

I'll see to that!

WANING MOON

Don't tell her what I've told you.

KOTWI

Why not?

WANING MOON

I promised Mablo that I wouldn't tell. Good bye

KOTWI

You've made me happy like the jumping trout!

(Waning Moon eyes her stonily. Kotwi bends her head and clasps her hands behind it.)
The God is great. He giveth us full bellies.

WANING MOON

The God is good to them that love his priestess.

KOTWI

I love you well.

WANING MOON

The God will hear me when I pray for you. And he will fill your belly.

KOTWI (with fervour)

The God is great! He is the God of Gods.

(She raises her head; Waning Moon turns and goes out to the left, walking with ceremonious dignity. Kotwi, highly delighted, goes to the tepee and calls.)

Suiva! Oh! Suiva!

SUIVA'S VOICE (sleepily)

Yes?

KOTWI

Wake up! Wake up! A great girl like you!

SUIVA'S VOICE

Is it the prayer hour?

KOTWI

Soon. The hills are bright. The sun is on the second ridge. Be quick!

SUIVA

I'm putting on my tunic. Or shall I come out naked?

KOTWI

Hush! For shame! Don't be a child!

SUIVA'S VOICE

Your voice is happy. Have you snared a grouse?

Maybe. KOTWI!
 A big one? SUIVA'S VOICE
 Aie! Maybe a very big one! KOTWI!
 A blue grouse? SUIVA'S VOICE
 A grouse with yellow on his cheeks. Di-di, di-di! KOTWI!
 There is no grouse with yellow on his cheeks. You snared a meadowlark. SUIVA'S VOICE (calmly)
 That smokes a silver pipe. KOTWI!
 You told me not to be a child. SUIVA'S VOICE
 Well! Well! We'll see! KOTWI!
 Just now I dreamt that I heard voices. SUIVA'S VOICE
 It was so. But hurry! Quick! The sun will soon be up! KOTWI!
 I'm coming! Who was here? SUIVA
 Old Wanng Moon. KOTWI!
 The Holy One! SUIVA'S VOICE
 The Holy One! Aie! Aie! KOTWI (chuckling)
 What did she want? SUIVA
 To talk of cows! KOTWI!
 The moon is on you. Which way did she go? SUIVA'S VOICE
 The hill way, to the lake. KOTWI!
 Was she alone? SUIVA'S VOICE
 You think the path is steep? KOTWI!
 You know the path is steep. I'll go and help her. SUIVA'S VOICE (reproachfully)
 No! I'll go! I'll go! She's a good woman! KOTWI!
 Good! She's the God's daughter! SUIVA
 (emerging on hands and knees)
 So she is! KOTWI!
 Get water from the spring, and build the fire. (going out to the left)
 But, first, your prayers. Both prayers. SUIVA
 You needn't tell me that!
 (Kotwi goes out. Sulva rises to her feet. She is a very beautiful Indian girl, barefooted, with loose hair, and wears a single fawnskin garment which leaves one shoulder bare and does not fall below the knees. She goes to the centre of the scene, turns and with arms outstretched addresses the sun, which has half-risen above the mountain.)

SUIVA

Give thanks, torch bearer, to the God of Gods!
And fear him, lest he crush the hollow reed that gives thee breath beneath the
great blue water! Fear him, torch bearer!

(She turns, comes forward and kneels.)

Great God of Gods, I am thy slave. I fear thee. Slay me not with tongue fire
in the crash of falling mountains.

Renew the springs, that I may drink. Renew thy sweat upon the maize fields.
Break thou the knees of the fat deer that I may eat, I and my people.

Make sharp and swift the arrows of my people. Make blunt the daggers of our
foes and break their bow-strings. Withhold thy torch from them and fill their mouths
with poison.

Give me to mate a strong mate in my season and bind him to me with the twisted
vine. And with sweet balsam and sweet secret oil ease thou the labour of my child-
bearing.

Or, choose me to thy service. Lay on my breast the face of the young moon and
bid me to be thy virgin. I will tend thy fire and shear the foeman's hair to fill thy nose
with incense.

Great God of Gods! I am thy slave. I fear thee!

(As she rises, Yellow Snake throws the boquet at her feet. She laughs,
darts to it, picks it up and peers about her to discover the thrower.)

SUIVA

Who are you?

YELLOW SNAKE (mockingly)

"I am thy slave. I fear thee."

SUIVA (reprovingly)

Yellow Snake! Where are you?

YELLOW SNAKE

There, in your hand, red berries and white blossoms.

SUIVA

Come to me!

YELLOW SNAKE

I will not.

SUIVA

(peering in the long grass)

Are you a field-mouse?

YELLOW SNAKE (laughing)

No.

SUIVA

A squirrel?

YELLOW SNAKE

No.

SUIVA

What are you, then?

YELLOW SNAKE

Your lover.

SUIVA

(seeing him and clapping her hands)

Yes!

YELLOW SNAKE

And singer of the glory in the morning!

(He swings down from the tree and takes her in his arms.)

SUIVA

Yellow Snake!

(He kisses her ardently.)

No! No! You mustn't!

SUIVA (struggling)

YELLOW SNAKE

(laughing and continuing)

Why?

SUIVA

(in a low voice)

Take care!

Indian
which
to the
which

YELLOW SNAKE
(releasing her hastily)

Your mother!

SUIVA
(half laughing, half serious)

No. The God might see.

YELLOW SNAKE (disgustedly)

The God? **The God!** That poor old man! There's too much water in his eyes.
He can't see anything.

SUIVA (frightened)

Take care! Take care!

YELLOW SNAKE

If I were God I wouldn't live in that dark pool.

(approaching her)

Your hair is like the thunderclouds! Your breath is like crushed lilies!

SUIVA (to divert him)

No, don't! If you were God where would you live?

YELLOW SNAKE (pointing)

I'd ride that cloud. I'd take these trees for arrows and shoot them at the sun.

SUIVA

You'd kill the sun!

YELLOW SNAKE

I'd wound him, so he'd limp and give us light after the birds are in their nests.

SUIVA

If you did that, we'd swim no more by moonlight.

(She fixes the bouquet in the bosom of her dress.)

YELLOW SNAKE

Yes, we should. Because the moon's his mate and when she hears him cry she'll come to bathe his wounds with sweet spring water.

But before she comes I'll catch a gourd of blood in my two hands and bring it down to you and bathe your feet.

SUIVA

With blood?

YELLOW SNAKE

With his blood. And I'll bathe mine too. And then, at night, we'll go and dance upon the mountain. And when our people see the light they'll think the God has struck some dead tree with his tongue. And that old hag, the priestess, Waning Moon, will say the God is angry, and she'll make Amburi give her a fat deer to burn upon the altar, (mockingly) to fill his nose with incense.

(Angrily) To fill her wrinkled belly!

SUIVA

Hush!

YELLOW SNAKE

And then I'll take you to the Hidden Water!

SUIVA

That's a dream! There is no Hidden Water!

YELLOW SNAKE

No?

SUIVA

Where is it?

YELLOW SNAKE

You'll find it with the sun's fire on your feet.

SUIVA

But you've not been there!

YELLOW SNAKE

I go when I will.

SUIVA

Where is it?

YELLOW SNAKE

Over there behind Grey Mountain.

The blue sea lies there.

SUIVA

It's two days journey higher than the sea.

YELLOW SNAKE

Above the tree line?

SUIVA

Many trees are there.

YELLOW SNAKE

And birds?

SUIVA

Aie! Trees and birds, but both are strange.

YELLOW SNAKE

SUIVA

(lying down and resting cheek on hand,
Tell me! How are they strange?

YELLOW SNAKE

(seating himself, cross-legged)

It's the white truth I tell you.

SUIVA

Are the trees of gold? And the birds like little men?

YELLOW SNAKE

The birds look like these birds but they are really dreams that choose the trees they love and nest with them. They mate like thrushes but their young are not like birds at all. Some are of stone and have carved limbs and faces, rubbed and smoothed with sand. And some are pictures made with blood on birch-bark. And some are only voices, but when they sing it's like quick water under the white moon.

And you must never hurt those birds or rob their nests.

SUIVA

Why not?

YELLOW SNAKE

Because, if you hurt them, you hurt the trees. If you kill them, you kill the trees. And if you kill the trees you have no shelter from the sun and storm. And though you live, life will be dull as sleep is without dreams. And you'll be glad to die!

SUIVA

What else is there?

YELLOW SNAKE

There's grass, like this grass and flowers and berry-bushes; but they have juices red as your own blood. And when they're hurt they cry as children do. And when the wind runs through them and they're glad you hear their laughter rippling up the hills.

And there's a deep lake, deeper than the sky; with water whiter than a young deer's teeth. And when you swim in it you're strong as the black otter and swift as the clean trout and sweet as the white lilies. And when you drink of it your heart is friendly and you hate no man and none hates you.

And when you look on it your eyes are stars, your hair is waving grass, your arms have bark like fir trees, and your legs are like the polished stones in the creek bottom . . . you don't know what you are. The bees and birds come to you, the shy deer, the trees, the flowers, even the stones and fishes. You talk to them and they to you. And so the quick day passes; days and days.

SUIVA

Has any man gone with you?

YELLOW SNAKE

Not with me; but Leril knows the way.

SUIVA

Mad Leril!

YELLOW SNAKE

Aie!

SUIVA

That's strange.

YELLOW SNAKE

I have a house there.

SUIVA
Yellow Snake! You've made a house for us! By Hidden Water!

If you will come?
YELLOW SNAKE

A two days journey? There, behind Grey Mountain!

Maybe not so far.
YELLOW SNAKE

One day?
SUIVA

Maybe not one day.
YELLOW SNAKE

How far? Where is it?
SUIVA

How far can the heart leap when the dawn birds sing?
YELLOW SNAKE

You haven't made a house!
SUIVA
YELLOW SNAKE
(with a wide gesture)

This is my house!
SUIVA

I thought you meant it!
YELLOW SNAKE

This is my house.
SUIVA

It's no more yours thar mine or any other's.
YELLOW SNAKE

A man must have no fear in his own house. He must walk straight and know the way of it. He must know the songs and plumage of all birds that nest, and all the colors of all fish that swim, and all the words and ways of all the beasts. And he must have no fear of any beast or man or God. If he's afraid, then this is not his house.

SUIVA
If you won't fear the God then I shant love you.

Why should I fear him?
YELLOW SNAKE

Yell. . . ce!
SUIVA

Why should I?
YELLOW SNAKE

SUIVA
Why? Because he's God! He gives you the sun's heat and the moon's whiteness. He drives the salmon to your traps. He curves your arrow to the quick deer's heart. He puts good magic in the roots of plants and hangs red berries on the bushes. And if you fear him he will prosper you, but if you fear him not he will strike you dead. The hills will fall on you or he'll put polson in your mouth so that your bones will rot ilke fallen trees.

But if you pray to him and hring him gifts and do his hidding as the priestess tells, you will be rich and warm and happy and well fed and you will live to see the ptarmigan turn white ten times the counted fingers of both hands.

Oh, you must fear him! Fear him, Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE
I can't fear him. I can't fear anything.

Only the God!
SUIVA
YELLOW SNAKE

Fat Mabio fears the God. Will you love him?

Mabio?
SUIVA (slightly diverted)

Aie! He wants you for his woman.
YELLOW SNAKE

What!

SUIVA

YELLOW SNAKE

I heard the priestess tell your mother so. That's why she was so happy. He's the grouse that smokes a silver pipe, and has the yellow on his cheeks.

SUIVA

The Great Chief's son! And he wants me!

YELLOW SNAKE (superbly)

I also want you.

SUIVA

Chief of the Seven Feathers! Are you sure?

YELLOW SNAKE (uneasily)

But you don't want him. You want me.

SUIVA (teasingly)

It's no small thing to be the Great Chief's woman.

YELLOW SNAKE

Rather than mate with him I'd pick a three-year skunk up by the tail.

SUIVA

He's not so very fat.

YELLOW SNAKE

The groundhog is a pine needle beside him.

SUIVA

Every day he prays at the God's altar.

YELLOW SNAKE

He doesn't pray. He eats the sacred meat after the God has smelt it.

SUIVA

That's a lie.

YELLOW SNAKE

I've seen him eat it.

SUIVA

How could you see him? Only the old men go within the gate. They and the Chief's son.

You tell too many lies.

YELLOW SNAKE

It's not a lie. I've seen him from the top of the flat rock.

SUIVA

But that's within the gate!

YELLOW SNAKE (sulkily)

What of it?

SUIVA

How do you get there?

YELLOW SNAKE

There's a deep crevice in the canyon wall. A cow could climb it.

SUIVA

They'll kill you if they catch you! They'll cut your hair off and throw it in the pool.

(Pleadingly)

No! No! You're lying to me! Tell me you've not been there!

YELLOW SNAKE

I say that Mablo eats the God's meat. He's a sly groundhog with an oily tongue. He only loves his belly.

SUIVA

You've not been there at all. You say these things because you're jealous of him.

YELLOW SNAKE

Jealous? No, I'm not!

SUIVA

You're only a singer but he's the Great Chief's son.

I don't care if he is. **YELLOW SNAKE**

He has a fine house too and lots of cattle. **SUIVA**

I don't care if he has. **YELLOW SNAKE**

I do! **SUIVA (with a purpose)**

Eh! **YELLOW SNAKE (startled)**

I say I care. **SUIVA (defiantly)**

You wouldn't marry him? **YELLOW SNAKE**

Maybe not. **SUIVA (rising)**

Maybe! You couldn't marry him! **YELLOW SNAKE**

My mother's old and we are poor. The winter's coming; we must have a house. And we must live. **SUIVA**

Then, you will be his woman? You! **YELLOW SNAKE (springing up)**

Suiva, it's not so? Tell me it's not so!

It will be if I choose. **SUIVA**

I'll kill you first! **YELLOW SNAKE**

Mahlo's a man! He wouldn't let you kill me! **SUIVA**

He's not a man! He's a round pot of bear's grease! And if you mate with him I'll kill you both! **YELLOW SNAKE**

(In agony)

You wouldn't mate with him!

When Mahlo asks me I'll say this to him:— **SUIVA**

If Yellow Snake has not made me a house by the young moon, then I will mate with you. **YELLOW SNAKE (wildly)**

How can I make a house by the young moon? **SUIVA**

By working hard, you'll make it. **YELLOW SNAKE**

The moon is half way here! **SUIVA**

Get Shiny Bird and the Blue Fox to help you. **YELLOW SNAKE**

Yes! Yes! And while they work I'll sing to them. **SUIVA**

You must work too. **YELLOW SNAKE (cunningly)**

I know a place in the thick cedar woods where the close branches are like sloping walls. And the ground's so thick with moss it springs like muskeg. There's a place to sleep! Why must we have a house? **SUIVA (gently)**

When the birds mate why do they build them nests? **YELLOW SNAKE (after a pause)**

That's so.

SUIVA

(drawing him down)

Sit down beside me and we'll make the plan.

YELLOW SNAKE

But tell me first you wouldn't mate with him?

SUIVA

I'll tell you nothing till the young moon comes. Give me that stick there!

(He hands her a dry stick which she tries vainly to break, then returns to him.)

You break it in four pieces; two long, like that; and two short, like this.

(He does so, returns them to her and gradually becomes interested as she arranges them on the sandy ground. She hands him back one of the smaller pieces.)

Now, break this one again and we'll make the door.

(He breaks it, hands her the pieces and sits down beside her. She arranges the fourth wall.)

The door must face the sunrise.

YELLOW SNAKE

We'll build it on the night side of the stream.

SUIVA

I know a hollow where the ground is smooth.

YELLOW SNAKE

So do I.

SUIVA

Below the traps?

YELLOW SNAKE

Not far. There's a young juniper with one arm in the stream.

SUIVA

And three flat stones to step on?

YELLOW SNAKE

Aie!

SUIVA

(clapping her hands)

That's my place, too!

YELLOW SNAKE

I thought so. Now, let's make the walls.

SUIVA

The inside first. Where shall we have the fire?

YELLOW SNAKE

Here, in this corner.

SUIVA (nodding)

Yes.

YELLOW SNAKE

We'll lay the fire-stones.

(They arrange some small stones in the form of an oven.)

SUIVA

Where shall we sleep?

YELLOW SNAKE

On this side, with our feet this way, so we can see the stars.

(Suiva lays some grass in the indicated place.)

SUIVA

Here are the cedar boughs.

(Yellow Snake adds to them some leaves.)

YELLOW SNAKE

And here are deerskins. Now, we'll do the walls.

(They build up a frame work of dry sticks.)

SUIVA

These are white birches.

YELLOW SNAKE

Yes. They gleam like silver. The light on them is like the moon on water.

SUIVA

And they are strong. They don't rot like pine saplings.

YELLOW SNAKE

We'll chink them with grey moss that's warm in winter.

(The corner posts of the house are forked, and in these forks they set the joists, and across the joists they lay rafters and cover the house with a litter of leaves and pine needles.)

SUIVA

We'll thatch the roof with rushes from the black swamp.

YELLOW SNAKE

And bind the rushes with thin willow boughs.

(They add a few finishing touches.)

SUIVA

And there's our home.

YELLOW SNAKE

(He takes her hand.)

With sunlight in the door.

SUIVA

(Rather shyly, but taking his hand.)

In our own house it will be well with us.

(The cracking of a branch is heard. They spring up.)

SUIVA (laughing)

It's mother!

YELLOW SNAKE

(preparing to clear out)

I fear no man or beast or God; but I fear her!

SUIVA

Quick! Where's the water pot!

(He picks up an earthenware pot.)

She hasn't seen us! Quick! Down to the spring!

(Hand in hand, they run together to the right. Kotwi comes grunting in from the left, glances at the cold fire stones, looks in vain for the pot, and then calls angrily.)

Suiva! Suiva!

(No reply. She catches sight of the toy house and inspects it closely and with growing indignation. There is the sound of approaching steps from the right, and she turns to scold her daughter but there enter instead Amburi, the old Chief, and his son Mablo. Amburi is a dignified, courtly old man accustomed to grant favours and command respect. He is dressed in black otter skins and carries an ornamented hatchet in his girdle. He also wears moccasins and deerskin leggings.

Mablo is a fat unctuous youth in brown bearskins. Kotwi, her expression changed to one of gratified surprise, goes forward to meet them.)

KOTWI

The Great Chief and his son do me much honour.

AMBURI (graciously)

Your man was a good man, and we respect you.

MABLO

(wiping his hands on his costume)

There is no woman whom we honour more.

KOTWI

Will the Great Chief be seated?

AMBURI

Ale!

KOTWI

And the Chief's son?

AMBURI (calmly)

The Chief's son will stand. Stand over there.

(a slight pause)

What think you of him, Kotwi?

KOTWI

He is most handsome. His legs are like great tree trunks. He has the courage of a mother-bear, and yet his ways are gentle.

MABLO

That is so.

AMBURI (sharply)

Let be!

KOTWI

He fears the God and doesn't run with fast girls.

AMBURI

It's true he fears the God.

MABLO (unctuously)

The God is good to them that fear him.

AMBURI

Say on, my son. Tell Kotwi why we've come.

MABLO

You tell her, Father.

AMBURI

My son has found your daughter to his liking.

KOTWI

My Suiva?

AMBURI

Ale! And he asks your leave to marry her.

KOTWI

So great an honour I had not dared to dream of!

AMBURI

You say well.

KOTWI

She is a good girl though and fit to mate him.

AMBURI

Fears she the God?

KOTWI

Like thunder on the mountain. And I have taught her many things besides. She can sew double stitch with strong deer-tendons and weave a blanket soft and white as snow. She can make baskets too that hold spring water, and smooth an arrow like stream polished stone. And she is cunning to set snares for rabbits; and in the smoking shed and at the traps no girl works harder.

MABLO

Can she cook?

KOTWI

Cook! When you eat deer meat as she cooks it, you'll think you never ate deer meat before. And a bear's heart! Or a blue grouse! Or the young trout! When she grills young trout I wonder that the God comes not from heaven to eat them!

MABLO

Does she wrap parsley round the fat bear's heart? Or does she cook it with wild spinach leaves?

KOTWI

She studds it with fine pellets of burnt grain and steeps it over night in berry wine and wraps wet leaves around it and cooks it in the ashes of green wood. For that alone a man might marry her!

AMBURI

(to Mablo)

Your belly will be glad, but life's not all b'g eating.

(to Kotwi)

Where is your girl? Is she not up yet?

KOTWI

She said her sun-prayer e'er the sun was up!

AMBURI

Where is she, then?

KOTWI

She must have gone to the far spring for water. I'll call her to come quickly.
(calling) Oh, Sulva! Sulva! Come you here! I want you!

AMBURI (rising)

Now that he has your leave he'll speak to her. Find your tongue, my son.

MABLO

Yes, Father.

KOTWI

My girl will take you in her arms. Don't be too backward, Mablo.

AMBURI

Remember you're the Great Chief's son, and we have many eattle.

KOTWI

Think of the fat bear's heart!

MABLO

I needn't think of those things. I want Sulva.

KOTWI

She'll be the proud girl, or she's not my daughter!

AMBURI

We'll leave him to the asking. But I doubt not she'll have him.

KOTWI

She'll be his clinging vine or I'm a liar.

AMBURI

I have some things to say to you.

KOTWI

Great Chief!

AMBURI

We'll go along the lake path.

(They go towards the left, Amburi leading.)

I hear your eattle have been stolen?

KOTWI

Ale! Most are gone! Now that my man is dead!

AMBURI

I know who stole them. He shall be killed and you shall have his herd to graze
with yours.

He was a fool to steal the eattle of the Chief's grandchildren.

KOTWI

The God is great. He giveth us full bellies!

((They go out by the left. Mablo makes some slight adjustments in his
costume, slicks his hair, etc., and strolls over to the fore-right of the scene.
Sulva runs in from the rear-right and, for a moment, fails to see him.))

SUIVA

Here I am, Mother! What made you call so loud?

(Silence. She turns and discovers Mablo.)

Oh!

MABLO

Good morning, Suiva!

SUIVA (dimpling)

Good morning, Mablo. I didn't know you were here!

MABLO

I came with Father.

SUIVA (encouragingly)

Yes?

MABLO

He's gone with your Mother to walk along the lake path.

SUIVA

What gets you up so early?

MABLO

I never miss the sun-prayer. Afterwards I sleep. Did you make this little house?
(He makes as if to stir it with his foot.)

SUIVA (swiftly)

Yes, but please don't touch it!

MABLO

You should have a fence around it to keep out the

SUIVA

We don't need a fence. We have no cattle.

MABLO

That's what your mother said. It's not so with us. We have more cattle than three
men can count.

SUIVA (balting him)

It must be wonderful to be so rich. Always to know that you can kill a beast and
have fresh meat.

MABLO

And one tenth part of all the game that's caught and all the fish.

SUIVA

And a big house!

MABLO

With two doors and a cooking spit that turns a whole great haunch of deer.

SUIVA

And haven't you a grizzly skin to lie on, with brown-grey hair that's deeper than
the bunch grass?

MABLO (nodding)

And I have anklets for the girl I marry

SUIVA

How many anklets have you?

MABLO

They would go all gold and silver to your knee and be some over for the other leg!

SUIVA

Imagine having anklets to your knees! She'll be a lucky girl, the one you marry!

MABLO

Aie! And pretty soon I'll choose her.

SUIVA

Does she know?

MABLO

Not yet.

SUIVA

When will you tell her?

MABLO

Do you think she'd like to know?

SUIVA

I'm sure she would.

MABLO

I'll tell her then. It's you!

I: **SUIVA**

I'm not joking. You're the girl. **MABLO**

Oh, Mablo! **SUIVA**

And you will love me? **MABLO**

Mablo Mablo You tell me this so quickly. You have not courted me. I would blush to tell you how soon that I will love you. **SUIVA**

MABLO (cooly)
I won't look at you when you say it.

SUIVA
I would feel shame to tell you quite so soon!
(She stoops quickly and picks up a leafy birch branch about six feet in length.)
But, I'll show you, Mablo. If you can catch me before I strip this branch, then I shall love you well and be your woman.

MABLO
That's a child's game! I'd rather have you tell me.

SUIVA
Two leaves are gone!

MABLO
Don't be too quick. I've had no breakfast yet!
(He runs at her and she pokes the end of the branch in his face. He stops abruptly and she strips off a few more leaves.)

SUIVA
You should run lightly for not having eaten.
(He makes a sudden dive for her; she eludes him lightly.)
If I were a fat cow, then you'd have caught me!
(She strips off a few more leaves.)

MABLO
If I don't catch you then maybe tomorrow you will tell me?

SUIVA
If you don't catch me I won't mate with you:

MABLO
You don't mean that!

SUIVA
As sure as these leaves fall!
(He sets about the pursuit in earnest but without success. They go in and out between the trees.)

MABLO
There are other girls!

SUIVA
Then why chase me and lose your breath?

MABLO
I want you. I will have you!

SUIVA
If you could run like Yellow Snake you'd catch me!
(He doubles at her round a tree.)
Oh, no! You don't! You are not cunning either! The leaves are falling fast! You must make haste! Be more like Yellow Snake; he'd catch me e'er the falling of one leaf!

MABLO
He has no cattle!

SUIVA
He'll make a song of how the groundhog chased the squirrel!

MABLO

He has no house!

SUIVA

He'll have one by the coming of the moon! And I'll go mate with him unless you catch me!

So catch me quick, my Mablo! Catch me! Catch me!

(She whips his legs. He yells and pursues. In his course he comes near to destroying the toy house.)

Be careful! That's the little house we made! And Yellow Snake will make a boy one like it! And I'll live there with him until I die!

(She has stripped all the leaves from the branch save a few at the top; these, she breaks off and throws in his face.)

And you can eat your anklets, you fat Mablo.

(She whips him soundly about the legs.)

Or hang them on the horns of an old cow!

(...whipping. Mablo squeals.)

For Yellow Snake's my mate, you sleepy Mablo!

So, don't come here again to make me laugh!

(She throws the whip at him and runs out to the right. He is in a state of smarting fury and impotent shame. First, he starts after her; then, hesitates, turns and catching sight of the toy house, runs at it and kicks it with all his might. His bare toes go through the edifice hut encounter the fire-stones. With a howl of pain he clutches the damaged foot and dances on the other. Waning Moon enters from the right; Mablo dances up to her.)

MABLO

What think you, Waning Moon! She will not have me! She beat me on the legs with a young birch tree! And she's run off to mate with Yellow Snake!

WANING MOON

She will not have you!

MABLO

And she will mate with him!

WANING MOON

The God has made her mad. She is no woman for the Great Chief's son. Go ask old Coyote's girl. She is more proper. And she has many cattle.

MABLO

I don't want his cattle or his daughter. I want Sulva.

WANING MOON

And she wants Yellow Snake. What can you do?

MABLO

He shall not have her!

WANING MOON

You must kill him then! But he is strong and cunning as the cougar! Ale! Stronger! For he stripped the yellow beast to get the skin he wears. And if you tackle him he'll kill you, Mablo.

MABLO

I didn't say I'd kill him.

WANING MOON

If you kill her the tribe will have your blood. You dare not do it!

MABLO

I don't want her dead. I want her living.

WANING MOON

Then you must poison him. I'll tell you how.

Dip a sharp cactus in a boiling of snakes' tongues and hide it in his bed. When the thorns prick him he will die and none shall know who killed him. If any man suspect, I'll say that the God did it because he would not fear him.

MABLO

It will be worse for him to live and not to have her.

WANING MOON

How can that be? If he's alive he'll have her.

MABLO

She fears the God. Make her his virgin priestess. And if he goes within the gate the tribe will kill him.

WANING MOON

How will that help y.u?

MABLO

The Chief's son goes within the gate.

WANING MOON

Sly fox! Give me ten cows and I will choose her!

MABLO

I will give you five.

WANING MOON

Ten!

MABLO

Seven!

WANING MOON

Remember how she whipped you!

MABLO

Eight. Eight, and no more!

WANING MOON

Listen, Mablo. When your father dies you'll be the Chief. And it is known that the Great Chief has power over the priestess. If you want her then, no man can stop you.

Give me ten cows!

MABLO

When will you choose her?

WANING MOON

Now. I hear her coming!

(in a whisper)

Promise me. Ten cows!

MABLO

Aie! You shall have them! But there's someone with her. Come this way! We'll watch them!

(They take shelter behind the rock to the right where they are visible to the audience but hidden from Sulva and Yellow Snake, who enter from the rear-right, carrying between them a potful of water.)

YELLOW SNAKE

I wish I'd seen you whip him with the birch tree.

SUIVA

He danced like a fat bear and squealed like a stuck rabbit!

(They put down the water pot. Yellow Snake discovers the remains of the toy house and indicates it to Sulva.)

YELLOW SNAKE

Look!

SUIVA

Our house!

YELLOW SNAKE

It's all in ruins!

SUIVA

He did it out of spite. It doesn't matter. It will be well with us in our own house.

(She takes his hand rather shyly.)

YELLOW SNAKE

(With a repetition of his previous wide gesture.)

Aie! And in my house it will be well with us. If I live like the robin in your nest, will you not go with me as white guilts go?

SUIVA (nodding)

To the high mountains where the great hears are.

YELLOW SNAKE

And to the Hidden Water?

SUIVA

When you have put the sun's fire on my feet.

YELLOW SNAKE

And you'll not harm the birds or rob their nests?

SUIVA

If I should hurt your dreams, then I'd hurt you.
If I should kill your dreams, then I'd kill you. And I love you.
(They draw closer together.)

YELLOW SNAKE

As I love you. As the white moon looks down on her own face

SUIVA

In the deep lake that's whiter than a young deer's teeth

YELLOW SNAKE

We shall swim there together and be strong.

SUIVA

And drink of it. So that we hate no man and none hates us.

YELLOW SNAKE

I'll start today to cut the thin birch saplings.

SUIVA

And when the young moon comes.

YELLOW SNAKE

And when it comes

(Waning Moon, directed by Mablo, has unplanned the silver moon from her vestment. Holding it behind her, she goes to meet the lovers who are about to embrace.)

WANING MOON

Sulva!

(They spring apart. She advances.)

SUIVA

Holy One! What brings you here!

WANING MOON

I have a gift for you.

SUIVA

A gift?

WANING MOON

Come nearer. Kneel. The God has spoken. The young moon is yours.

(With a deft movement she fixes the silver moon on Sulva's tunic, then turns swiftly to encounter Yellow Snake who has sprung forward. He pauses before her outstretched arms; Mablo grins from his hiding place and the curtain falls.)

End of Act One

ACT II.

The scene represents a rocky canyon and is divided from left to right by a deep chasm at the bottom of which is a swift stream. The chasm is spanned by a huge hideous stone image of the God of Gods. At the feet of the image, in an iron basket, is a fire of pine bark. Beside the fire are a pot of meat-scrap, a cup of wine, and a sacrificial knife. The altar is approached by three stone steps; below, the torrent crashes into the deep pool; beside it, at the right, is a pile of pine bark.

To the left, well forward, is a high, flat-topped rock which is reached by descending a natural crevice of the cliff behind it. To the right is a sheer cliff, pierced by a cavern with a doorlike opening. The background shows only the scarred face of a cliff tufted with ferns and stunted pine trees.

The right and left entrances are around the forward ends of the cliffs.

The time is sunset of the same day. As the curtain rises Waning Moon is discovered grilling a chop over the sacred fire; Mablo, resembling a fat poodle, sits on the altar step waiting for it to be done; Leri, a mad old beggar, dressed in disreputable rabbit-skins, is squatting on the ground to the right of the altar and peering into the deep pool.

MABLO

I'm hungry, Waning Moon.

WANING MOON

(exhibiting the chop)

It's almost done.

MABLO

Don't burn it.

WANING MOON

Huh! You'll get no meat from Suiva, red or black

MABLO

By and by I will.

WANING MOON

(indicating Leri)

If you go mad like Leri! She says she'll feed no other with the God's meat.

MABLO

Wait and see.

(He lowers his voice and glances toward the cavern.)

She can't hear us, can she?

WANING MOON

No. She's at the far end putting on her white dress

MABLO (grinning)

We didn't lose much time.

WANING MOON

Even her mother hasn't seen her since.

MABLO

Or Yellow Snake!

WANING MOON

He's standing by the gate.

MABLO

He'll come no further. This is her house and mine.

WANING MOON

Don't be too rash. Your father is a just man, Mah'.

MABLO

I said nothing.

WANING MOON

He'd strike you quickly as he would a stranger.

MABLO

But I said nothing. Isn't the meat done?

WANING MOON

(inspecting the chop)

Aie! It's as he likes it.

(She holds it under the nose of the image and intones in a whining voice.)

Great God, this is the five-pronged buck you sent; this is his body. Shiny Bird killed him with a flinty spear and sends you now his body to devour that you may send more deer to Shiny Bird.

He tears you, God; set more deer in his path.

(This formally over, she is about to hand the chop to Mablo when Lerii suddenly demands it.)

LERII

Meat!

WANING MOON

You've had a bone, mad Lerii.

MABLO (impatiently)

It's getting cold. Don't mind him.

(She hands Mablo the chop which he devours gluttonously.)

LERII

I want meat.

WANING MOON

Don't bother me. Go back and look for pictures.

LERII

I've watched the pool all day. I'm tired of watching. And now the shadow's on it.

WANING MOON

It was almost dark when you saw Pantherhead fall from the pointed rock.

MABLO

(with his mouth full)

And three days later he did fall.

LERII

Of course, he fell. I saw him. His face was torn and all his bones were broken.

MABLO

How did he come to fall?

LERII

He put his whole weight on a rotten tree. When you found him there was a dead branch in his hand.

MABLO

Who told you that?

LERII

I saw it in the pool.

MABLO (to Waning Moon)

There was a dead branch in his hand.

LERII

He held so tight, you had to twist it from his hand . . . like this!

(His pantomime suggests that certain leverage was necessary to wrench the stick from the dead man's grasp.)

MABLO (gaping)

That's so.

LERII

And then you gathered up his arrows and put them in your belt. The bow was broken but you took the bow-string.

MABLO (uncomfortably)

I gave them to his woman.

LERII

That may be. I only saw what happened at the rock

MABLO (to Waning Moon)

Do you think he does see pictures in the pool?

WANING MOON (non-committally)

Who knows? The God has touched him.

MABLO

He tried to show me one the other day. I couldn't see it.

LERII (turning)

It was there.

MABLO

I couldn't see it.

LERII (shrugging)

The belly has no eyes.

(Mablo is put out of countenance; Waning Moon, shocked at this affront to the Chief's son.)

WANING MOON (sharply)

Go to your place, mad Lerii!

(Lerii, his assurance completely shattered by her tone, sinks to the edge of the pool and sits down.)

MABLO

Where's the wine?

(Waning Moon passes him the wine cup.)

WANING MOON

Don't let her see you!

(He glances at the cavern, turns his back to it and drinks.)

MABLO (returning the cup)

It's a good wine. Who made it?

WANING MOON

Coyote's girl.

(She inspects the contents.)

You didn't leave much. No matter. I'll have to fill it for the rites.

MABLO

Does Sulva drink it at the rites?

WANING MOON

Not likely; at the rites. She wets the God's lips with it.

MABLO

Does the tribe know she'll take the vows tonight?

WANING MOON

Aie! They know! Already they show me less respect. As I came in more than a score were gathered at the gate and many did not greet me. But you will see them fawn to Sulva's hand! Until she gives her place up to another. It's the God's priestess, not the maid, they care for!

Filthy dogs!

MABLO

You've had a good life, Old Moon.

WANING MOON

Well, that's true. In all these years I've never once been hungry. And never once gone sober to my bed.

MABLO

You've got no cause to grumble.

(He gets up and hands her the bone.)

Here's the bone. The God might like it.

WANING MOON (taking it)

Aie! He's fond of bones.

(She lays it deftly among the flames of the brazier.)

The fire is low; give me some pine bark.

(Mablo gives her some bark which she lays on the fire.)
Now, take the cup. I'll fill it from the goatskin.

MABLO

Can't I stay?

WANING MOON

(coming down from the altar)

You'll come in with the others.

MABLO

I'd like to see her now.

WANING MOON

You'd better wait. You'll see her at the rites. And afterwards, as often as you like.

(They go towards the left entrance. Waning Moon turns and calls:)
Oh, Suiva!

SUIVA'S VOICE

Yes?

WANING MOON

Your mother's at the gate. I'll send her in.

(in a lower tone)

Come, Mablo!

(Mablo, who has been trying to peer into the cavern, shakes himself, and follows her out to the left. As they disappear, Suiva comes from the cavern. She wears a long white vestment and, at her breast, the silver moon. She goes to the altar, makes obeisance to the image, and then, after a hesitating pause, directs her attention to the flat-topped rock, the place which Yellow Snake professed to have visited. Leril, whom she had not seen, gets up and approaches her from behind. He watches her a moment before speaking.)

LERII

He isn't there.

SUIVA (startled)

Mad Leril! You frightened me! I . . . I thought I saw an eagle.

LERII

You saw no eagle for his wing is broken. He'll flap his wing no more in the sun's face.

(He indicates the image.)

He is the happy one. He has no wings.

SUIVA

Poor Leril!

LERII

He has a stone heart. He will live forever.

SUIVA

When you fell into the pool it was his hand that saved you.

LERII

(going to the edge of the pool)

When I fell in the pool I looked for him. I looked in the green cavern. I looked in the white tent. He wasn't there.

SUIVA

(joining him by the pool)

And while you looked he had you by the hair. He pulled you from the suckhole and threw you on the sandbar.

LERII

It was a log I held to.

SUIVA

Poor Leril!

LERII

(spitting in the pool)

Bah!

SUIVA

You mustn't do that!

LERII (suddenly)

Look!

What? SUIVA
LERII
 (pointing in the pool)
 A picture!
 Where? SUIVA
LERII
 By the black rock.
 No, no! Don't look!
 I see no picture. SUIVA
LERII
 Now, it's gone. SUIVA
 What was it, Lerii? LERII
 Nothing. SUIVA
 What? LERII
 The God is hungry. SUIVA
 I'll feed him by and by. LERII
 Aie! You'll feed him by and by. SUIVA (vaguely disturbed)
 What was the picture? LERII
 Never mind. You'll see.
 (A slight pause.)
 But you'd do better iff you ran away.
 (Kotwi enters from the left and overhears this speech.)
KOTWI
 What's that you're saying!
 (Suiva runs to her and takes her in her arms. Lerii gets up and ~~grins~~
 idiotically.)
SUIVA
 Mother! KOTWI (importantly)
 I've come to see my daughter, the new priestess. You go away, mad Lerii.
LERII
 Ask me the question first. KOTWI
 Not here, at the God's altar! LERII
 Then, I won't go. KOTWI
 If I ask it once, then will you go? LERII
 Ask and find out. SUIVA
 Yes, ask it, Mother. There's no harm. KOTWI
 What does the God know, Lerii? LERII
 The God knows nothing. Even less than you know.
 (Chuckling insanely, he goes out to the right.)
SUIVA
 Poor Lerii! KOTWI
 When he fell in the pool he saw the God. And those who see the God go surely mad.

He says he didn't see the God. SUIVA
That proves he's mad. And if he's mad he must have seen the God. KOTWI
Now, let me look at you! SUIVA
Do you like my new dress? KOTWI
Stand off a little.
(Sulva does so.)
Now, turn around.
(Sulva gyrates slowly.)
It's not quite even. Let me catch it up.
(She takes a fishbone from her own costume and adjusts the skirt to her
back, then stands off and inspects her again.) There!
It's beautiful. When the girls see you they'll turn inside out!
(She approaches her again.)
May I lay my hand on the young moon?

I'll ask the Holy One. SUIVA
Tut, child, I'm your own mother! KOTWI
(She fingers the silver crescent.)
Aie! It's cold and heavy. But they say to touch it cures the belly ache.

Have you the belly ache? SUIVA
KOTWI
No. And it's not much belly ache I'll have with no big girl to catch me grouse
and rabbits.
Didn't Mablo want you for his woman?

Yes. SUIVA
KOTWI
And you wouldn't have him?
SUIVA
No.
KOTWI
Why not?
SUIVA
I couldn't Mother. I love Yellow Snake.
KOTWI
That's a poor reason to refuse the Great Chief's son.
SUIVA
Have you seen Yellow Snake since I came here?
KOTWI
He's standing by the gate with his long bow and arrows. All the old women are
laughing at him. They bid him sling you out of the God's temple. They call him lazy
leached.

What does he say to them. SUIVA
KOTWI
He says no word.
SUIVA
Why is he armed?
KOTWI (shrugging)
To shoot the sun, maybe.
SUIVA
And he say that?
KOTWI
I said it.
SUIVA
So did he. He said he'd shoot the sun and catch a gourd of blood in his two hands
and bring it down to me and bathe my feet.

KOTWI

He is a worthless singer of mad songs.

SUIVA

In all the mountains of the world there's no man like him.

KOTWI

It's a good thing, my girl, that the God chose you. But for my sake I wish you'd married Mablo. If you'd said "yes" to him Amburl would have got me back my cattle. And now he will not.

How am I to live?

SUIVA

The God will pity you. You'll find a fat deer with a broken leg

KOTWI (dryly)

Ale! Maybe.

SUIVA

I wonder why he chose me.

KOTWI

So do I. Old Wanling Moon's a sly one. You don't know where you're at with that old greybird.

SUIVA

Mother!

KOTWI

You've been a good girl, though. I'll say that for you.

SUIVA

When I was no higher than your knee, you taught me fear of him. And every day I've said my prayers at sunrise and at sunset. All my life I've feared him. I think that's why he chose me.

KOTWI

Partly for that, and partly too because we lost our cattle. He knows we're poor and that I'm old. Maybe he'll whisper in your ear to feed your poor old mother twice a day.

SUIVA

If he does, I'll run and tell you!

KOTWI

Ale! And you'd best run fast. Or maybe I'll be dead of hunger before you get there (whiningly)

You won't forget your poor old mother, Suiva?

SUIVA

Of course not, Mother.

KOTWI

There's my own Suiva! I knew that's what you'd say. Where do they keep the meat?

SUIVA (distastefully)

I don't know, Mother.

KOTWI

No matter! No matter! We'll find out by and by! It's a fine thing to be the God's own daughter. A virgin priestess has great power for good. Pray him to slay our enemies and make their women barren.

SUIVA

Yes.

KOTWI

And when a deer is killed or a black bear, or ducks or turtles, remember that the God must have his share. If any man retain the whole of any bird or beast, the tribe will die of scurvy. Tell them that!

SUIVA

I'll tell them.

And I'll pray that Yellow Snake may learn to fear the God so that he'll live to be your age and mine together.

Mother!

KOTWI

Yes?

SUIVA

You'll see him as you go out by the gate.

Aie! KOTWI

Go up to him and whisper in his ear. SUIVA

I will not. I have no word to say to that young man. KOTWI

Give him a message from me. SUIVA

What is it? KOTWI

Tell him that I love him; that I'll love him all my life. But that he must go away and never try to see me any more. SUIVA

I'll tell h'im the last part! KOTWI

No, tell him all! If you do that for me, there's nothing I won't do for you. SUIVA

Well, I see no harm in it. And you'll be good to me. I know you will. KOTWI

I'll tell him, Sulva.
(Waning Moon enters from the left, carrying a jug of oil and a cup of wine.)

SUIVA (whispering)
Tell him now, Mother. Now, before the rites begin.
(Sulva goes to the altar, and kneels on the stone step, facing the image. Kotwi meets Waning Moon by the left entrance.)

Old Moon! KOTWI

Yes? WANING MOON

(Kotwi draws her aside to the left)

What made you choose her? KOTWI

Have you forgotten the five cows you promised? WANING MOON

So? It was my cows that did it. I said three, not five. KOTWI

It was five you said. If you go back on it I'll send her home. WANING MOON

(indicates the God)
She's not his daughter yet.

All right! All right! I only hope I get the worth of them. KOTWI

That's your look out. Where are you going? WANING MOON

Only to the gate. KOTWI

Come when you hear the goat drums. And tell the old women not to talk so much. WANING MOON
The God dislikes their chatter.

(Kotwi goes out to the left. Waning Moon watches her with amused triumph, then approaches Suiva.)

Young Moon, the time is near. WANING MOON

Yes, Holy One. SUIVA (rising)

All the old men and women are gathered at the gate. WANING MOON
Here, take the wine cup.
(Suiva takes it.)

Lay it at his feet.

(She does so.)

That's right. And here's the oil to light you on your way.

(She hands Suiva the jug of oil.)

Put it on this side of the fire, where I can reach it without crossing over.

(Suiva places it to the right of the fire basket.)

So. And now what else is there?

SUIVA

The twining of white blossoms.

WANING MOON

I put it by the pine bark.

(She goes to the right of the altar and picks up a chaplet of white blossoms and green leaves.)

When you have spoken the last words I lay this on your head. You wear it as you walk backwards to the cavern.

(She holds it up.)

It's not until this crown is on your head that you're the God's own daughter.

But when this touches you, your life is his.

SUIVA

Yes, Holy One.

WANING MOON

You'll tend his fire until you're old as I am. And if any man come near you, he'll be killed. If you seek out any man to love him, you'll be killed.

SUIVA

I'll seek no man and none shall come to me.

WANING MOON

(indicating the image)

Do you know his ways?

SUIVA

Only what Mother taught me.

WANING MOON

How did he make the hills?

SUIVA

By breathing on the clouds he made them hard. And with his right hand he set them on the earth.

WANING MOON

Where does he live?

SUIVA

He has two houses. One in the deep pool; the other in a land beyond the sea.

WANING MOON

We know this house. Tell me about the other.

SUIVA

The other house is a great Yellow Tent, higher than any mountain and ten times wider than the eye can see. Inside the tent are springs of water and sweet berry wine and herds of antelope and flocks of fat white ducks. Yes, and all other birds and beasts we hunt against our hunger. But there we do not hunt them. When we're hungry they come and fall upon our spears. And all the stones are hot with hidden fire so that to roast our meat we have but to lay it on the nearest stone. And when we're fed we dance in many circles, the Great Chiefs in the centre and then, the priestess and then, in wider circles, all who have feared the God and done his will.

WANING MOON

How do we get there?

SUIVA

When a man dies, his spirit perches like a bird on the fir tree above his grave. At the last moon the Great God gathers all these spirits in his hands and those who feared him not he crushes and they live no more. But those who feared him he gathers to his breast and takes with him to his great Yellow Tent beyond the sea.

WANING MOON

You know already some thing of his ways but you have much to learn. How does he make his will known to the tribe?

SUIVA

He speaks his wishes in the priestess' ear and she proclaims them to the people.

WANING MOON

And if the people disobey his will?

SUIVA

Then his great eyes grow red like burning logs. And all the tribe falls down before him and no man dare move until the fire has vanished from his eyes. And then they bring him gifts and do his bidding as the priestess tells, else he will strike them down as leaves in autumn.

WANING MOON

Do you believe all that?

SUIVA

I know it's true.

WANING MOON

And are you glad he chose you?

SUIVA

(after a slight pause)

I fear him and I'm glad to do his will.

WANING MOON

His priestess must not fear him overmuch.

SUIVA

Holy One!

WANING MOON

Only as a daughter fears her father. Not as the common people fear the God. If you fear him too much you cannot help him.

SUIVA

How can I help him?

WANING MOON

He's very old and sometimes he forgets the kind of meat or fish he likes the best. Then you must tell the people what you think he likes. And often when he's drunk and cannot speak you must speak for him as seems best to you. If we need rain, the tribe must bring him gifts; and they must bring more gifts till the rain comes. And when the rain does come they must bring still more gifts for that he heard their prayer and sent the rain. It's the same thing with floods or fire or cattle sickness. I'll tell you more of these things by and by. But now you must make ready for the rites. Your hair's too tightly bound.

SUIVA

I'll loosen it.

WANING MOON

Do you remember all the words to say?

SUIVA

I think so.

WANING MOON

At the last, when I ask you if you renounce all men to serve the God, what answer do you make?

SUIVA

(raising her right hand)

I renounce all men, all love, all hope of home and children. I shall serve him now, all days and nights, all summers and winters till I'm old as the Old Moon. I swear it by his hand.

WANING MOON

That's right. Now, come into the cavern and I'll unbraid your hair and sprinkle you with sweet oil.

SUIVA

Then may I pray the God to make me speak with a clear voice?

WANING MOON

Ale! You can pray until the people come.

(They go into the cavern. Yellow Snake is seen climbing down the rock-chimney to the left. The descent is slow and hazardous but finally he reaches the grass-tufted top of the flat rock. Here he stands for a moment peering downward, then descends the remaining ten feet to the level of the stage. He prowls about in search of Suiva, lingering for a moment by the cavern mouth. The voices of the two women are suddenly heard in conversation; he retreats swiftly to the proximity of the altar. The voices grow louder. He climbs the altar steps and takes refuge behind the image of the God. Suiva, with hair

unbound, comes slowly from the cavern, advances to the centre of the scene, pauses and gazes for a moment at the top of the flat rock, then proceeds to the altar and kneels on the first step.)

SUIVA

Great God whom I have feared, now make me strong; strong to endure thy will; strong to forget my lover.

YELLOW SNAKE (unseen)

The ferns grow tall and deep beyond the ranges. The grass is green and heavy with the rain. I'll make my love a tent of leaning silver with birches whiter than the white moon-stream. I'll make my love a bow that's straight and slender, with arrows plumed and fitted to her hand. I'll make my love a bed of sleeping cedar and lay a yellow fawnskin at her feet.

My love is like the lark that sings to waking, and like the thrush that sings the leaves to sleep. My love is all the sun time and the star time. My love is waking and my love is sleep.

(He discovers himself and comes down from the altar.)

SUIVA

Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE
(with hands extended)

I've come for you.

SUIVA

You mustn't!

YELLOW SNAKE

Suiva!

SUIVA

No. The God!

YELLOW SNAKE

But you're my mate.

SUIVA

I'm the God's daughter.

YELLOW SNAKE

That stone thing isn't God.

SUIVA (in terror)

Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE

How can that stone be God?

SUIVA

He'll strike you!

YELLOW SNAKE

Strike me? That!

I'll show you. Then, you'll come.

(He picks up a stick and mounts the altar.)

SUIVA

He'll make you mad!

YELLOW SNAKE
(menacing the image)

Show now if you are God and hold my hand!

SUIVA

He'll kill you!

(Yellow Snake strikes the image and throws away the stick.)

YELLOW SNAKE

I struck you, God. Now, strike me! Kill me, God!

SUIVA

Don't kill him, God! Don't kill him! Make him mad!

YELLOW SNAKE
(coming down from the altar)

Suiva!

SUIVA

Spare him as you spared Lerli! Make him mad!

YELLOW SNAKE

Would you lay madness on me?

SUIVA

He won't kill you.

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SUIVA
 He chose me. He will hear me.

YELLOW SNAKE
SUIVA
 He didn't choose. He bought you.

(LerII enters unnoticed from the left.)
YELLOW SNAKE
SUIVA
 Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE
 Your mother sold you to him for ten cows.

SUIVA (drawing away)
 Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE
 Ten cows for Shiny Bird!

SUIVA
 For Shiny Bird?

YELLOW SNAKE
 To keep old Waning Moon.

SUIVA
 He's made you mad!

LERII (unexpectedly)
 Shiny Bird is driving ten cows to his pasture.

SUIVA (startled)
 LerII!

YELLOW SNAKE
 There!

LERII
 But they're not Kotwi's cattle.

YELLOW SNAKE
 Whose?

LERII
 Mablo's!

YELLOW SNAKE
 Mablo's!

LERII
 Ale! But that won't help you!
 (He laughs and runs to the left.)

YELLOW SNAKE
 Mablo's!

SUIVA
 Yellow Snake, go now while the God lets you!

YELLOW SNAKE
 Mablo bought you. This is the trap he made. Now, will you come?

SUIVA
 I'll pray the God to take his madness from you.

YELLOW SNAKE
 Madness?

(Suddenly, the goat drums sound from the left.)
SUIVA
 Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE
 Come quickly!

SUIVA
 (freeing herself)
 No!

(She turns to him again and takes him in her arms.)
YELLOW SNAKE
 (She kisses him and springs away.)
 Now, go! They'll kill you!

YELLOW SNAKE
 Come!

SUIVA

They'll kill me if they find you here.
(The drums grow louder.)
Do you want them to kill me?

YELLOW SNAKE

Suiva!

SUIVA

Go!

(The drums grow louder.)

YELLOW SNAKE

I'll come tonight.

SUIVA

You mustn't.

YELLOW SNAKE

Yes.

SUIVA

I'll be his priestess!

YELLOW SNAKE

No. Don't take the vows. Pretend the God has struck you. Say no word. Face
down upon the altar.
Then, tonight, we'll go!

SUIVA

Yellow Snake!

YELLOW SNAKE

I'll watch you from the rock. Don't take the vows!

(He goes to the flat-topped rock, climbs it and lies on the top. Waning
Moon comes from the cavern.)

WANING MOON

Suiva, stand upon the altar. Face the God!

(Suiva does so. Waning Moon mounts the steps and stands to the right, the
brazier between them. She picks up the jug of oil and pours some on the fire,
lighting the wild place with a flaring brilliance. The procession enters from the
left. First, come Amburi and Mablo; then two old men beating drums; then
the worshippers, all old men and women dressed in colored blankets and tanned
skins of mountain animals. They arrange themselves in a deep semi-circle
around the altar, the Chief and Mablo standing apart at the extreme right.)

The drums cease and after a short pause Waning Moon makes one step
forward and raises her hand.)

WANING MOON

Great Chief and Great Chief's son, and you old men and women, bow your heads
(The worshippers do so with a single motion.)

Fear you the God?

THE WORSHIPPERS

We fear him.

WANING MOON

Has any man killed any beast today?

AN OLD MAN
(raising his head)

My son killed a black bear beyond the canyon.

WANING MOON

The God will take one shoulder for his part.

THE OLD MAN

My son shall bring it at tomorrow's dawn.

WANING MOON

And let him fear the God. The God is great.

THE WORSHIPPERS

He giveth us full bellies.

WANING MOON

The God is good to them that love his priestess.

THE WORSHIPPERS

We love you well.

WANING MOON

The God will hear her when she prays for you. And he will fill your bellies.

THE WORSHIPPERS

(raising their heads)

The God is great; he is the God of Gods.

WANING MOON

(addressing the Image)

Great God of Gods, I was your priestess when the world was young. And now the world is old, and I am old. I am the Waning Moon and I have spent my brightness in your service. Already you have crooked your finger at me and soon you'll take me to your Yellow Tent. There, you have made a place for me beside you and I shall sit all seasons at your feet.

And though I leave my place here to another, and go to live with Shiny Bird, the tribe must know that I'm no common person, that I am still your daughter. They must know that if they work me ill your hand will strike them. That you will shut them from your Yellow Tent.

(She turns to the worshippers.)

Hear you his will?

THE WORSHIPPERS

We hear it.

WANING MOON

Then, bide by it and he will prosper you.

AMBURI

Even as we fear him, we shall bide by it.

WANING MOON

He willed it that the Old Moon should have rest. He whispered in my ear that I should work no more. And then he broke the sky with a loud thunder, and rent the sky with a bright spear of fire. And the loud thunder said to me, "Choose Suiva for the Young Moon;" and the bright spear was pointed at her house.

And I made known to her the Great God's bidding, and she is come to take his holy vows.

(She turns to Suiva.)

Stand forth, Young Moon.

(Suiva turns, moves forward and faces the worshippers.)

(Waning Moon turns again to the worshippers.)

Here is a maiden with the Moon upon her. Before I lay the white flowers on her head, will any say that she's not fit to serve him?

(She pauses. There is no response.)

Will any say that she has lied or stolen?

(She pauses. There is no response.)

Will any say that she is not a virgin?

(She pauses. There is no response.)

Then, will you love her as you love the Old Moon?

THE WORSHIPPERS

Aie! We'll love her.

WANING MOON

And will you fear her as you feared the Old Moon?

THE WORSHIPPERS

Aie! We'll fear her as we feared the Old Moon.

WANING MOON

The God has heard you. He will not forget.

(She turns to Suiva.)

Young Moon, as the God spoke, the tribe has spoken. Do you wish them well?

SUIVA

I wish them well.

WANING MOON

In peace and war?

SUIVA

Their bellies shall be filled. The daggers of their enemies shall be broken.

WANING MOON

And when they die?

SUIVA

Those who have loved and feared me, they shall be taken to his Yellow Tent.

THE WORSHIPPERS

We love you and we fear you.

WANING MOON

(handing her the oil)

And will you guard his fire?

SUIVA

(pouring on oil)

As now I guard it.

(She hands back the jug of oil. Waning Moon offers her the plate of meat and will you feed him?)

(Suiva takes a scrap of meat and lays it on the fire.)

As now I feed him.

(Waning Moon lays down the meat and takes up the sacrificial knife which she hands to Suiva.)

And will you shear the foeman's hair to fill his nose with incense?

SUIVA

(taking the knife)

With this knife will I shear it.

(She hands back the knife. Waning Moon extends the cup of wine, which Suiva dips her fingers.)

WANING MOON

And will you give him the sweet wine to drink?

SUIVA

As now I give it.

(She turns to the image and wets its lips with her fingers. Waning Moon puts down the goblet and takes up the wreath of white flowers. Yellow Snake unable to control his agony, raises himself on his knees and peers downward at the altar. He is easily discerned by the audience, but is not, as yet, discovered by the worshippers. But Suiva sees him, as she turns and comes forward to the front of the altar.)

WANING MOON

(with the wreath)

These are the sacred flowers; the flowers of God. Before I lay them on your face make prayer.

(Suiva closes her eyes for a moment, then raises them to Yellow Snake who holds out his arms to her; then, looks at Waning Moon.)

WANING MOON

Do you renounce all men to serve the God?

SUIVA

(raising her right hand)

I renounce all men, all love, all hope of home and children. I shall serve him no all days and nights, all summers and all winters till I'm old as the Old Moon. I swear it by his hand.

(A sound escapes Yellow Snake. Mablo hears it, discovers him and points him out to Amburi. He is about to give the alarm when Amburi puts his hand over his mouth. He lowers his hand after a moment and seizes his arm. Two men never take their eyes off Yellow Snake until the ceremony concludes. None other has discovered him.)

Waning Moon lays the crown on Suiva's head; then, turns to the worshippers.)

WANING MOON

The crown is on her. The Young Moon is here!

(The drums sound. The worshippers with bent heads and arms extend go out backwards to the left.)

THE WORSHIPPERS

The Moon, the Moon is here! Young Moon we fear you!

(Suiva and Waning Moon come down from the altar and, facing the retiring worshippers, walk backwards to the cavern which they enter as the drum beats. The last of the worshippers, go out to the left. Mablo and Amburi remain as they were with eyes fixed on Yellow Snake who, thinking himself unobserved, begins to climb upward. They watch him until he is out of sight. Then Amburi releases Mablo's arm.)

AMBURI

Go and kill him.

MABLO

I?

AMBURI (disdainfully)

Tell the young men to kill him and bring his body here.

(Mablo hurries out to the left. Amburi folds his arms in an attitude of waiting and the curtain falls.)

End of Act Two.

ACT III.

Since the preceding act fifteen minutes have elapsed. The scene is vacant, slightly darker but otherwise unchanged. As the curtain rises, Suiva comes from the cavern, goes stealthily to the base of the flat rock, and calls softly.

SUIVA

Yellow Snake!

(a pause)

Yellow Snake! Go now, the way is clear!

(A further pause. She turns, goes to the altar, climbs the steps, and from that place looks across to the top of the rock and discovers that he is gone. She utters a perceptible sigh of relief; then, extends her arms as though he were still there; then lets them fall with a gesture of resignation.)

(Waning Moon comes from the cavern and approaches her. She is carrying a pot which contains a sulphurous paste.)

WANING MOON

The fire is low.

SUIVA

I'll tend it.

(She picks up the jug of oil.)

WANING MOON

Not oil! Not oil! That's only for the rites. Lay pine bark on it.

(Suiva replenishes the fire with pine bark.)

So. Don't smother it. It's good dry bark and full of green. The trouble is, it burns too quickly. When you want to sleep, you must use green wood.

Only be careful that it doesn't die.

(Waning Moon picks up the cup and drinks.)

SUIVA

I know the law. If the fire dies, the God will kill me. And the tribe will suffer famine for two seasons.

WANING MOON

There's nothing like old wine. What's that you said!

SUIVA

I said the God would kill me.

WANING MOON

If that were so, I'd be already dead.

SUIVA

You let it out!

WANING MOON (drinking again)

How can I wake to tend it when I'm drunk? No harm has come. And none will come unless the tribe find out.

For that I keep a firestick in the cavern.

SUIVA

Was there no famine?

WANING MOON

Famine? No! But the tribe might have killed me. You'd best be careful. Amburl fears the God as a blind man fears thunder. No matter what you tell him, he'll believe it. He's the best friend we have. He keeps the tribe in order. For fear of him they dare not slight the God. But he's a just man. It's all one to him, the priestess and the people. It's the God he fears.

So, if you speak from God to make a law, you'd better mind it. For if you break it and he catches you he'll kill you quickly as he would a squirrel.

SUIVA

Then it's the Chief who punishes the priestess?

WANING MOON (slightly tipsy)

The God, the chief, the priestess, how do I know? We're so mixed up together who can tell?

The wine is good. Will you not drink?

(She proffers the cup.)

I thought the wine was sacred.

SUIVA

No more than we are. Drink!

WANING MOON

I don't like it.

SUIVA

You'll learn to like it. And you'll tell the tribe to bring the God his goat-skin every month. And it must be old wine of such a color; old yellow wine that warms the head and belly. The God hates new wine as he does old meat!

WANING MOON

Does the God hate it or do you?

SUIVA

What he likes, I like; what I hate, he hates. We do not differ, the old God and He speaks, I answer; I speak, he answers. It's the same word always.

WANING MOON

When does he speak to you?

SUIVA

Most often when I've had three cups. It's then I hear him roaring in the wind. At least, I think I hear him. Who can tell?

WANING MOON

You told me that you heard him every day

SUIVA

Maybe I do.

WANING MOON

But do you?

SUIVA

I'd say so anyway, and so must you.

WANING MOON

Why must I if it isn't true?

SUIVA

The tribe expects the God to speak to you. If he does not, they'll think that you displease him. And if they think that you displease him, they'll find another priestess.

WANING MOON

Will they let me go?

SUIVA (eagerly)

Aie! They'll let you go! Into the pool to feed him! But if you listen you may hear his voice.

WANING MOON (sardonically)

I've always feared him. He should speak to me

SUIVA

Maybe he will. But if he doesn't, I'll be here. I'll tell you what to say.

WANING MOON

You're not the God.

SUIVA

My ways have been his ways for fifty years. I know his will, and you'd do well to listen when I speak.

WANING MOON

Then, tell me this:
If there should come a man, a young man, here, and take a stick and strike the Chief with it, what would he do?

SUIVA

The Chief would kill him for his blasphemy.

WANING MOON

Yes, but the God? What would the God do? Would he lay madness on him?

SUIVA

The priestess might pour poison in his cup.

WANING MOON (judicially)

But would the God himself lay madness on him?

SUIVA

Not without your help.

WANING MOON

But, if I prayed him?

SUIVA

Prayers are not enough.

WANING MOON

SUIVA

Has he no power to act without my help?

WANING MOON

You and he are one. You have your strength together.

SUIVA

But he has strength alone. I've seen his red eyes gleam

WANING MOON

I'll show you how they gleam. I came to show you that, but I forgot.

(She mounts the altar, dabs her fingers in the pot of paste, and bends down to Sulva.)

You see this paste, now watch what I shall do!

(She smears two thick circles about the eyes of the image.)

Lay it on thick, so that they shine the brighter!

SUIVA

But they don't shine!

(Waning Moon lays down the pot, picks up the cup of wine and dips her fingers in it.)

WANING MOON

Now, look!

(She exhibits her fingers which glow with a soft light.)

SUIVA (terrified)

His fire is on you!

WANING MOON

(laughing creakily)

Aie! His fire is on me! And there's another pot inside the cavern. If you want more I'll show you how to make it.

(She twiddles her fingers.)

Don't be afraid. It doesn't burn. I get it from the mountain.

SUIVA

What is it?

WANING MOON

I don't know. I saw it gleaming in the rain one night. And then I learnt to make strong by baking in an oven of hot stones. Some day I'll show you.

(Sulva, overcome with her disillusion, sinks down on the altar steps. Waning Moon continues.)

If any slight the God, then wet his eyes. And they'll fall down before him on their bellies. They'll fear his anger and they'll mend their ways. They'll bring him gifts as many as you tell them.

(She pauses and glances down at her.)

What's the matter? Are you sick?

SUIVA

I want to go away.

WANING MOON (not unkindly)

You can't go now.

SUIVA

I want my mother.

WANING MOON

She'll come to you tomorrow. She'll come every day. You'll feed her with the God's meat.

SUIVA

Was it for that she sold me?

WANING MOON

Sold you?

SUIVA

Yes.

WANING MOON

Who said your mother sold you?

(Sulva makes no answer.)

Your mother did not sell you. But if she had there'd be no harm in it. There's not a girl in all the tribe who doesn't envy you. You'll never come in hungry from the hunt and have no meat. Those days are gone.

SUIVA

My lover's gone.

WANING MOON

Aie! It's not sweet to live without a man. And none come here except the old men
Only the old men, and Mablo.

SUIVA

Mablo!

WANING MOON

Aie! And it was he that wanted you to mate. Don't be too sad. He comes here
when he likes. And he's a fine young man.

(She pats her consolingly on the shoulder and crosses to the cavern, which
she enters, carrying with her the pot of paste. There is rather a long interval
during which Suiva sits motionless, occupied with her thoughts.)

Mablo, carrying a bow and arrows, comes in quickly from the left. After
glancing about the place he discovers her and approaches. She rises to meet
him.)

MABLO

Have you seen my father?

SUIVA

No.

MABLO

I left him here. I thought he'd wait.

SUIVA

He may come back.

MABLO

Aie! He'll come back. I have some news for him! Some news he'll like to hear.
(Suiva tries to walk by him to the cavern.)

Where are you going?

SUIVA

What is that to you?

MABLO

I'll be your friend, Young Moon.

SUIVA

Then, let me pass.

MABLO

Wait till my father comes.

SUIVA

I want to go into the cavern.

MABLO

It isn't late.

SUIVA

I'm tired.

MABLO

Do you sleep lightly? Would you hear me if I called you?

SUIVA

This morning I whipped you. If you come tonight I'll use a knife.

MABLO

You're not so wild as that. And if you were I'd tame you.
(He thumps his chest.)

I'm a man.

(Amburi enters from the right. Suiva sees him.)

SUIVA

There's your father.

(She goes quickly into the cavern. Mablo joins his father. They meet
the left-front corner of the scene.)

AMBURI

Well?

MABLO

I killed him, Father!

AMBURI (incredulously)

You!

MABLO

The others would not for the songs he makes.

AMBURI

You say you killed him! You killed Yellow Snake!
(He lays his arm affectionately on Mablo's arm.)
My son! I'm proud of you! How did you kill him?

Alone I did it. MABLO
 How? AMBURI
 (Mablo contorts himself to indicate the small of his back.)
 I shot him here. MABLO
 Behind! AMBURI
 He never saw me. He never knew that I was there. MABLO
 You shot him in the back? AMBURI
 While he was climbing. He fell and is twice dead. Did I not well? MABLO
 Aie! You did well! You did so well the squaws shall spit on you. AMBURI
 Father! MABLO
 You, my son! AMBURI
 You said to kill him! MABLO
 Yes! But kill him so! An arrow in the back! Is that the Chief's way? AMBURI
 Can't you use the knife? MABLO
 But he'd have killed me with the knife! AMBURI
 What of it? MABLO
 What of it? AMBURI
 Yes. MABLO
 But . . . but, Father, I'd be dead! AMBURI
 Aie! You'd be dead. But dead as a 'ef dies; not living like the ground-hog AMBURI
 coward you are.
 You shall have women's clothes!
 No! No! MABLO (in agony)
 You shall have women's clothes and wear them for the passing of one moon. And AMBURI
 I shall tell the squaws to spit on you, and the children, they shall spit on you.
 I will not! MABLO
 What! AMBURI
 Yes! Yes! I'll wear them! MABLO
 Your shame has poisoned me. The man you killed broke the God's law but he was AMBURI
 not a coward. And for my son, I'd rather have him dead than you alive.
 They've brought his body to the gate. What shall I tell them? MABLO
 Tell them to make it ready for the rites. AMBURI
 (Mablo slinks out to the left. Amburi pauses for a moment in meditation,
 then turns to the cavern and calls:)
 Old Moon!
 (Waning Moon comes scurrying out.)

Great Chief!

WANING MOON

Is the God hungry, Old Moon?

AMBURI

The God is hungry. He said at sunrise that he wants fresh meat

WANING MOON

Is the time good for sacrifice?

AMBURI

The time is good. The sun was red tonight.

WANING MOON

The sky was red with streaks of yellow gold. What does that mean?

AMBURI

Great good will follow on the sacrifice. He'll send the buffalo to the near water holes.

WANING MOON (glibly)

What would he do for the great sacrifice?

AMBURI

The great sacrifice?

WANING MOON

You heard me.

AMBURI

Is it a man or woman?

WANING MOON

It's a man.

AMBURI

For a man-sacrifice, he'll send the caribou again across the ranges.

WANING MOON

Good! Have the young moon make ready for the rites

AMBURI

Tonight?

WANING MOON

His body's at the gate.

AMBURI

Is it a young man?

WANING MOON

A young man from the Blue Sea country, caught on our hunting grounds
You tell her that.

AMBURI

I'll tell her.
(She goes part way to the cavern.)

WANING MOON (turning)

Come here!
(She returns.)

AMBURI

You'll tell her, but it's not the truth.

WANING MOON

Great Chief!
(Amburi scrutinizes her intently.)

AMBURI

Was there a young man here today?

WANING MOON
(with genuine surprise)

A young man here!

AMBURI

Within the gate?

WANING MOON

How could there be?

AMBURI

There was a young man here!

WANING MOON

I didn't know it.

AMBURI

Your face is like your words. I hold you guiltless.

He must be killed. **WANING MOON**

He has been killed. **AMBURI**

Who is he? **WANING MOON**

Yellow Snake. **AMBURI**

The singer! **WANING MOON**

That is good! (a slight pause)

They say he loves the young moon. **AMBURI**

It may be. **WANING MOON**

Does she love him? **AMBURI**

I don't know. **WANING MOON**

Can you find out? **AMBURI**

She might not tell the truth. **WANING MOON**

It may be that she knew that he was here. She may have called him to her. If she is guilty and I let her live the God will take his favor from the tribe. **AMBURI**

That was the word he spoke. **WANING MOON**

We cannot change it. But it may be that she is innocent. She may not love him; she may not know that he was here. **AMBURI**

How can you tell? **WANING MOON**

The old men shall bring in the sacrifice. And I shall judge her as she pulls back the white cloth from his face. **AMBURI**

Aie! **WANING MOON** (admiringly)

Now, make her ready while I lead them in. **AMBURI**
(Amburi starts for the left exit, then pauses.)

If you should tell her to beware

May the God strike me! **WANING MOON**

With my hand! **AMBURI**

So be it. **WANING MOON**
(He goes out to the left. Waning Moon, who has bowed before him, straightens up, gasping. She has had a very real fright. There is a momentary pause during which she composes herself, then she goes toward the cavern, halts and calls.)

Young Moon! Come out here! **WANING MOON**
(Suiva, dressed as before, comes from the cavern.)

What is it? **SUIVA**

The great sacrifice. **WANING MOON**

A man! **SUIVA**

A hunter from the Blue Sea country. Our young men killed him where the hills divide. **WANING MOON**

SUIVA

When did they kill him?

WANING MOON

When the sun was high. Their arms are sore from carrying his body

SUIVA

I hadn't heard there was a hunter killed.

WANING MOON

They've just come in. The way was long and steep.

SUIVA

Is he a young man?

WANING MOON

I don't know.

SUIVA

Where have they laid his body?

WANING MOON

At the gate. The old men make it ready for the rites.

SUIVA

So soon?

WANING MOON

The beaters hold the death-drums in their hands. Come quickly and I'll show you what to do.

SUIVA

Must I?

WANING MOON

Who else?

SUIVA

You do it for tonight.

WANING MOON

I am no more his priestess.
 (They go to the altar. Waning Moon hands her the knife.)
 Here's the knife.
 (Suiva takes it.)
 Now, stand upon the altar!
 (Suiva mounts the altar.)
 Further back!
 (Suiva moves back a step. Waning Moon indicates the forward part of the altar.)
 They lay it here and when the drums have ceased you pour a flame of oil upon the fire. Now, do you know the rites?

SUIVA

Yes. We used to play them when I was a child. We took turns being priestesses.
 But, then, I never thought
 (The drums sound. The weird, monotonous muffled beating grows louder and louder as the worshippers approach.)
 They're coming!

WANING MOON

Speak up boldly!

SUIVA

Yes. I'll try.

WANING MOON

When you have cut the burning of his hair, and offered it, what then?

SUIVA

I draw the white cloth from his face and say, "This is my enemy. He shall feed the God."
 And then the old men throw him in the pool.

WANING MOON

You know the rites. I have no more to tell you
 (She goes to the right.)

SUIVA

Stay with me!

WANING MOON

I cannot

SUIVA

Why?

WANING MOON

Now you must stand alone.

(She takes her place at some distance to the right. There enter from the left in procession Amburi and Mablo, the beaters of the death-drums, eight old men carrying the body of Yellow Snake, and a large following of old men and women. The bearers lay the shrouded body on the altar and the procession arranges itself to left and right on the outskirts of an imaginary V of which the altar is the apex.

The drums cease and Suiva pours oil upon the fire, lighting the scene with a weird, flaring brilliance.)

SUIVA

Fear you the God?

WORSHIPPERS (with bent heads)

We fear him.

SUIVA

The God will hear me when I pray for you. And he will fill your bellies.

WORSHIPPERS (raising their heads)

The God is great. He is the God of Gods.

SUIVA

Where do the hunters go with swift brown feet?

AMBURI (standing forth)

Over all lands they go to serve the God.

SUIVA

Are the God's hunters home from the far lands?

AMBURI

From the far lands the hunters all are home.

SUIVA

Do their swift arrows cling to the light deer?

AMBURI

They cling not to the deer or bear or cougar.

SUIVA

Did their spent arrows fall upon the mountain?

AMBURI

Their arrows did not fall upon the mountain.

SUIVA

Where did their arrows fall?

AMBURI

They fell upon the white thing at your feet.

(Suiva pretends not to have seen it before.)

SUIVA

What is this white thing?

(A pause. No response.)

Is it the body of a fish or bird?

AMBURI

It did not live in water or in air.

SUIVA

Is this a body that stood straight and strong?

AMBURI

The brown snake crawls but this one did not crawl.

SUIVA

Is this a cunning body with bound hair?

AMBURI

We caught no wild sheep in the twisted thorns.

SUIVA

Is this a body with a voice to speak?

AMBURI

The hill dog barks but this one did not bark.

SUIVA
It is not fish or bird or beast. What is it?

AMBURI
Honour to God and favour to the tribe.

SUIVA
Speak, that the God may know! What is this white thing?

AMBURI
The white thing is a man.

SUIVA (greatly surprised)
A man!

AMBURI
He was our enemy that loved us not.

SUIVA
He is my enemy. The God has struck him.

AMBURI
He was our enemy that feared us not.

SUIVA
He is my enemy. The God shall eat him.

AMBURI
He was a fighter but he'll fight no more.

SUIVA
He was a hunter but he'll hunt no more.

AMBURI
He was a singer but he'll sing no more.

SUIVA
He was a lover but he'll love no more.

AMBURI
In all the moons his mate shall find him not.

SUIVA
Her feet are weary but she'll find him not.

AMBURI
Will the God breathe a burning of his hair?

SUIVA
The knife is sharp. The flame is hot and bright.

AMBURI
Then cut, and may the Great God prosper us!
(Suiva takes the sacrificial knife, kneels by the body, and without uncovering the face, seizes the hair with her left hand.)

SUIVA
(addressing the body)
My hand is in your hair! Why don't you strike me?

(She threatens it with the knife.)
Am I your mate that you fear not my hand?

(a pause)
Are you asleep?
(She shakes him.)

Wake up!
(a pause)

Or are you dead?
(A pause, then tauntingly:)
Strong man, you're dead! You're dead! You'll wake no more! My enemy is dead. He cannot harm me. My hand is in his hair. He cannot strike me. My enemy is dead. He'll wake no more.

(Again addressing the body.)
You were a fighter but you'll fight no more. You were a hunter but you'll hunt no more. You were a singer but you'll sing no more. You were a lover but you'll love no more. You were a dancer but you'll dance no more! You'll toss no more your hair to the sky!

(She severs a lock of hair and springs to her feet, brandishing it.)
See now, my enemy, how weak you are! And I, the daughter of the God, am strong.

And as I hold your cut hair in my hand, so does he hold your spirit.
And as I crush your cut hair in my hand, so shall he crush your spirit.
(She holds the severed lock above the fire and addressed the image.)
Great God! Make wide your nostrils! Breathe it deep!
(She scatters it on the fire.)
And have more hunger for the sacrifice!

THE WORSHIPPERS

The sacrifice!
(Suiwa returns to the body and prods it with her foot.)
Strong man, strong man, my foot is on your heart. The great God struck you and
you've come to nought. And now, the God will look upon your face, and shut your spirit
from his Yellow Tent.
(She kneels by the body.)

THE WORSHIPPERS

(at high tension)

The face! The face!

SUIVA

(withdrawing the cloth)

You are my enemy! You shall feel the God.
(She recognizes him. There is a long, motionless pause. She lays her hand
on his head and turns to the worshippers with childish bewilderment.)
This is no enemy. This is my beloved.
(They jeer at her. She looks at them incomprehendingly; then at the
image; then at Yellow Snake.)
What have they done to you?
(More jeers.)

This is my mate.

KOTWI (shrieking)

He's not your mate!

SUIVA

Mother!

(A short pause.)

He is my mate.

(She turns again to the body, and strokes the hair.)

Yellow Snake! Speak to me! I'm your mate!

AMBURI (harshly)

Since when has the God's priestess had a mate?

(Suiwa ponders his words for a moment, glances at her white vestment,
gets up and loosens it at the shoulders. It falls from her, leaving her clad in
the fawn-skin of Act One.)

SUIVA

(with childish relief)

Is that it!

(She kneels again by the body.)

Now, will you speak to me? I am no more his daughter. I'm your mate. I am your
Suiwa as I used to be. Now, if you ask me I will go with you.

Will you not ask me? Speak!

(A pause)

Or are you angry with me?

(pleadingly)

Yellow Snake! Look at me. Be not angry.

(with arms outstretched)

See! I am your mate again. And all is well.

(A pause)

Be no more angry. Speak! Tell me of Hidden Water! Take me there! Take me
to Hidden Water!

(A pause. She turns to the worshippers.)

He doesn't hear me.

((They jeer more loudly. She bends over him again and feels the coldness
of his face. She gets up and faces them with dawning realization.)

What have you done to him!

(More jeers, silenced by Amburi's voice.)

AMBURI

Why did he come here?

SUIVA

He came because he loves me and I love him.
What have you done to him?

AMBURI

Your lips have spoken.
(He turns to the bearers who are crouching by the altar.)
Make the sacrifice!

THE WORSHIPPERS

The sacrifice!
(The bearers spring forward and seize the body. Suiva tries vainly to withhold them.)

SUIVA

He's mine! You shall not!
(They topple the body from the altar into the pool. A great cry goes up. The bearers crouch back to their former places. Suiva bends over the pool and when the body strikes the water, some sixty feet below, she flings up her hands and turns shrieking on the worshippers.)

SUIVA

You! You! My people! You have killed my mate!

AMBURI

Old men, make ready!
(The old men by the altar draw their knives,)

SUIVA

Will you kill me too?

AMBURI

Kill her!
(The old men rush forward. Suiva stoops, picks up the silver moon and confronts them with it.)

SUIVA

Kill me!
(They waver and fall back.)
Cowards!

AMBURI

Kill her!
(The old men hesitate.)

SUIVA

Come!

OLD MEN (to Amburi)

We dare not.

SUIVA

Why?

(She indicates the image.)

The God won't hurt you.

(She picks up the wine cup.)

Look!

(She dashes the wine in his face.)

His name is fear!

(She drops the wine cup.)

Now, kill me!

THE WORSHIPPERS

(recoiling)

Profane!

SUIVA

This is not God. The God is dead. You killed him. He walked among you but you did not know him. He was God.

THE WORSHIPPERS

Profane! Profane!

SUIVA

He was the singer of the joy of life. His name was love. You killed him. He was God.

AMBURI

Kill her!

(The old men again rush forward. Suiva seizes the fire basket and drags it to the edge of the pool. The old men again draw back.)

THE WORSHIPPERS

(whimpering)

The fire!

SUIVA

(balancing it on the edge)

Now will you kill me?

THE WORSHIPPERS

No!

SUIVA

Amburi, will you spare me?

AMBURI

Yes.

SUIVA

(Towards! You are more dead than he is.

(She topples the fire basket into the pool.)

THE WORSHIPPERS

The fire! The fire is gone!

(Suiva bends over the pool. Her voice is low, sweet, caressing.)

SUIVA

My mate! My mate! My singer! My beloved!

You had no fear.

(She stands proudly erect.)

And now I have no fear.

(She steps from the altar into the void.)

THE WORSHIPPERS

(ignoring her completely)

The fire! Famine and death!

(The eyes of the image, smeared with sulphur and wet with wine have begun to glow. An old squaw first notices them.)

THE SQUAW (shrieking)

The eyes!

THE WORSHIPPERS

(in mortal terror)

The eyes! The eyes!

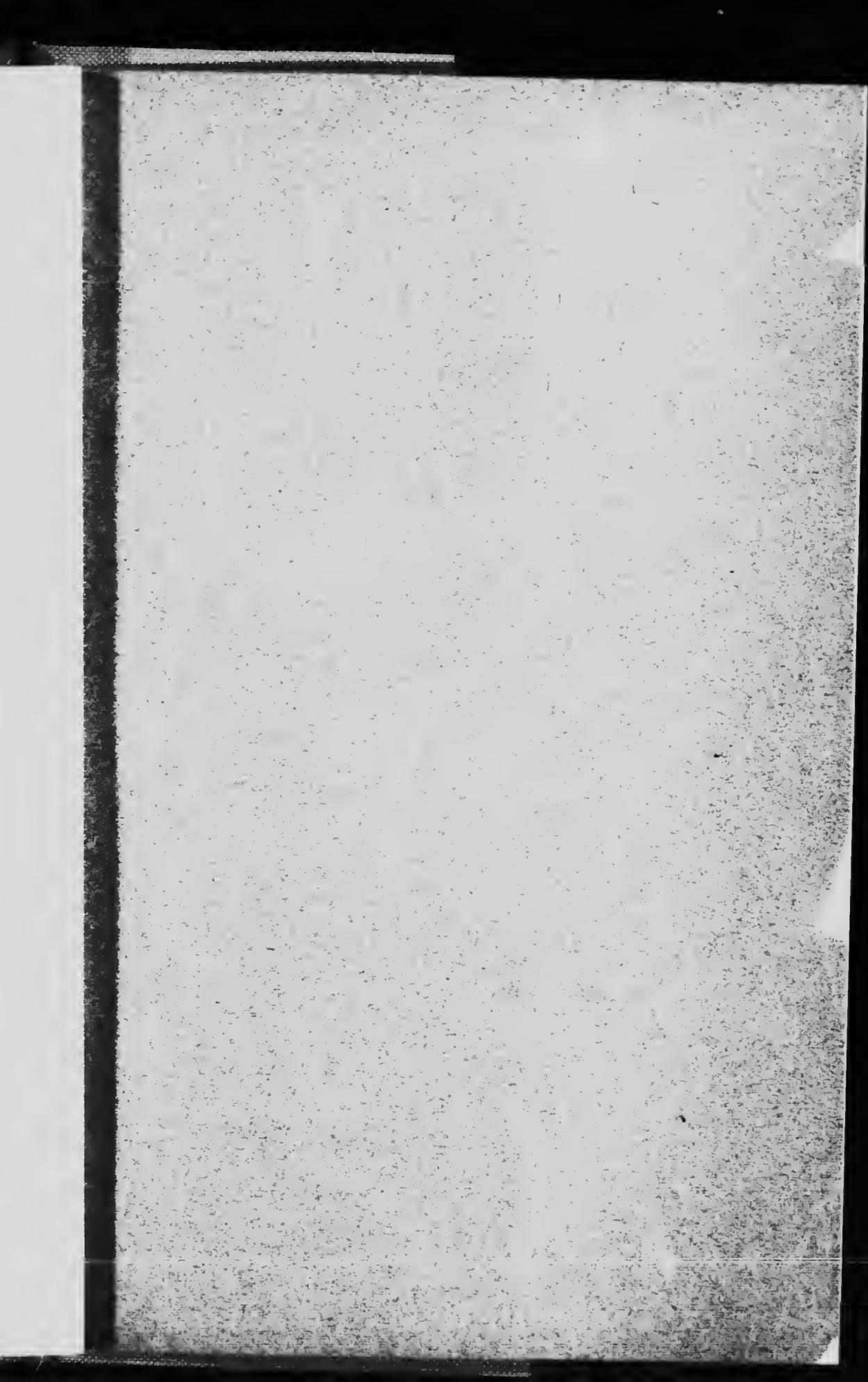
AMBURI

Fall down before him. Fear him. He is angry.

(As they prostrate themselves Mad Lerii emerges standing from the throng. He looks down at them, up at the image and laughs his insane laugh. Then, silence, a short pause and the curtain falls.)

THE END.





PENTICTON HERALD  PENTICTON, B. C.

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