

PRIMEVAL LITHUANIA (Excerpt from the novel "KELTAS")

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The nightingale warbled in an ancient mode. Jehova had forgotten this country. All his attention descended on Asia Minor.

...Within impenetrable marches, triangled firs —towers of Lithuanian temples — rose toward the stars. Creeping mists were turning into shapes: laumės, their braids astray; tiny and tattered kaukai; the aitvarai whistling through the air; lauksagai and žeme-patys oozing through the soil. The abstract gods of nature, their shapes changing every minute.

**Lole palo eglelo
Lepo Leputele,**

sang the nightingale. One had only to stand in the thicket to see how the adders attached themselves to the ground with every pore of their body, how toads observed the universe with their vaulted eyes. One needed only to meditate without deliberating. Words were but magic formulas, incomprehensible and replete with meanings like the shaping of the mists. All one needed was to contemplate the sharp-tongued flames of the eternal fire—they would light up the towerlike firs, and the huge immeasurable earth was the temple. To be born, to live, to die. To melt away into the mists, to sit down on the high benches of the beyond and, sometimes, to roam around the familiar forests and marshes.

And, if sorrow or terror would wander close, there was wood to shape half-human carvings from and to erect these on the roadsides. A sorrowful fright carved itself into elongated wrinkles, a shortened body and the final earthly devotion. These wooden sculptures did not compete with nature. In the tangled embraces of gnarled stumps, in the entanglement of branches, in the flow of lakes and rivers one could recognize these humanized ones. A sad terror enveloped those living.

**Skambinoj kankleliai
Lioj ridij augo,**

sang the nightingale.

Honeycombs, ears of rye, ryes, tulips and lilies. Sluggish and sweet-toothed bears. Resin of pine trees-golden amber, the slow suction of the Baltic foam into the amber sand.