

CHANT OF HONOUR

In the thick dense forest she stoops
Crouching to pick up the dead branch of the tree.
She breaks it into suitable sizes, laying them side by side.
She is chanting to herself.

What is she chanting?
The fame of the ancient heroes?
The fame of her tribal warriors?

Now she is stooping, crouching, to pick up another dead branch.
Crack. She breaks the dead branch into suitable sizes.
Her chanting grows louder, frightened bats flutter away.

What is she chanting?
The honour of the ancient warriors?
The honour of her tribal heroes?
Her own honour for bringing life to her household?

The sun laughs pitylessly, the air stands still,
Tense to breaking point.
Sweat streams from her face, her bare back baking.
The black blisters on her black palms break.

Is it water? Is it blood that streams out?
She chants louder.

What is she chanting?
The mingling of blood and water for her household.

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