

ix-Xul's Vision

In the early days of the creation Father Sun and Mother Moon held great feasts in their palace, so that the gods and goddesses would come to know each other's faces and ways. All of them came to the feasts—the children of Mother Moon and Father Sun, and all those who came from the world directions and the places of strength, and all those who rose from the stuff of the creation. They played ball in the ballcourts by the palace, and they danced, and they played music. They enjoyed juicy tamales and frothing cacao and sweet fruits while they spoke of our ancestors and the wickedness of ah-Puch.

At one of these feasts, Father Sun was watching one of the young goddesses. She was new in the garden of the gods, she had just come from the north and was not yet known to him. ix-Xul was her name, she was a day-bearer for one of the months. Sitting up tall and straight was her way, she never spoke quickly but always thought a little about what was said. And this was her face: it was smooth, and pretty, there was more than one young god who came to speak with her. She would not be unknown for long.

Father Sun was thinking about something he had heard, something his wife had said. In truth there was a burden on his heart. He set down his drinking mug and said to her,

"ix-Xul. I have heard that the future is known to you, you dream of what will come. If that is true, I have a question." He did not say this loudly, it was only the two of them talking, but when Father Sun spoke to anyone, many others stopped to listen.

ix-Xul looked upon Father Sun, she contemplated him for a few heartbeats and said, "I have learned some divining."



"Very well," said Father Sun. "You have heard of my brother, ah-Puch, and his attacks on my children in the world below. Tell me, will there be a day when he succeeds? Will he destroy the creation, or will he be defeated and made small?"

Now all the others seated on their mats became quiet. There was only sipping, only nibbling. This question concerned everyone. The color rose to ix-Xul's face.

"I have seen some things, in dreams."

"Give us the flavor, then."

So the goddess looked at her mat and considered what was to be said, and these were her words: "At the end of time all the lands of the world below are filled with your children. They are in the north, they have claimed the south, they are strong in the east and in the center. Only the west is not settled, only where your brother is strongest are there no people. But that must change. There are too many villages, and some people must go into the west. Eight thousand are the number of people who walk the great black road into the west. The caçique of those people is Kin K'akmo. The high priest of the walking people is Chac K'awil; he is your voice and carries your heat. Those people pass into the mountains, and at the end of the road their journey begins.

"Here is the name of the first place they come to, the valley likna. They lose their blankets there, they have to chase all over to catch their blowing things, and so they move on. Koot is the next valley they find, there are stone walls going up the sides of mountains, but no one has tended them for a long time. No one is there to greet the travellers, and they just leave that silent place. At a great rock called Ichpax the travellers stop to rest, but the spirits of the rock beat on their heads day and night until they leave. Then they come to Butzlum, where steam rises from the



ground, but the heat is too great, and no one can stay there. At Maxlum many things disappear, someone snatches away necklaces and earrings, and everyone flees. Below the huge stone called Tunai the people plant fields, but the maize is eaten by insects, there are too many bugs for people to live safely. Now the travellers come to Wihnal, where their bellies rumble all the time, and they must move on. Those are hard times for your children, they are tired and hungry, it is only the strength of Kin K'akmo and Chac K'awil that sustains them.

"Now they come to a great field with a single tree growing in it, that place is called Xinanche, where the thin branches lash at the people. That tree moves even when there is no wind, its branches raise welts and make the people afraid to stay. They go on to Tikinna, where their mouths glue shut for thirst and their feet kick up so much dust they cough all the time. Tikinna is that place. After that there is a mesa with many sinkholes, Celsonot is its name, but people get sick from frozen stomachs. The water there cannot be warmed even when boiled. In the forested valley called Cahel Pech there is good soil and many fruit trees but countless ticks; the people are nearly sucked dry. At Asluum there is no soil, only stony bumps, and the people move on. At the tall rock called Hopb'al no one can strike a spark. There is no fire allowed in that place. In the valley of K'ohan Ceh there are many deer, but they are all sickly and weak. Something makes bloody wounds on their bodies but does not kill them, and the walking people leave before that happens to them.

"They arrive at the ruins of a great city, that is K'obenpuch, where the men want to settle but the women do not. Many fights are had there, until the leaders make everyone leave. In the valley of Tuchnal great explosions of gas come from holes in the stones, it is a reeking place where no one could live. Now your children grow weary, Father Sun,



they stumble past the great waterfall at Aakanha, where strange voices cry out in the ears of sleepers and keep waking them up. No one can stand that place. They cannot stay either at Tsutzlum, eiber, where the sands are too soft for building. At Canwitz the great sky serpent, Ek Chicchan, slithers over the mountains and makes such thunder that the people scream and run away. And so at last they come to the valley T'abnal, where their sparks strike properly and their maize grows well."

Now ix-Xul took a drink, she emptied her cup and set it down.

"That is all very interesting," said Father Sun. "But does my brother destroy them?"

"This is a four-layered vision," said ix-Xul. "I cannot go directly to its end."

"Well," said Mother Moon, "What happens to them at T'abnal? It sounds like a good place."

Father Sun looks at his wife; it was clear he just wants his question answered, but it seems he is alone in this desire. He says nothing, and ix-Xul continues.

"A man comes to T'abnal, he is tall and strong. He comes from the west to speak with the lord Kin K'akmo and the high priest Chac K'awil.

"I am the descendent of the first people who came here,' he said to those lords. 'You have seen the walls my people made, the old city we built.'

"What is your name?' says the cacique Kin K'akmo.

"I no longer remember,' says the man from the west. 'My people have been gone a long time, I almost forgot how to speak. You are welcome to these lands, no one claims them.'

"Well, you can join us, if you are willing to work, to farm,' says cacique Kin K'akmo.



"Oh, I have my own milpa, far away. I cannot abandon my lands,' says the nameless man. 'My ancestors are buried there.' He lowers his head and leaves the lords, he returns farther west.

"In truth everything he says is lies. He is a servant of ah-Puch who has come to spy upon your children, Father Sun. He has no lands in the west, his true home is a cave with many other people who chose ah-Puch's path. He came to the western city to learn who the powerful men were, it was their strength he was observing. Then he went to tell his lords what he had seen.

"And here is the building of the great western city: the houses are raised up first, on their platforms. Each family builds their house, each lineage makes its compound. The jungle fields are burned clear, the mountainsides are built up with walls to make growing places. Then come the granaries for maize, and then the palaces and the pyramid-mountains and the temples with their smoking incensarios. Four hundred temples are built, our names are chanted day and night by the priests. Your children labor very hard, and their fields fill with plump maize, and they are content in their new city. All this time the children of ah-Puch are watching and laughing, they are dancing in their cave, thinking of the wickedness that is to come.

"And this is the beginning of suffering for your children: thieves take their maize. Many ears are taken, many baskets of seeds are taken, right from the fields. Jade is stolen from the houses, thirteen-generation jades disappear. Wedding gifts are stolen. Cacao pods are stolen. This is the time of false accusations, of beaten wives. Many eyes are blackened, people are unjustly accused and wrongly hanged. The lords of the city are stung with evil dreams. They cannot restore order. Their heads hurt all the time. It is ah-Puch's sorcerors who do this. It is the power of the



night."

Now ix-Xul was interrupted by ah-Itzamna, that wise old god. "And what are we doing, all this time? Are we not helping drive away those evil ones from the west?"

ix-Xul was careful with her words; she did not know these older gods, and she did not want to say anything foolish. "We are old," she said. "The world at the end of time is filled with people raising their voices to us, and there is only one city in the west. We lend them some strength, but the rest of the burden falls on them. It is their warriors who must hunt the thieves."

"Well, what is their fate?" said Father Sun.

"This is what happens in the west," said ix-Xul. "In this time of pain the deceiver returns to their city, but he does not look the same. He is dressed in the skins of coh the puma; he bears the staff of a priest. He has changed his face and his ways, but it is the same wicked servant who came the first time. He is received as a wandering wise man, he claims to be a speaker of prophecy.

"I have cast light-stones and devoured the skins of toads,' says this deceiver to Kin K'akmo and Chac K'awil. 'I have prayed for many days and fed a thousand balls of incense to the sacred flames. It grieves my heart to say what has been shown to me in my visions, but those above force me to come here and speak.'

"Bring forth your words,' says cacique Kin K'akmo. 'We have strength to hear them.'

The false priest bows his head down low and pretends humility.

"There are corruptions in your midst,' says the liar. 'There are those who pretend to give faith to the people, but they are secretly in the service of the night. Ask yourself, cacique Kin K'akmo, why the gods have not



heard your prayers. Ask yourself why you are left to suffer the torments of ah-Puch's servants, when you are never forgetful in your sacrifices.'

"The high priest Chac K'awil feels a shadow coming, but he cannot see it clearly. He is exhausted by the evil dreams ah-Puch's sorcerors send against him. 'The gods and goddesses do hear our prayers,' he says. 'If they were not giving us strength, ah-Puch's servants would have defeated us already. Who are you, what are these words?'

"This deceiver laughs, he pretends to be amazed.

"'It is said that the skin of balam can show a sign of the truth,' he says. 'In the beginning all jaguars were black, like their father ah-Puch. It was the touch of other gods that added more colors. But the skin of balam is always black near his father's children.' The liar sets down his carrying net and pulls forth a skin. It is a false skin, not a jaguar at all but some creature of ah-Puch's that looks like a jaguar, and when the deceiver draws it onto his own back, the skin keeps its three colors.

"'Here it is,' says the deceiver to the high priest. Chac K'awil takes the false fur, he is not afraid. He places it onto his back, and immediately the yellow and the white disappear. The spots grow to cover everything. The high priest cannot speak, he is so angered at this deception.

"'Now you see how it is, cacique Kin K'akmo,' says the liar.

"But the cacique of the western people is no fool. He knows ah-Puch's servants have many tricks. 'I have never heard of balam's coat acting in this way,' he says. 'And your face is not known to us. Why should we trust this strange magic you bring into our city?'

"The deceiver lowers his face, the failure of his trick is a blow to him, even his bent tongue is stilled. Then his lord places seeds into his head, they are seeds of evil ideas, and immediately he says, 'I am only a servant, speaking of things I have seen in dreams. If this pelt is ugly to you, cast



it into the fire. There is an older way to test men. There is the language of Tula, the stutterings of the ancient ones. Perhaps this is more acceptable, to demonstrate the truth of my words?'

"Yes,' says the high priest to caçique Kin K'akmo. He is hot to prove himself against this false prophet. 'Let him choose any ten priests in this city, and have them prepare their riddles for tomorrow. I will answer them all, you will see.'

"Very well,' says Kin K'akmo. 'If you answer the riddles falsely, you must die by decapitation. If your answers are correct, it is this prophet who is false, and it is he who shall die.'

"As it must be,' says the deceiver. He goes out of the mat house and selects ten priests from the city, it does not matter which ones. He will cheat anyway, so he chooses honest men because it is for nothing. In the night he kills one of the priests and skins him, and in the morning he comes to the mat house wearing the skin of the dead man. No one knows it is the deceiver, his disguise is complete. In the mat house he says,

"Our guest is sickly today and resting. He said that he trusts our caçique to ensure a proper contest, he will not argue the results.'

"Ask your riddles, then," says Kin K'akmo.

"The high priest Chac K'awil stands in the center of the mat house, ten priests are seated on mats in a half-circle around him. The deceiver is the ninth priest, and so he is silent while the others take their turns.

"The first priest seems nervous and says his riddle very quickly:

'Bring me three handfuls of pebbles,
plucked from the ground.
I desire to eat them, to drink them,
in the form of a cloud.'

"Chac K'awil says, 'You desire ground-up maize kernals and a little



water, whipped into frothing atole,' and the first priest is satisfied.

"The second priest also speaks quickly. He does not look at the high priest when he says:

'Give me twenty slashes across my forehead,
It is the breath on the eyes of infants,
that shall blow my hair back.'

"The high priest says, 'Twenty red feathers from the scarlet macaw would make a fine headdress, indeed.' That is the correct answer and the end of this riddle.

"The third priest makes an ugly grin, truly he loves difficult riddles:

'I crave fifty babies tightly curled,
fresh from the wombs of their mothers.
Be sure all will fit in your two cupped hands.'

"Chac K'awil says, 'Fifty tiny white flowers from the world tree are what you name.' And so the third priest is defeated.

"The fourth priest is a friend to Chac K'awil, but he pretends to not know him when he says:

'It is the placenta of the sky I desire.
Don't forget its cord!'

"It is a lump of sap from the copal tree you wish for, with a hanging-cord. You will burn it as incense.' Those are the words of high priest Chac K'awil, and the riddle is answered.

"The fifth priest spits out his words, he is hard to understand. It is not clear why he is mumbly-mouthed:

'Bust out the old man's teeth and bring them to me.
Don't neglect the tooth worm burrowing through them,
bring them all together.'

"The high priest smiles. 'Jade beads are what you desire, and a string



to thread them on.' The fifth priest nods, and the riddle game goes on.

"The sixth priest raises his arm and says in a loud voice:

'Bring me the sun blazing!
Bring me the touch of the moon!
Bring me droplets of the night,
for my ankles are cold.'

"High priest Chac K'awil makes a sound, it is 'tsk, tsk,' and he shakes his head. 'And just yesterday I held the pelt of a jaguar, from which to make high-backed sandals for you,' he says, and the riddle is finished.

"Here is priest seven, he knows he is not clever enough to trap the high priest, but he says his old riddle anyway:

'Go and get me your priestly shawl,
that I may sniff its odor
alongside my own wide-spread shawl,
and breathe in the scent at the center of the sky.'

" 'I have never been asked for my divining cloth in such a way,' says the high priest. 'You want to smell it and be certain I have been dutiful in burning incense.' And the seventh priest is defeated.

"The eighth priest also is a friend of the high priest's, here is his riddle:

'It is the breath of the swamp I desire,
stuffed with my head, under my head,
wrapped with the touch of my wife's spider-hand.'

"It is a pillow of your wife's weaving you ask for, stuffed with hanging tree-moss and your own hair.' So the riddle game leaves the eighth priest and goes to the ninth, who in truth is ah-Puch's servant, the deceiver.

'Bring me the head of your son.
Strangle him and cut off his head
that I may laugh at his tongue sticking out.'



"There is no riddle here, it is only an ugly command that is given. The high priest stares hard at the ninth priest, but he cannot see the deceiver in the dead man's skin. ah-Puch has clouded his vision, and the high priest can only admit that he cannot answer the riddle.

"The caçique is very unhappy, the priests are miserable as well, but there is nothing they can do. The caçique has already spoken on this matter, he has been heard by many people. There remains only the destruction, and it is swift. There is a warrior whose duty is to decapitate sacrifices, and this man does the cutting of high priest Chac K'awil's head. So your voice in the west is silenced, Father Sun. In this way your brother moves against you."

ix-Xul had to rest for a moment, she had to have a little honey-water for her voice.

"And all of this you have seen?" said ah-Itzamna. "In dreams this has appeared to you?"

"In dreams, and in the smoke of burning mushrooms," said ix-Xul. "I can show you how this is done."

"You were speaking of Puch," said Father Sun.

"It is the death of the high priest Chac K'awil that opens the way for your brother to make himself known among your children," said ix-Xul.

"This is what I have come to see, Kinich Ahaw: with Chac K'awil killed, the deceiver leaves the mat house. He goes back to his master, who will suckle him on blood for his reward.

"Now comes the death of the western city, it takes three days and three nights only for your brother's servants to destroy it. There is no high priest to lead the other priests. There is no strongest voice to organize the others. The sorcerors of the night crush the heads of the people with evil dreams. Thieves steal incense and family relics from the shrines, so



that the hearts of the people are severed. ah-Puch's children attack the wood gatherers and herbalists in the forest, no one is safe. Kan koch stings the priests, fer-de-lances come down from the ceiling thatch and up from the floors. The spirits of disease bring burning fever to the little ones. It is the time of weeping, the time of cowering.

"On the third day the lord Kin K'akmo is killed by those nobles who have chosen your brother's path. ah-Puch promises them great power if they overthrow your strong caçique. He is felled by a club, his head is broken open. And the murderers become the ruling lords, and our temples are torn down, and new temples are raised to your brother.

"Here is the beginning of screaming sacrifice, of people dragged to the altars and cut apart. Now begins the days of burning coals dumped onto bellies, and strangulation. All those who serve us are slashed, their lives end on the altar. The stairs of ah-Puch's temples are washed in blood, painted in blood. His temples cannot be seen for the clouds of flies that surround them. Darkness comes to the western city, and there is never again light in that place."

"And are we too old to stop this destruction?" said Mother Moon.

"There is suffering everywhere in those last days," said ix-Xul. "The cries of the western people are heard too late. There may be others who know what happens in that place after the darkness comes, but I do not."

Father Sun was greatly irritated. He had listened to many words but had not gained what he wanted. "How many layers of your four-layered story is that?" were his words to ix-Xul.

The young goddess looked at the floor with her face on fire, the heat rose to her cheeks and forehead. "All these things I have spoken of have been seen very clearly," said ix-Xul. "They were my own dreams, my



own visions. Not so long ago I performed a serpent ceremony, to gain more wisdom. It was the blooded smoke-serpent I summoned, in the north. It came from a red-jeweled cloud and brought with it glimpses of the last days of your creation."

"Why would you ask for that knowledge?" were the sharp words of ah-Itzamna.

"I wanted to know how this place would end, before I left the north to come here," she said.

Maybe it was respect Lord Medicine felt, for he let her go. He sat back, and ix-Xul said,

"The people of Xibalba come forth from the caves, I see their shadows under the moon. There are murderers, liars, men who marry their own sisters. There are women who copulate with animals, it is true. They bring out their deer and tapirs, they hold their dogs too close. There are robbers with long clubs of hard wood. There are spirits of darkness, spirits of swamps, spirits of forgotten shrines and places of wrongful death. Four thousand mud men come out of the cenotes, their steps make the earth shake. There are twenty thousand stick people from the second creation, they are stupid and set themselves on fire. And at last come the lords of the night, the nine walk in all the corners of the west, nothing will escape their darts and poisons.

"This is the end of the west, of all the villages and towns that grew up there after the making of the western city: the people are buried in mud, burned by fire, stuck with darts. There comes the seizure-touch of spirits. There comes sudden death. The acantuns are smashed, the family shrines are thrown over. Mud men smother the warriors and the lords. Stick men set the houses on fire, they burn the priests. All the villages are destroyed. The west is made small.



"In the north, in the south, in the center, in the east, the priests know what has happened, from their dreams. They burn great mounds of incense, their sweet smoke rises to our garden. Forty thousand herbs are picked and dried and powdered. The priests practice their dancing. The warriors take up their darts. Then ah-Puch sends many liars to trouble your children. The wise men are persuaded that ah-Puch will be content with the west; no one else will be attacked. The warriors are persuaded to lower their spears, to lower their dart throwers. Then comes the murders of the powerful men. Many lords are assassinated, and their killers take their mats.

"And this is the fall of the north: the strong trample the weak, everyone is pounded down. All the lords are replaced by your brother's servants. They call the priests traitors, they call the warriors traitors. There are many hangings, many decapitations. The killers on the mats and the thrones only laugh to see so much destruction. Then the lords bring false testimony against each other. The killers are killed; it is the time of three-day rulers, the time of grasping men. Then the burning men of the second creation come. The four hundred cities of the north burn. The three-day rulers are all made slaves to fire. The lords of the night come to the north, in the grey time between darkness and dawn. Five days they are there, nine days and the north is gone."

"I cannot listen to this," said ah-Sek. The lord of the hot days walked out of the feasting hall of the gods, he did not stay to hear of more ruin. In truth many of the gods and goddesses were shocked to hear of the destruction of the people.

"This is a hard vision," said Father Sun to ix-Xul. "But I must know its end. I must know of my brother's strength, in the last days. What does he do after the north is his?"



"It is the south that is next, Father Sun. The center is ignored, for now. And this is the fate of the south: your children die gurgling. It is disease that your brother brings to those strong people. Running sores and streaming mucus. Worms in the bowels, worms in the brain. The southern people suffer watery lungs. Flailing seizures take them. The plazas fill with feces, they fill with pus. The cries of your children rise up, they reach this garden and our ears.

"Now comes a hail of darts from the sun, a thousand trails of fire in the sky. ah-Puch's disease-spirits are charred. The south is covered with the black smoke of their burning. No one can see what is happening. There is smoke, there is thunder. Forty thousand wisps come from the burnt spirits. Then the lords of the night arrive in the south, they walk under the sun. They fear nothing. Three days they are in the south, five days, nine. The south is ground down. There is the stink of the dead, rotting. Four hundred yellow cities are toppled, there is no one in those places any more. Only three white temples remain, as in the beginning.

"ah-Puch's children do not stop to take jades or idols or jewelry. They do not stop to admire themselves in obsidian mirrors. In ten thousand canoes they row through the southern swamps. They are guided by their father in the night, there are no torches to see by. It is the center that they want next, they wish to devour the four thousand cities that your children built in the forested hills.

"The people of the center know what is coming. They feel despair, they cannot fight. It is carnal sin that they take for forgetfulness, they throw away their final days in the creation. It is the time of lust, the time of licentiousness. The wise ones slobber at the mouth, their wives flee in terror from them. 'It is useless to fight,' are the words of the lords. 'We will end our days this way, instead.' Now their hands are on the young



women. Now they are after their own daughters, their own sons. There go the judges, taking what they want. There are the sayers of prophecy, pleasing themselves in the temples. No one thinks to pray. The hearts of the people burst from fear, burst from lasciviousness. The warriors wink at each other, they give spittle from the corners of their mouths. Now the lords slather and twist their necks to look up skirts. They lay on the ground like drunks, they amuse themselves in this way. If there are a few pious people who call upon us, their mouths are broken. They are beaten down and imprisoned. They are hanged for sport.

"When the lords of the night come to the center, they are greeted with a great feast, a celebration of the end. Those people have heaped the tables with poisoned food, poisoned drink. And this is the end of the center: the people of four thousand cities eat their own poison. The lords of the cities drink deeply, the priests devour meat full of killing herbs. The cacao froths with murderous juice. The people die on the tables, they die under the tables. Even the children destroy themselves with tainted fruits and honey bread. And the mud men come among them and smash the living and the dead. And the last of the stick men set the cities on fire. And the murderers from the north and the south come into the center and kill many people with knives, with garrotes.

"In the great green city of the center, the lords of the night drink the poison. They eat the poison and spit it at each other for amusement. No one raises a spear against them. No darts are launched. The devout people flee to the east, they are gone. Everyone else is killed, they all die. The lords of the night are in the center for nine days, and nine days more. All your wise men are dead. All the priests are crushed. Now the lords of the night have dominion over the center. They shatter the temples and the shrines. Our stone faces are broken. All the incensarios are



pulverized under the feet of ah-Puch's children, and the center is empty."

Now ix-Xul had to drink; she had been speaking for a long time. Someone filled her cup with tree-fresh cacao, and she drank it all. Every sip was taken. There were no questions from the other gods and goddesses. ix-Xul's words frightened them into silence.

"And the east?" said Father Sun. The corners of his mouth turned down; it was clear he did not enjoy this vision. It was only disgust for his brother that forced him to listen.

ix-Xul's eyes became strange, she did not see the garden of the gods any more, or the other gods and goddesses. She saw the world on the last day, her vision was very clear when she said:

"Here it is, then, the final day of the creation. All the pious ones have gathered in the east. They bear their own shields, their own darts. The skin of the angry jaguar is spread in the plaza of the great red city, and all the warriors and lords and herbalists and dancers and priests go to meet the lords of the night. All their feathers are shimmering, your people are proud under their creator.

"And the gods arrive in the east. We leave our garden and walk among your children. We are as they are, our faces are drawn with soot. We take our places among the warriors and the lords of men. Our wise ones stand with their priests. Our herbalists prepare to fight spirits. There is no sunrise on that last day, the sun is in the world.

"Now comes a messenger from your brother. ah-Puch sends his word with a spirit. 'These are my lands,' is his claim. 'I was present at the creation, I am part of everything that is. Today I will reclaim what is mine, and you will bow down to the underworld and the night.'

"No answer is given. The messenger is run off, with no words.

"There is a great clap of thunder, its source is not known. The lords



of the night arrive in the east. They are clothed in the skins of your children. Nine is their number. There are mud men at their feet. The sinkholes have opened, the caves have opened, and the wicked people of the underworld have come out. They have no feathers, no sandals. They are wretched and ugly. They lift their spears, and your children raise their dart-throwers.

"This is the last of the east: the air is filled with darts, and spears. The air is filled with copal incense. There are clouds of burning blood and herbs. The smoke gags warriors, it suffocates lords. Gods strangle on that stink. Endless are the people of the underworld. All the wicked souls shout, 'This is your end, this is the coming of the night.' There are animal men from Xibalba, every twisted thing walks under the sky. Nothing is hidden any more. Those are the days of puma-men, kinkajoumen, vulture-men.

"There are no tears on the faces of the eastern people. There are no cries. Only prayers are heard. A hundred million darts and spears are thrown and caught in flesh. We are among your children, we destroy the underworld people. Their warriors are snuffed out. Their priests are silenced. Now the lords of the night come forth. Their darts fill the land with poison. It is the end of the eastern people, all those who lived through the obsidian rain. There is not one man left, not one woman, one child. It is the end of laughter, the end of drinking, the end of feasting. There are no more songs, no more riddles, no more games, no more lovers. ah-Puch's servants have destroyed it all, they have silenced everything. Misery is what is on our faces, there is nothing to fight for. The lords of the night begin dancing. They believe they have won.

"And now the world truly ends: the sun sparkles, and a million burning darts fall from the sky. Everything is aflame. The cities of the



men are gone, even the stones burn. The lords of the night see their end. They throw their hooked darts, they jab their barbed spears. Gods are killed, goddesses die. The lords of the night are destroyed in the fire. And the trees are gone. Grass is gone. Birds are gone. Animals, gone. Even the fishes are killed in the boiling seas.

"In all this time there is no ah-Puch. He is not seen in the west, he is not seen in the north, he is not known in the south, he never came to the center. No one knows where he is. There are only a few gods and goddesses now, waiting for him to show his face.

"Well, he will never come so close to his brother, who is stronger. He has gone into the garden of the gods during the fighting. He has sneaked in, it is treachery he employs. In truth he does not want the world or its people. Something else is his desire. There in our home he raises his black axe. He stands at the great ceiba tree that holds up the sky, and he chops its trunk. He strikes where it is tender, where its heart is open. The wakah-chan is split, its branches drop. The sky breaks, the heavens fall, and the world below is destroyed. It is the death of all of us, only Father Sun and Mother Moon live. Only ah-Puch is not killed in the breaking of worlds. All things are as they were in the beginning, there are only three once more.

"There is a chase, the three gods run into the mouth of a cave. The sun and the moon chase the wasp star into the underworld, but it is only a trap that has been laid. From the far places in Xibalbe come the ancient jaguars, balam whose coat is only one color. There are a thousand of them, they have waited since the beginning for the last day of the creation. The sun is old. The moon is old. The black jaguars fall upon them, they are not afraid of the fire and the moon beams. The black jaguars are burnt up, they are frozen, but there are too many.



"And there he is, ah-Puch watches the pouncing of balam. He encourages the jaguars, he sings to them, a little. And then he raises his axe above the root of the world tree, and he chops. And the sky of the underworld breaks, and all the worlds fall and are destroyed. The sun is gone, the moon is gone. Even the black jaguars are crushed. ah-Puch throws down his axe and smokes a cigar, and then he dances.

"This is what I have seen, Father Sun. I do not know what becomes of the souls of your children, or our souls. I do not know what your brother does, after the end."

It is said that Father Sun did not look at the goddess. He was too angry, he did not wish to burn her young face.

"This knowledge is too strong for such a tender sprout," were his words. "There will be no more asking such questions until we are much older, much stronger. Thank you for your story, ix-Xul. You will always be welcome in this garden."

Then the gods and the goddesses returned to their feast and their conversation. It was from ix-Xul's vision that they learned the bitterness of divination, and that is why only the priests and day-keepers are allowed this knowledge today.

