

Popol Vuh (Preamble through Chapter 9)
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PREAMBLE

This is the beginning of the old traditions of this place called Quiché. Here we shall write and we shall begin the old stories, the beginning and the origin of all that was done in the town of the Quiché, by the tribes of the Quiché nation.

And here we shall set forth the revelation, the declaration, and the narration of all that was hidden, the revelation by Tzacol, Bitol, Alom, Qaholom, who are called Hunahpú-Vuch, Hunahpú-Utiú, Zaqui-Nimá-Tziís, Tepeu, Gucumatz, u Qux cho, u Qux Paló, Ah Raxá Lac, Ah Raxá Tzel, as they were called.* And [at the same time] the declaration, the combined narration of the Grandmother and the Grandfather, whose names are Xpiyacoc, and Xmucané,** helpers and protectors, twice grandmother, twice grandfather, so called in the Quiche chronicles. Then we shall tell all that they did in the light of existence, in the light of history.

*These are the names of the divinity, arranged in pairs of creators in accord with the dual conception of the Quiché: *Tzacol* and *Bitol*, Creator and Maker. *Alom*, the mother god, she who conceived the sons, from *al*, "son," *alán*, "to give birth." *Qaholom*, the father god who begat the sons, from *qahol*, "son of the father," *qaholah*, "to beget." Ximénez calls them mother and Father; they are the Great Father and the Great Mother, so called by the Indians, according to Las Casas; and they were in heaven.

**Xpiyacoc and Xmucané, the old man and the old woman (in Maya, *xnuc* is "old woman"), equivalents of the Mexican gods Cipactonal and Oxomoco, the sages who, according to the Toltec legend, invented their astrology and arranged the counting of time, that is, the calendar. Although in the Quiché legend there was also the other abstract pair previously mentioned, Xpiyacoc and, above all, his consort Xmucané, this pair had a more direct contact with the things of this world; together they were what the Mexican archaeologist Enrique Juan Palacios calls "the active Creator-couple who are directly concerned with the making of material things."

This we shall write now under the Law of God and Christianity; we shall bring it to light because now the Popol Vuh, as it is called,*** cannot be seen any more, in which was clearly seen the coming from the other side of the sea and the narration of our obscurity, and our life was clearly seen. The original book, written long ago, existed, but its sight is hidden to the searcher and to the thinker. Great were the descriptions and the account of how all the sky and earth were formed, how it was formed and divided into four parts; how it was partitioned, and how the sky was divided; and the measuring-cord was brought, and it was stretched in the sky and over the earth, on the four angles, on the four corners, as was told by the Creator and the Maker, the Mother and the Father of Life, of all created things, he who gives breath and thought, she who gives birth to the children, he who watches over the happiness of the people, the happiness of the human race, the wise man, he who meditates on the goodness of all that exists in the sky, on the earth, in the lakes and in the sea.

****Popo Vuh*, or *Popol Vuh*, literally the "Book of the Community." The word *popol* is

Maya and means "together," "reunion," or "common house." *Popol na* is the "house of the community where they assemble to discuss things of the republic," says the *Diccionario de Motul*. *Pop* is a Quiché verb which means "to gather," "to join," "to crowd," according to Ximénez; and *popol* is a thing belonging to the municipal council, "communal," or "national." For this reason Ximénez interprets *Popol Vuh* as Book of the Community or of the Council. *Vuh* or *uúh* is "book," "paper," or "rag" and is derived from the Maya *búun* or *úun*, which means at the same time both paper and book, and finally the tree, the bark of which was used in making paper in ancient times, and which the Nahua call *amatl*, commonly known in Guatemala as *amatle* (*Ficus cotinifolia*). Note that in many words the *n* from the Maya is changed to *j* or *h* in Quiché. *Na*, "house" in Maya, is changed to *ha*, or *ja*; *húun* or *úun*, "book" in Maya, becomes *vuh* or *uúh* in Quiché.

PART I

Chapter 1

This is the account of how all was in suspense, all calm, in silence; all motionless, still, and the expanse of the sky was empty.

This is the first account, the first narrative. There was neither man, nor animal, birds, fishes, crabs, trees, stones, caves, ravines, grasses, nor forests; there was only the sky. The surface of the earth had not appeared. There was only the calm sea and the great expanse of the sky.

There was nothing brought together, nothing which could make a noise, nor anything which might move, or tremble, or could make noise in the sky.

There was nothing standing; only the calm water, the placid sea, alone and tranquil. Nothing existed.

There was only immobility and silence in the darkness, in the night. Only the Creator, the Maker, Tepeu, Gucumatz, the Forefathers,* were in the water surrounded with light.** They were hidden under green and blue feathers, and were therefore called Gucumatz. By nature they were great sages and great thinkers. In this manner the sky existed and also the heart of

**E Alom*, literally, those who conceive and give birth, *e Qaholom*, those who beget the children. In order to follow the conciseness of the text here the two terms are translated as the "Forefathers."

**They were in the water because the Quiché associated the name Gucumatz with the liquid element. Bishop Núñez de la Vega says that Gucumatz is a serpent with feathers, which moves in the water. The Cakchiquel Manuscript says that one of the primitive peoples which migrated to Guatemala was called Gucumatz because their salvation was in the water.

Heaven, which is the name of God and thus He is called.

Then came the word. Tepeu and Gucumatz came together in the darkness, in the night, and Tepeu and Gucumatz talked together. They talked then, discussing and deliberating; they agreed, they united their words and their thoughts.

Then while they meditated, it became clear to them that when dawn would break, man must appear. Then they planned the creation, and the growth of the trees and the thickets

and the birth of life and the creation of man. Thus it was arranged in the darkness and in the night by the Heart of Heaven who is called Huracán.

The first is called Caculhá Huracán. The second is ChipiCaculhá. The third is Raxa-Caculhá. And these three are the Heart of Heaven.

Then Tepeu and Gucumatz came together; then they conferred about life and light, what they would do so that there would be light and dawn, who it would be who would provide food and sustenance.

Thus let it be done! Let the emptiness be filled! Let the water recede and make a void, let the earth appear and become solid; let it be done. Thus they spoke. Let there be light, let there be dawn in the sky and on the earth! There shall be neither glory nor grandeur in our creation and formation until the human being is made, man is formed. So they spoke. Then the earth was created by them. So it was, in truth, that they created the earth. Earth! they said, and instantly it was made.

Like the mist, like a cloud, and like a cloud of dust was the creation, when the mountains appeared from the water; and instantly the mountains grew.

Only by a miracle, only by magic art were the mountains and valleys formed; and instantly the groves of cypresses and pines put forth shoots together on the surface of the earth.

And thus Gucumatz was filled with joy, and exclaimed: "Your coming has been fruitful, Heart of Heaven; and you, Huracán, and you, Chipi-Caculhá, Raxa-Caculhá!"

"Our work, our creation shall be finished," they answered.

First the earth was formed, the mountains and the valleys; the currents of water were divided, the rivulets were running freely between the hills, and the water was separated when the high mountains appeared.

Thus was the earth created, when it was formed by the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, as they are called who first made it fruitful, when the sky was in suspense, and the earth was submerged in the water.

So it was that they made perfect the work, when they did it after thinking and meditating upon it.

Chapter 2

Then they made the small wild animals, the guardians of the woods, the spirits of the mountains, the deer, the birds, pumas, jaguars, serpents, snakes, vipers, guardians of the thickets.

And the Forefathers asked: "Shall there be only silence and calm under the trees, under the vines? It is well that hereafter there be someone to guard them."

So they said when they meditated and talked. Promptly the deer and the birds were created. Immediately they gave homes to the deer and the birds. "You, deer, shall sleep in the fields by the river bank and in the ravines. Here you shall be amongst the thicket, amongst the pasture; in the woods you shall multiply, you shall walk on four feet and they will support you. Thus be it done!" So it was they spoke.

Then they also assigned homes to the birds big and small. "You shall live in the trees and in the vines. There you shall make your nests; there you shall multiply; there you shall increase in the branches of the trees and in the vines." Thus the deer and the birds were told; they did their duty at once, and all sought their homes and their nests.

And the creation of all the four-footed animals and the birds being finished, they were told by the Creator and the Maker and the Forefathers: "Speak, cry, warble, call, speak each one according to your variety, each, according to your kind." So was it said to the deer, the birds, pumas, jaguars, and serpents.

"Speak, then, our names, praise us, your mother, your father. Invoke then, Huracán, Chipi-Caculhá, Raxa-Caculhá, the Heart of Heaven, the Heart of Earth, the Creator, the Maker, the Forefathers; speak, invoke us, adore us," they were told.

But they could not make them speak like men; they only hissed and screamed and cackled; they were unable to make words, and each screamed in a different way.

When the Creator and the Maker saw that it was impossible for them to talk to each other, they said: "It is impossible for them to say our names, the names of us, their Creators and Makers. This is not well," said the Forefathers to each other.

Then they said to them: "Because it has not been possible for you to talk, you shall be changed. We have changed our minds: Your food, your pasture, your homes, and your nests you shall have; they shall be the ravines and the woods, because it has not been possible for you to adore us or invoke us. There shall be those who adore us, we shall make other [beings] who shall be obedient. Accept your destiny: your flesh shall be torn to pieces. So shall it be. This shall be your lot." So they said, when they made known their will to the large and small animals which are on the face of the earth.

They wished to give them another trial; they wished to make another attempt; they wished to make [all living things] adore them.

But they could not understand each other's speech; they could succeed in nothing, and could do nothing. For this reason they were sacrificed, and the animals which were on earth were condemned to be killed and eaten.

For this reason another attempt had to be made to create and make men by the Creator, the Maker, and the Forefathers.

"Let us try again! Already dawn draws near: Let us make him who shall nourish and sustain us! What shall we do to be invoked, in order to be remembered on earth? We have already tried with our first creations, our first creatures; but we could not make them praise and venerate us. So, then, let us try to make obedient, respectful beings who will nourish and sustain us." Thus they spoke.

Then was the creation and the formation. Of earth, of mud, they made [man's] flesh. But they saw that it was not good. It melted away, it was soft, did not move, had no strength, it fell down, it was limp, it could not move its head, its face fell to one side, its sight was blurred, it could not look behind. At first it spoke, but had no mind. Quickly it soaked in the water and could not stand.

And the Creator and the Maker said: "Let us try again because our creatures will not be able to walk nor multiply. Let us consider this," they said.

Then they broke up and destroyed their work and their creation. And they said: "What shall we do to perfect it, in order that our worshipers, our invokers, will be successful?"

Thus they spoke when they conferred again: "Let us say again to Xpiyacoc, Xmucané, Hunahpú-Vuch, Hunahpú-Utiú: 'Cast your lot again. Try to create again.' " In this manner the Creator and the Maker spoke to Xpiyacoc and Xmucané.

Then they spoke to those soothsayers, the Grandmother of the day, the Grandmother of the Dawn, as they were called by the Creator and the Maker, and whose names were Xpiyacoc and Xmucané.

And said Huracán, Tepeu, and Gucumatz when they spoke to the soothsayer, to the Maker, who are the diviners: "You must work together and find the means so that man, whom we shall make, man, whom we are going to make, will nourish and sustain us, invoke and remember us."

"Enter, then, into council, grandmother, grandfather, our grandmother, our grandfather, Xpiyacoc, Xmucané, make light, make dawn, have us invoked, have us adored, have us remembered by created man, by made man, by mortal man. Thus be it done.

"Let your nature be known, Hunahpú-Vuch, Hunahpú-Utiú, twice mother, twice father, Nim-Ac, Nima-Tziís, the master of emeralds, the worker in jewels, the sculptor, the carver, the maker of beautiful plates, the maker of green gourds, the master of resin, the master Toltecat,* grandmother of the sun, grandmother of dawn, as you will be called by our works and our creatures.

*Here the text seems to enumerate the usual occupations of the men of that time. The author calls upon *ahqual*, who is evidently the one who carves emeralds or green stones; *ahyamanic*, the jeweler or silversmith; *ahchut*, engraver or sculptor; *ahzalam*, carver or cabinetmaker; *ahraxalac*, he who fashions green or beautiful plates; *ahraxazel*, he who makes the beautiful green vases or gourds (called Xicalli in Náhuatl,)--the word *raxá* has both meanings; *ahgol*, he who makes the resin or copal; and, finally, *ahtoltecat*, he who, without doubt, was the silversmith. The Tolteca were in fact, skilled silversmiths who, according to the legend, were taught the art by Quetzalcoatl himself.

"Cast the lot with your grains of corn and the *tzité*.** Do it thus, and we shall know if we are to make, or carve his mouth and eyes out of wood." Thus the diviners were told.

***Erythrina corallodendron*. *Tzité*, *arbol de pito* in Guatemala; *Tzompanquahuítl* in the Mexican language. It is used in both countries to make fences. Its fruit is a pod which contains red grains resembling a bean which the Indians used, as they still do, together with grains of corn, in their fortunetelling and witchcraft. In his *Informe contra Idolorum Cultores*, Sánchez de Aguilar says that the Maya Indians "cast lots with a large handful of corn." As is seen, the practice which is still observed by the Maya-Quiché is of respectable antiquity.

They went down at once to make their divination, and cast their lots with the corn and the *tzité*. "Fate! Creature!" said an old woman and an old man. And this old man was the one who cast the lots with *Tzité*, the one called Xpiyacoc. And the old woman was the diviner, the maker, called Chiracán Xmucané.

Beginning the divination, they said: "Get together, grasp each other! Speak, that we may hear." They said, "Say if it is well that the wood be got together and that it be carved by the Creator and the Maker, and if this [man of wood] is he who must nourish and sustain us when there is light when it is day!

"Thou, corn; thou, *tzité*; thou, fate; thou, creature; get together, take each other," they said to the corn, to the *tzité*, to fate, to the creature. "Come to sacrifice here, Heart of Heaven; do not punish Tepeu and Gucumatz!"

Then they talked and spoke the truth: "Your figures of wood shall come out well; they shall speak and talk on earth."

"So may it be," they answered when they spoke.

And instantly the figures were made of wood. They looked like men, talked like men, and populated the surface of the earth.

They existed and multiplied; they had daughters, they had sons, these wooden figures; but they did not have souls, nor minds, they did not remember their Creator, their Maker; they walked on all fours, aimlessly.

They no longer remembered the Heart of Heaven and therefore they fell out of favor. It was merely a trial, an attempt at man. At first they spoke, but their face was without expression; their feet and hands had no strength; they had no blood, nor substance, nor moisture, nor flesh; their cheeks were dry, their feet and hands were dry, and their flesh was yellow.

Therefore, they no longer thought of their Creator nor their Maker, nor of those who made them and cared for them.

These were the first men who existed in great numbers on the face of the earth.

Chapter 3

Immediately the wooden figures were annihilated, destroyed, broken up, and killed.

A flood was brought about by the Heart of Heaven; a great flood was formed which fell on the heads of the wooden creatures.

Of *tzité*, the flesh of man was made, but when woman was fashioned by the Creator and the Maker, her flesh was made of rushes. These were the materials the Creator and the Maker wanted to use in making them.

But those that they had made, that they had created, did not think, did not speak with their Creator, their Maker. And for this reason they were killed, they were deluged. A heavy resin fell from the sky. The one called Xecotcovach came and gouged out their eyes; Camalotz came and cut off their heads; Cotzbalam came and devoured their flesh.

Tucumbalam came, too, and broke and mangled their bones and their nerves, and ground and crumbled their bones.

This was to punish them because they had not thought of their mother, nor their father, the Heart of Heaven, called Huracán. And for this reason the face of the earth was darkened and a black rain began to fall, by day and by night.

Then came the small animals and the large animals, and sticks and stones struck their faces. And all began to speak: their earthen jars, their griddles, their plates, their pots, their grinding stones, all rose up and struck their faces.

"You have done us much harm; you ate us, and now we shall kill you," said their dogs and birds of the barnyard.

And the grinding stones said: "We were tormented by you; every day, every day, at night, at dawn, all the time our faces went *holi, holi, huqui, huqui*, because of you. This was the tribute we paid you. But now that you are no longer men, you shall feel our strength. We shall grind and tear your flesh to pieces," said their grinding stones.

And then their dogs spoke and said: "Why did you give us nothing to eat? You scarcely looked at us, but you chased us and threw us out. You always had a stick ready to strike us while you were eating.

"Thus it was that you treated us. You did not speak to us. Perhaps we shall not kill you now; but why did you not look ahead, why did you not think about yourselves? Now we shall destroy you, now you shall feel the teeth of our mouths; we shall devour you," said the dogs, and then, they destroyed their faces.

And at the same time, their griddles and pots spoke: "Pain and suffering you have caused us. Our mouths and our faces were blackened with soot; we were always put on the fire and you burned us as though we felt no pain. Now you shall feel it, we shall burn you," said their pots, and they all destroyed their [the wooden men's] faces. The stones of the hearth, which were heaped together, hurled themselves straight from the fire against their heads causing them pain.

The desperate ones [the men of wood] ran as quickly as they could; they wanted to climb to the tops of the houses, and the houses fell down and threw them to the ground; they wanted to climb to the treetops, and the trees cast them far away; they wanted to enter the caverns, and the caverns repelled them.

So was the ruin of the men who had been created and formed, the men made to be destroyed and annihilated; the mouths and faces of all of them were mangled.

And it is said that their descendants are the monkeys which now live in the forests; these are all that remain of them because their flesh was made only of wood by the Creator and the Maker.

And therefore the monkey looks like man, and is an example of a generation of men which were created and made but were only wooden figures.

Chapter 4

It was cloudy and twilight then on the face of the earth. There was no sun yet.

Nevertheless, there was a being called Vucub-Caquix who was very proud of himself.

The sky and the earth existed, but the faces of the sun and the moon were covered.

And he [Vucub-Caquix] said: "Truly, they are clear examples of those people who were drowned, and their nature is that of supernatural beings.

"I shall now be great above all the beings created and formed. I am the sun, the light, the moon," he exclaimed. "Great is my splendor. Because of me men shall walk and conquer. For my eyes are of silver, bright, resplendent as precious stones, as emeralds; my teeth shine like perfect stones, like the face of the sky. My nose shines afar like the moon, my throne is of silver, and the face of the earth is lighted when I pass before my throne.

"So, then, I am the sun, I am the moon, for all mankind. So shall it be, because I can see very far."

So Vucub-Caquix spoke. But he was not really the sun; he was only vainglorious of his feathers and his riches. And he could see only as far as the horizon, and he could not see over all the world.

The face of the sun had not yet appeared, nor that of the moon, nor the stars, and it had not dawned. Therefore, Vucub-Caquix became as vain as though he were the sun and the moon, because the light of the sun and the moon had not yet shown itself. His only ambition was to exalt himself and to dominate. And all this happened when the flood came because of the wooden people.

Now we shall tell how Vucub-Caquix was overthrown and died, and how man was made by the Creator and the Maker.

Chapter 5

This is the beginning of the defeat and the ruin of the glory of Vucub-Caquix brought about by two youths, the first of whom was called Hunahpú and the second, Xbalanqué. They were really gods. When they saw the harm which the arrogant one had done, and wished to do, in the presence of the Heart of Heaven, the youths said:

"It is not good that it be so, when man does not yet live here on earth. Therefore, we shall try to shoot him with our blowgun when he is eating. We shall shoot him and make him sicken, and then that will be the end of his riches, his green stones, his precious metals, his emeralds, his jewels of which he is so proud. And this shall be the lot of all men, for they must not become vain, because of power and riches.

"Thus shall it be," said the youths, each one putting his blowgun to his shoulder.

Well, now Vucub-Caquix had two sons: the first was called Zipacná, the second was Cabracán; and the mother of the two was called Chimalmat, the wife of Vucub-Caquix. Well, Zipacná played ball with the large mountains: with Chigag, Hunahpú, Pecul, Yaxcanul, Macamob, and Huliznab. These are the names of the mountains which existed when it dawned and which were created in a single night by Zipacná.

In this way, then, Cabracán moved the mountains and made the large and small mountains tremble.

And in this way the sons of Vucub-Caquix proclaimed their pride. "Listen! I am the sun!," said Vucub-Caquix. "I am he who made the earth!" said Zipacná. "I am he who shook the sky and made the earth tremble!" said Cabracán. In this way the sons of Vucub-Caquix followed the example of their father's assumed greatness. And this seemed very evil to the youths. Neither our first mother nor our first father had yet been created. Therefore, the deaths of Vucub-Caquix and his sons and their destruction was decided upon by the youths.

Chapter 6

Now we shall tell how the two Youths shot their blowguns at Vucub-Caquix and how each one of those, who had become arrogant, was destroyed.

Vucub-Caquix had a large nantze tree and he ate the fruit of it. Each day he went to the tree and climbed to the top. Hunahpú and Xbalanqué had seen that this fruit was his food. And they lay in ambush at the foot of the tree, hidden among the leaves. Vucub-Caquix came straight to his meal of nantzes.

Instantly he was injured by a discharge from Hun-Hunahpú's blowgun which struck him squarely in the jaw, and screaming, he fell straight to earth from the treetop.

Hun-Hunahpú ran quickly to overpower him, but Vucub-Caquix seized his arm and wrenching it from him, bent it back to the shoulder. In this way Vucub-Caquix tore out Hun-Hunahpú's arm. Surely the two youths did well in not letting themselves be defeated first by Vucub-Caquix.

Carrying Hun-Hunahpú's arm, Vucub-Caquix went home, and arrived there nursing his jaw.

"What has happened to you, my lord?" said Chimalmat, his wife.

"What could it be, but those two demons who shot me with blowguns and dislocated my jaw? For that reason my teeth are loose and pain me very much. But I have brought it [his arm], to put it on the fire. Let it hang there over the fire, for surely these demons will come looking for it." So said Vucub-Caquix as he hung up the arm of Hun-Hunahpú.

Having thought it over, Hun-Hunahpú and Xbalanqué went to talk with an old man who had snow-white hair and with an old woman, really very old and humble, both already bent, like very old people. The old man was called Zaqui-Nim-Ac and the old woman, Zaqui-Nima-Tziis. The youths said to the old woman and the old man:

"Come with us to Vucub-Caquix's house to get our arm. We will follow you, and you shall tell them: 'These with us are our grandchildren; their mother and father are dead; so they follow us everywhere we are given alms, for the only thing that we know how to do is take the worm from the teeth.'

"So Vucub-Caquix shall think we are boys and we shall also be there to advise you," said the two youths.

"Very well," answered the old man and woman.

Then they started out for the place where they found Vucub-Caquix reclining on his throne. The old woman and man walked along followed by the two boys, who stayed behind them. In this way they arrived at the house of the lord who was screaming because his tooth pained him.

When Vucub-Caquix saw the old man and the old woman and those who accompanied them, he asked, "Where do you come from, grandparents?"

"We come looking for something to eat, honorable sir," they answered.

"And what do you eat? Are those not your sons who are with you?"

"Oh, no, sir! They are our grandsons; but we are sorry for them and what is given to us, we share with them, sir," answered the old woman and the old man.

Meanwhile, the lord was suffering terrible pain from his tooth, and it was only with great difficulty that he could speak.

"I earnestly beseech you to have pity on me. What can you do? What do you know how to cure?" the lord asked them.

And the old ones answered, "Oh, sir! we only take the worm from the teeth, cure the eyes, and set bones."

"Very well. Cure my teeth, which are really making me suffer day and night, and because of them and of my eyes I cannot be calm and cannot sleep. All of this is because two demons shot me with a pellet [from their blowgun] and for that reason I cannot eat. Have pity on me, then, tighten my teeth with your hands."

"Very well, sir. It is a worm which makes you suffer. It will end when these teeth are pulled and others put in their place."

"It is not well that you pull my teeth, because it is only with them that I am a lord and all my ornaments are my teeth and my eyes."

"We will put others of ground bone in their place." But the ground bone was nothing but grains of white corn.

"Very well, pull them out, come and relieve me," he replied.

Then they pulled Vucub-Caquix's teeth; but in their place they put only grains of white corn, and these grains of corn shone in his mouth. Instantly his features sagged and he no longer looked like a lord. They removed the rest of his teeth which shone like pearls in his mouth. And finally they cured Vucub-Caquix's eyes, piercing the pupils of his eyes, and they took all his riches.

But he felt nothing any more. He only watched, because at the advice of Hunahpú and Xbalanqué, they took from him all of the things of which he had been so proud.

Then Vucub-Caquix died. Hun-Hunahpú recovered his arm. Chimalmat, the wife of Vucub-Caquix, also perished.

In this way Vucub-Caquix lost his riches. The healer took all the emeralds and precious stones which had been his pride here on earth.

The old woman and the old man who did this were miraculous beings; and having recovered the arm of Hun-Hunahpú, they put it in place, and it was all right again.

It was only to bring about the death of Vucub-Caquix that they did this, because it seemed wicked to them that he should become so arrogant.

And then the two youths went on, having in this way carried out the order of the Heart of Heaven.

Chapter 7

Here now are the deeds of Zipacná, the elder, son of Vucub-Caquix.

"I am the creator of the mountains," said Zipacná.

Zipacná was bathing at the edge of a river when four hundred youths passed dragging a log to support their house. The four hundred were walking, after having cut down a large tree to make the ridge-pole of their house.

Then Zipacná came up, and going toward the four hundred youths, said to them: "What are you doing, boys?"

"It is only this log," they answered, "which we cannot lift and carry on our shoulders."

"I will carry it. Where does it have to go? What do you want it for?"

"For a ridge-pole for our house."

"All right," he answered, and lifting it up, he put it on his shoulders and carried it to the entrance of the house of the four hundred boys.

"Now stay with us, boy," they said. "Have you a mother or father?"

"I have neither," he answered.

"Then we shall hire you tomorrow to prepare another log to support our house."

"Good," he answered.

The four hundred boys talked together then, and said:

"How shall we kill this boy? Because it is not good what he has done lifting the log alone. Let us make a big hole and push him so that he will fall into it. 'Go down and take out the earth and carry it from the pit,' we shall tell him, and when he stoops down, to go down into the pit, we shall let the large log fall on him and he will die there in the pit."

So said the four hundred boys, and then they dug a large, very deep pit. Then they called Zipacná.

"We like you very much. Go, go and dig dirt, for we cannot reach [the bottom of the pit]," they said.

"All right," he answered. He went at once into the pit. And calling to him as he was digging the dirt, they said: "Have you gone down very deep yet?"

"Yes," he answered, beginning to dig the pit. But the pit which he was making was to save him from danger. He knew that they wanted to kill him; so when he dug the pit, he made a second hole at one side in order to free himself.

"How far [have you gone]?" the four hundred boys called down.

"I am still digging; I will call up to you when I have finished the digging," said Zipacná from the bottom of the pit. But he was not digging his grave; instead he was opening another pit in order to save himself.

At last Zipacná called to them. But when he called, he was already safe in the second pit. "Come and take out and carry away the dirt which I have dug and which is in the bottom of the pit," he said, "because in truth I have made it very deep. Do you not hear my call? Nevertheless, your calls, your words repeat themselves like an echo once, twice, and so I hear well where you are." So Zipacná called from the pit where he was hidden, shouting from the depths.

Then the boys hurled the great log violently, and it fell quickly with a thud to the bottom of the pit.

"Let no one speak! Let us wait until we hear his dying screams," they said to each other, whispering, and each one covered his face as the log fell noisily. He [Zipacná] spoke then, crying out, but he called only once when the log fell to the bottom.

"How well we have succeeded in this! Now he is dead," said the boys. "If, unfortunately, he had continued what he had begun to do, we would have been lost, because he already had interfered with us, the four hundred boys."

And filled with joy they said: "Now we must make our *chicha* within the next three days. When the three days are passed, we shall drink to the construction of our new house, we, the four hundred boys." Then they said: "Tomorrow we shall look, and day after tomorrow, we shall also look to see if the ants do not come out of the earth when the body smells and begins to rot. Presently we shall become calm and drink our *chicha*," they said.

But from his pit Zipacná listened to everything the boys said. And later, on the second day, multitudes of ants came, going and coming and gathering under the log. Some carried Zipacná's hair in their mouths, and others carried his fingernails.

When the boys saw this, they said, "That devil has now perished. Look how the ants have gathered, how they have come by hordes, some bringing his hair and others his fingernails. Look what we have done!" So they spoke to each other.

Nevertheless, Zipacná was very much alive. He had cut his hair and gnawed off his fingernails to give them to the ants.

And so the four hundred boys believed that he was dead, and on the third day they began the orgy and all of the boys got drunk. And the four hundred being drunk knew nothing any more. And then Zipacná let the house fall on their heads and killed all of them.

Not even one or two among the four hundred were saved; they were killed by Zipacná, son of Vucub-Caquix.

In this way the four hundred boys died, and it is said that they became the group of stars which because of them are called Motz,* but it may not be true.

*A mass, the Seven Little Sisters, the Pleiades. Brasseur de Bourbourg notes that *Omuch qaholah*, the four hundred young men who perished in an orgy, are the same as those who were worshipped in Mexico under the name *Centzon-Totochtin*, the four hundred rabbits who were implored as gods to protect the *pulque* and the drunkards.

Chapter 8

Now we shall tell how Zipacná was defeated by the two boys, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

Now follows the defeat and death of Zipacná, when he was overcome by the two boys, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

The boys' hearts were full of rancor because the four hundred young men had been killed by Zipacná. And he only hunted fish and crabs at the bank of the river, which were his daily food. During the day he went about looking for food, and at night he carried mountains on his back.

With a leaf of the *ec* plant which is found in the forest, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué quickly made a figure to look like a very large crab.

With this they made the stomach of the crab; the claws, they made of *pahac*, and for the shell, which covers the back, they used a stone. Then they put the crab at the bottom of a cave at the foot of a large mountain called *Meaguán*, where he was overcome.

Then the boys went to find Zipacná on the river bank.

"Where are you going, young man?" they asked him.

"I am not going anywhere," Zipacná answered, "only looking for food, boys."

"And what is your food?"

"Fish and crabs, but there are none here and I have not found any; I have not eaten since day before yesterday, and I am dying of hunger," said Zipacná to Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

"Over there in the bottom of the ravine there is a crab, a really large crab, and it would be well if you would eat it! Only it bit us when we tried to catch it and so we were afraid.

We wouldn't try to catch it for anything," said Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

"Have pity on me! Come and show it to me, boys," begged Zipacná.

"We do not want to. You go alone, you will not get lost. Follow the bank of the river and you will come out at the foot of a large hill; there it is making a noise at the bottom of the ravine. You have only to go there," said Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

"Oh, unfortunate me! Won't you accompany me, boys? Come and show it to me. There are many birds which you can shoot with your blowguns and I know where to find them," said Zipacná.

His meekness convinced the boys. And they asked him: "But, can you really catch him? Because it is only for you that we are returning; we are not going to try to get it again because it bit us when we were crawling into the cave. After that we were afraid to crawl in, but we almost caught it. So, then, it is best that you crawl in," they said.

"Very well," said Zipacná, and then they went with him. They arrived at the bottom of the ravine and there, stretched on his back, was the crab, showing his red shell. And there also in the bottom of the ravine was the boys' hoax.

"Good! Good!" said Zipacná happily. "I should like to have it in my mouth already!" And he was really dying of hunger. He wanted to try to crawl in, he wanted to enter, but the crab was climbing. He came out at once and the boys asked, "Did you not get it?"

"No," he answered, "because he was going up and I almost caught him. But perhaps it would be good if I go in from above," he added. And then he entered again from above, but as he was almost inside, with only the soles of his feet showing, the great hill slid and fell slowly down on his chest.

Zipacná never returned and he was changed into stone.

In this way Zipacná was defeated by the two boys, Hunahpú and Xbalanqué; he was the elder son of Vucub-Caquix, and he, according to the ancient legend, was the one who made the mountains.

At the foot of the hill called Meaguán he was vanquished. Only by a miracle was he vanquished, the second of the arrogant ones. One was left, whose history we shall tell now.

Chapter 9

The third of the arrogant ones was the second son of Vucub-Caquix who was called Cabracán.

"I demolish the mountains," he said.

But Hunahpú and Xbalanqué also defeated Cabracán. Huracán Chipi-Caculhá, and Raxa-Caculhá talked and said to Hunahpú and Xbalanqué:

"Let the second son of Vucub-Caquix also be defeated. This is our will, for it is not well what they do on earth, exalting their glory, their grandeur, and their power, and it must not be so. Lure him to where the sun rises," said Huracán to the two youths.

"Very well, honored sir," they answered, "because what we see is not right. Do you not exist, you who are the peace, you, Heart of Heaven?" said the boys as they listened to the command of Huracán.

Meanwhile, Cabracán was busy shaking the mountains. At the gentlest tap of his feet on the earth, the large and small mountains opened. Thus the boys found him and asked Cabracán:

"Where are you going, young man? "

"Nowhere," he answered, "here I am moving the mountains, and I am leveling them to the ground forever," he answered.

Then Cabracán asked Hunahpú and Xbalanqué, "What did you come to do here? I do not recognize you. What are your names?" said Cabracán.

"We have no names," they answered, "we are nothing more than shooters of blowguns and hunters with bird-traps on the mountains. We are poor and we have nothing, young man. We only walk over the large and small mountains, young man, and we have just seen a large mountain, over there where you see the pink sky. It really rises up very high and overlooks the tops of all the hills. So it is that we have not been able to catch even one or two of the birds on it, boy. But, is it true that you can level all the mountains?" Hunahpú and Xbalanqué asked Cabracán.

"Have you really seen the mountain of which you speak? Where is it? If I see it, I shall demolish it. Where did you see it?"

"Over there it is, where the sun rises," said Hunahpú and Xbalanqué.

"Very well, show me the road," he said to the two boys.

"Oh no!" they answered. "We must take you between us. One shall go at your left and the other at your right, because we have our blowguns, and if there should be birds we can shoot them." And so they set out happily, trying out their blowguns. But when they shot with them, they did not use the clay pellets in the tube of the blowgun; instead they felled the birds only with the puff of air when they shot them, which surprised Cabracán very much.

Then the boys built a fire and put the birds on it to roast, but they rubbed one of the birds with chalk, covering it with a white earth soil.

"We shall give him this," they said, "to whet his appetite with the odor which it gives off. This bird of ours shall be his ruin, as we cover this bird with earth so we shall bring him down to the earth and bury him in the earth.

"Great shall be the wisdom of a created being, of a being fashioned, when it dawns, when there is light," said the boys.

"As it is natural for man to wish to eat, so Cabracán desires food," said Hunahpú and Xbalanqué to each other.

Meanwhile the birds were roasting, they were beginning to turn golden brown, and the fat and juice which dripped from them made an appetizing odor. Cabracán wanted very much to eat them; they made his mouth water, he yawned, and the saliva and spittle drooled because of the smell which the birds gave off.

Then he asked them: "What is that you eat? The smell is really savoury. Give me a little piece," he said to them.

Then they gave a bird to Cabracán, the one which would be his ruin; and when he had finished eating it, they set out toward the east where the great mountain was. But already Cabracán's legs and hands were weakening and he had no strength because of the earth with which the bird he had eaten was rubbed, and he could do nothing to the mountains. Neither was it possible to level them.

Then the boys tied him, they tied his hands behind him and also tied his neck and his feet together. Then they threw him to the ground and there they buried him.

In this way Cabracán was overcome by Hunahpú and Xbalanqué. It would be impossible to tell of all the things they did here on earth.

Now we shall tell of the birth of Hunahpú and Xbalanqué, having first told of the destruction of Vucub-Caquix and that of Zipacná and of Cabracán, here on earth.