

LAY OF LIFE AND DECAY

—Khajiiti M&M—

Aranor the spry, trueborn Valenwood son,

11

Stripling still, not yet a half century seen,

11

Loved to wander foothill, glade, and wooded grove.

11

Came to a hollow, and unfamiliar sight

11

Beheld: crouching therein a hoary Khajiit

11

Washing from fur bloody stain and fleshy gore.

11

“Where thy prey, and wherefore such lust, newfound friend?”

11

“No beast so great to merit such carnage lives

11

“Or mayhap art best hunter yet poor butcher?”

11

“Jest not, sapling elf, for barely three days past,

11

“Compelled by Earth Bones’ Pact, slain one dared profane

11

“Inviolate Green; soul for Ooze, flesh for food.”

11

“What name bear, stranger here, who honors Y’ffre?”

11

“Too few elves remember and keep Meat Mandate,

11

“Barbarous ‘tis deemed, rev’rence for tradition.”

11

“Long in past, Twilight Queen brought forest race change,

11

“Fur-clad forms bound to moons, penance must be borne:

11

“Pact kept in Wooded Vale, new life for Za’kir.”

11

Long discourse engaged these two, fast friendship forg'd.

11

Embarked on many hunts, swiftly prey pursued,

11

Greater love none: honor to Hostess Y'ffre.

11

Fateful day when chase brought them to aged elf,

11

In camp, small fire built, fallen deadwood fed.

11

Cat's eye, joyous rage, knife to throat, blood flame soaked.

11

“Wherefore this murder and such violence harbor?

11

“What tenet broke? No meat wasted, no sap burnt,

11

“Only dead grass and blighted branch for kindling!”

11

“Hear now, young elf, longer you live, but elder

11

“This one for now! No affront here, save the dead,

11

“Who took by fire new life through Rot from Green.”

11

Bowed then young Aranor to old feline's sight,

11

Agreed 'twas sin to take any plant from Green.

11

Chased they still after game, but Pact breakers first.

11

Benighted day! Came they across young mother

11

Bathing in pond whilst small daughter by reeds play'd,

11

Overturning stone, cry gave, revuls'd by Slugs.

11

Startled matron quickly rose, stumbled toward girl,

11

Reached out, for steadying assist, nearby branch,

11

Still green, alas, snapped! Aranor arrow loos'd.

11

“We must needs this woman eat, lest Pact we break!

11

“But what of kid? Guide me now, my dearest friend,

11

“For Earth Bones nor Ancestors will aid us now.”

11

“Attend thy juv'nile ear; put hope in Y'ffer,

11

“Or, rather, her Shadow. Life fails, but Rot grows.

11

“Give we now the babe to Decay, Namiira.”

11

“What trust in Ancestors Not? Reveal'd now thy

11

“Leal service, not Y'ffre first, but Lady Rot.

11

“All lives taken, cover, for cannibal's heart!”

11

“Partner in my arts, thee, sit at Darkness' feet!

11

“Taste the meals She gives! Inevitable Rot,

11

“Life's end; feed Decay, and 'morrow thee She feeds.”

11

Twisted-broken, Bosmer relented; back to

11

Hollow the pair away'd, grisly work began:

11

Small cries cut short: meal dress'd, new Hostess did carve.

11