

Mountain Boy



The body of an eight year old boy, ensconced in a little crypt, was discovered in the Andes at an altitude of about three miles. Because of the cold, he was well preserved. A picture of him in the Museum of Natural History in Chile, where he now resides, is reproduced in the book *Lost Empires*, accompanied with the following description:

A youngster still huddles against the mountain top cold that killed him in sacrifice to the sun 500 years ago. Perhaps numbed by coca for his ordeal of honor, he bore a bag of coca, images of silver and gold, even his baby teeth and nail parings, lest he search the for his body parts.

Was this my tribe?

These teachers who spoke of honor and gave me coca that I would not feel the bite of the frost too deeply and who smiled (my father even dropping his eyes in a sort of apology) but who still left me alone on the mountain with my baby teeth and all the pretty things?

After they returned to their huts and their plans for the next day darkness came over the mountain like the hand of death and in the night wind I thought I heard animals hungry for my flesh and the moaning of the spirits of the unburied dead.

These who left me here, I said, these are not my people.

And finally sleep came and I slept for 500 years until I was found by these others who talk of cutting me open to see what I ate for supper and who are also not my people and whose gods I also do not understand,

And I dream once again the only dream that ever came to me on the mountain that I awake in a green wood with the sunlight almost horizontal in its earliness and yet already bright and I see people coming for me and by a secret sign I was born knowing but am forbidden ever to disclose I learn that this is my tribe,

And they hold me and hold me and hold me

Until I am warm again.