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Jackal Dance

Here in the harrowing forest lie the harping trees...
 On the tops of the harping trees rose a funnel
 of smoke. The sent of cedar. The sounds of
 the harrowing forest. The smoke stretching for
 something more heavenly. A group of wild
 children dancing, dancing around a pyre.
 Some of them were angry. They were angry at
 the music, the sounds of the harping trees.
 The trees wouldn't stop talking... they were
 talking about cedar burning, about the
 funeral pyre. One of the boys decided
 to take a stick, the end turning to ashes,
 red ashes: hot as the body it was burning.
 And drove the stick into himself. His skin was
 burning. The sent of molten flesh:
I mean, his skin was melting, it was
 melting down to the muscle, then
 the muscle was melting. It was melting
 right off his bones. His white bones
 were singing, they were singing around
 the funeral pyre. *Then I saw him*,
 he was laughing, laughing with the
 other jackals. The jackal children
 were dancing & laughing. Someone
 was beating on drums and howling
 at the trees: the harping trees.
 The ashen sky, the ashen body. It was smoldering.
 Then one of the boys, in all his
 burning joy, took up the head of the
 corpse – it was still burning –
 and stuck it into the end of a stick.
You see, he thought that stick was
 harping, he thought it might be singing.
 He needed the silence: he
 needed to silence the stick.
 Then the head of the corpse
 was blinking its eyelids at the
 jackal – the head of the corpse was
 burning – he was telling the jackal
 he belonged back on the pyre. It was
 saying to put him back on the flames. But the

boy did not care, he did not listen. He
picked up the stick with the head on it
and led the others. He led them down
the corridor of the harrowing forest
– through the harping trees.

He led them down the dark way
and they all followed after. They wanted
the dead. They wanted this talking head.
We will make the dead live on, he said to the
others. *We will make the world see how the
dead live on...*

So, the jackal in a fervor walked until he
found the husk of an old tree, the bark
discolored from an old death: it
once had died long ago.

I must tell you now, what the boy didn't know
was that there was a ghost there: it was
hiding in the husk of the old tree. It
was watching the jackal, it was watching
the boy. The boy took the head
of the corpse – the burning head – and
pitched it into the side of the discolored old
tree. The tree was smoldering; the tree was
set on fire. The jackal was laughing in the night;
he was howling at the trees; and the others
became afraid of him... The ghost was watching
him as his lips curled up in that impeccable,
horrific smile. The ghost was sitting on the tops
of the flames; he was listening to the jackal howls.
He was smiling with the boy.