

The Night of the Day the Khoi-Khoi Meet Bartolomeu Dias and Crew

by Cami Park

It keeps coming back to the end of the world. Dogs sitting on roofs, birds flying about indoors, clattering locusts.

The sheep's paunch is torn down the middle, spilling dung, and tossed on the fire to roast. Bartered wine is passed mouth to mouth around the circle around the fire. The chief tells this story--

Tsui-Goab, creator of rocks and stones, bringer of rain and storm, magician, warrior, the first of us all, having killed evil once and for all after many battles and deaths and resurrections, sent a hare from his home in the clouds to give People-People this message: "As I die and dying am born again, so you shall die and dying live again." But the hare was stupid, and delivered the message thusly: "As I die and dying am born again, so you shall die and dying not be born again." When the hare repeated to Tsui-Goab the message it had delivered, Tsui-Goab hit the hare on the nose, cleaving its lip. Such is the hare.

They had come, hands free of ash, already soaking wet, sallow. Thin fabrics clung to their chests like petals. As the flowers of our daughters taken by angry rain was our doom.

She strums the instrument bartered for cattle. Her name is the sound of trapped birds; the slap on the cow's rump the slur of eyes on her, she can't form these with her tongue and palate; she looks to the moon and tries with her fingers.

We bend to our natures as trees to the wind.

Available online at *«<http://fictionaut.com/stories/cami-park/the-night-of-the-day-the-khoi-khoi-meet-bartolomeu-dias-and-crew>»*
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