

HUNTING

YOU SMELL LIKE SMOKE, and I like that about your smell—that you have become of smoke. And that is why I nourish you with the fire I light, and don't lose you in my memory when you go away for hunting. I recognize your smell from far away, as you are approaching me far behind the palisades, before you cross the final furrow of wild boars, far behind the deer, and far beyond the lairs.

You commended yourself to Suhirina-riwe, who stroked the moon with the point of his arrow, and you painted your body with the spots of the jaguar, and you bundled in leaves every enchantment to hunt pures, tapirs, and sandpipers, and you blew the powders into the wind to immobilize the quanas wings and stop its flight, and to hold it intact up to the moment of releasing your feathered arrow.

You have the fire of the sacred kolori, and the best bows, constructed with skill, and the most alert ankles, and muscles most courageous. And you have me, following you forever, when you continue after the track, when you imitate the whistles, when you transmit the howls that paralyze the flock, when you make all the effort before shooting the dart.

You arrive. And you have returned alone without any othe hunter, you, solitary with your prey. You distribute to the men their precise ration, their necessary ration, and for yourself you conserve the large bones and the skull.

We'll display these bones over the hut, so that Omao will bring to the jungle new and robust animals, just like the ones you brought today.

At last, I roast the meat, and you again become of smoke. . . .

translated by the author and Marilyn Chin