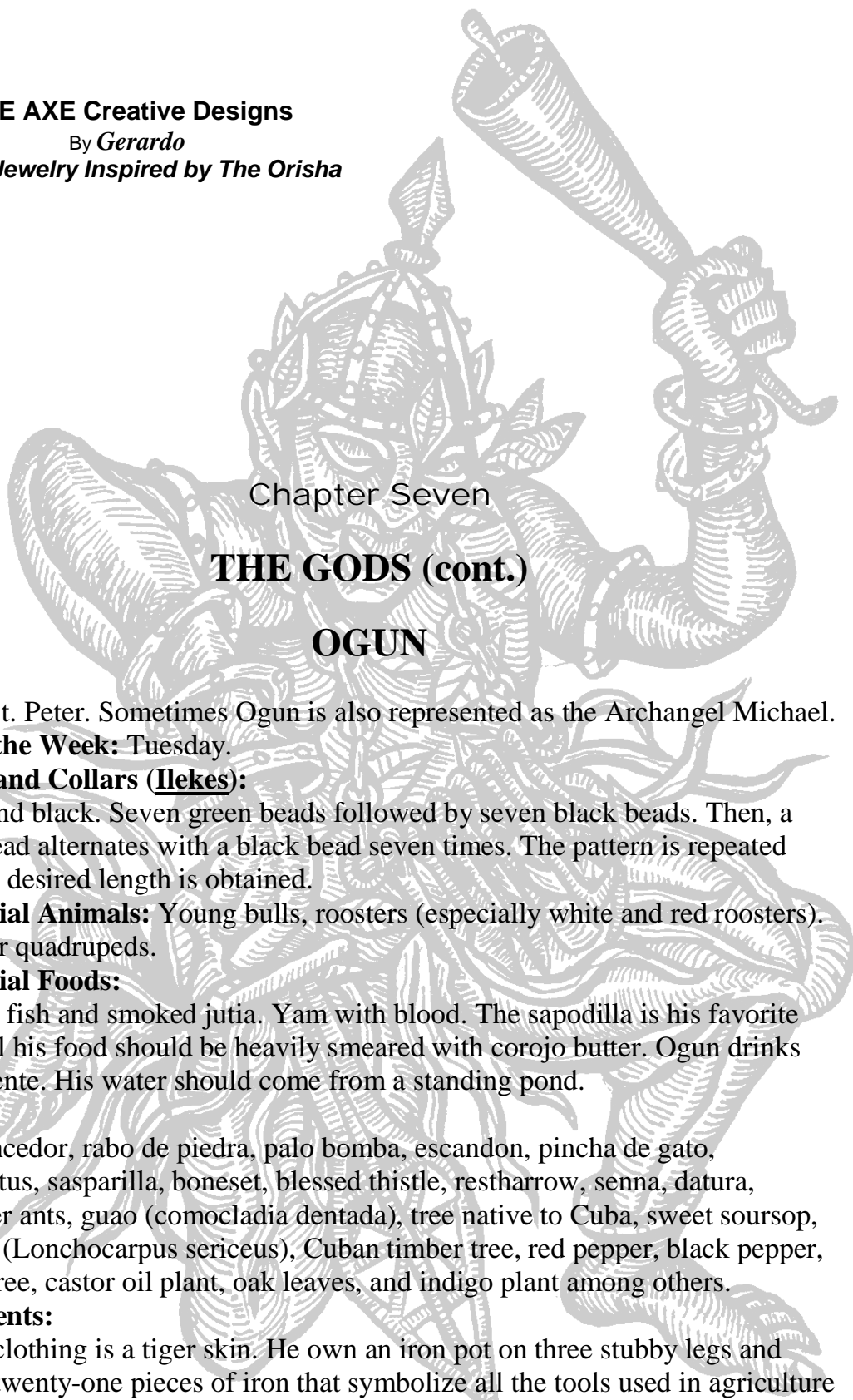




IFE AXE Creative Designs
By *Gerardo*
Jewelry Inspired by The Orisha



Chapter Seven

THE GODS (cont.)

OGUN

Saint: St. Peter. Sometimes Ogun is also represented as the Archangel Michael.

Day of the Week: Tuesday.

Colors and Collars (Ilekes):

Green and black. Seven green beads followed by seven black beads. Then, a green bead alternates with a black bead seven times. The pattern is repeated until the desired length is obtained.

Sacrificial Animals: Young bulls, roosters (especially white and red roosters). All other quadrupeds.

Sacrificial Foods:

Smoked fish and smoked jutia. Yam with blood. The sapodilla is his favorite fruit. All his food should be heavily smeared with corajo butter. Ogun drinks aguardiente. His water should come from a standing pond.

Herbs:

palo vencedor, rabo de piedra, palo bomba, escandon, pincha de gato, Eucalyptus, sasparilla, boneset, blessed thistle, restharrow, senna, datura, carpenter ants, guao (comocladia dentada), tree native to Cuba, sweet soursop, guamao (Lonchocarpus sericeus), Cuban timber tree, red pepper, black pepper, mastic tree, castor oil plant, oak leaves, and indigo plant among others.

Ornaments:

Ogun's clothing is a tiger skin. He own an iron pot on three stubby legs and nine or twenty-one pieces of iron that symbolize all the tools used in agriculture and blacksmithing. The most common tools are: an arrow, an anvil, a pickaxe,

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a hatchet, a machete, a hammer, and a key. Ogun's tools are always well greased with corajo butter.

Apataki:

For as long as anyone can remember, for as long as there is memory, Ogun and Chango have been enemies. The way it is told by some, their hatred goes back to their childhood.

It is said that Ogun had sex with his mother. The incestuous relationship took the mother's affections away from the father. Chango, Ogun's younger brother, grew up and found out about his brother's illicit love. He decided to take vengeance.

Ogun and Oya were lovers. Chango waited and watched Ogun's house until he saw that he left Oya alone. He went to the door, and, being a strong and fierce warrior, had no difficulty knocking it down.

He went in, grabbed Oya and ignored her protests.

"You are coming with me now," he told her. "You are going to be my woman."

When Ogun returned, he searched the house for Oya. The neighbors told him what had happened. Furious, Ogun ran to Chango's house.

Chango had made love to Oya. His sexual prowess had made her fall madly in love with him.

Ogun hammered on Chango's door. Chango stuck his head out a window.

"What do you want?" shouted Chango.

"I want my woman back," yelled Ogun.

"Well, let's see if she wants to go back with you," said Chango.

Oya leaned out the window.

"What do you want, little man?" she shouted. "Go back home, I'm quite happy here."

Ogun's face got very red. His throat swelled like a bull's.

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"He has put a spell on you," he shouted. "I don't care if he is the god of thunder. I'm going to make you mine again and destroy him."

Oya's and Chango's laughter was his answer.

Ogun and Chango have been mortal enemies ever since.

That's one version, but, another story tells of the time when Ogun and Chango met each other in the forest.

When he saw Chango, Ogun pounded his chest.

"Chango, I challenge you." He drove his huge spear into the earth between Chango's legs. "We haven't fought each other in a long time. It's time to show you that I'm the better warrior," bragged Ogun.

"When do you want to fight?" asked Chango without raising his voice.

"I want to fight right now!" roared Ogun.

"I agree with you," said Chango. "I want to fight you right now too."

With a yell, Ogun grabbed his spear and rushed at Chango.

"Wait, wait," said Chango. "Let's not rush matters. We have the rest of our lives in which to fight each other. Let's do this right."

"What do you mean?" growled Ogun.

"Let's have a drink first," said Chango. "Aren't you thirsty?" And, he took a large gulp from his gourd full of aguardiente.

"Let me have some," said Ogun. "Watching you drink makes me thirsty."

Chango handed him the gourd. "Have a good drink of aguardiente. I'll wait. We have all day to fight."

Chango knew that Ogun loved strong drink. He also knew that Ogun had no capacity for alcohol. After just a couple of gulps from the gourd, Ogun was weaving and laughing at nothing.

Ogun had two or three more slugs from the gourd. They went right to his head. His eyes got very red, so did his nose and ears.

"I'm ready to fight now." he yelled at Chango. "Get ready, I'm going to destroy you."

Of course, Ogun could do nothing of the kind, since he was now blind drunk. He whirled his arms, trying to hit Chango. Chango picked him up and threw him on the ground. Ogun tried to get up, but Chango jumped up and down on his chest, picked him up by his feet and swung his head against a tree. Ogun's head made a very unpleasant sound as it hit the tree trunk.

Chango left Ogun lying on the ground. The ants went into Ogun's nose and into his ears.

An hour later, Ogun came to. His head hurt terribly. His whole body was covered with insect bites and, what's worse, he felt like a complete fool for allowing Chango to play a dirty trick on him. He got to his feet slowly, blowing the ants out of his nose. He held on to the tree trunk for support.

"I will never forgive you," he croaked, shaking his fist in the direction of Chango's house. "I will never forgive this."

And, he didn't. Ogun never forgave Chango. They have been enemies ever since.

Notes:

Ogun rules all the metals. He is the only Orisha who can handle iron. All the trades that use metal tools, from the butcher to the steel worker to the surgeon, are protected by Ogun. He protects all warriors. Anyone wanting to work with a knife, a sword or an ax has to sacrifice to Ogun.

Ogun disguises himself in order to observe his "children". He can appear as a laborer, a hunter or a warrior. He also likes to dress up as a butcher or a smith. His wrath is terrible and usually takes the form of a bloody accident.

When Ogun comes down and possesses a Santero or Santera, he dances vigorous warrior dances and pretends to be clearing a path through the forest so that his warriors can follow him. Chango and Ogun should never be summoned in the same ceremony. If they gain possession of bodies at the same time, the two "caballos" will try to fight to the death, no matter how holy the occasion.

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OSAIN

Saint: St. John (San Jose) in the city and with St. Ambrose in the countryside.

Day of the Week: Sunday.

Colors and Collars (Ilekes): White, red and yellow. The collar is made up of one white bead followed by nine red beads and eight yellow beads. The pattern is repeated until the desired length is obtained.

Sacrificial Animals:

Goats and red roosters, turtles, turkeys, guinea hens, quail, black male doves, owls, monkeys. All reptiles, especially the crocodile. Osain will receive the feathers and the blood of pheasants, the heart of mockingbirds and the feathers and blood of hummingbirds. He also likes peacock feathers.

Sacrificial Foods:

The sap of trees and herbs. seeds, flowers and grains. Tobacco. He often appears to people with insomnia and asks them for a light. He drinks aguardiente.

Herbs: All medicinal and magical herbs belong to Osain.

Ornaments: Osain is never without his pipe. His Otanes and cowrie shells are kept in a gourd. The drums used in Santeria ceremonies are consecrated to him.

Apataki:

As his knowledge of herbal magic grew, Osain thought himself to be Orunmila's superior. Envy made his thoughts black.

"If I get rid of Orunmila," he muttered to himself. "I will have his powers and gifts as well as my own. I will be the most powerful Orisha."

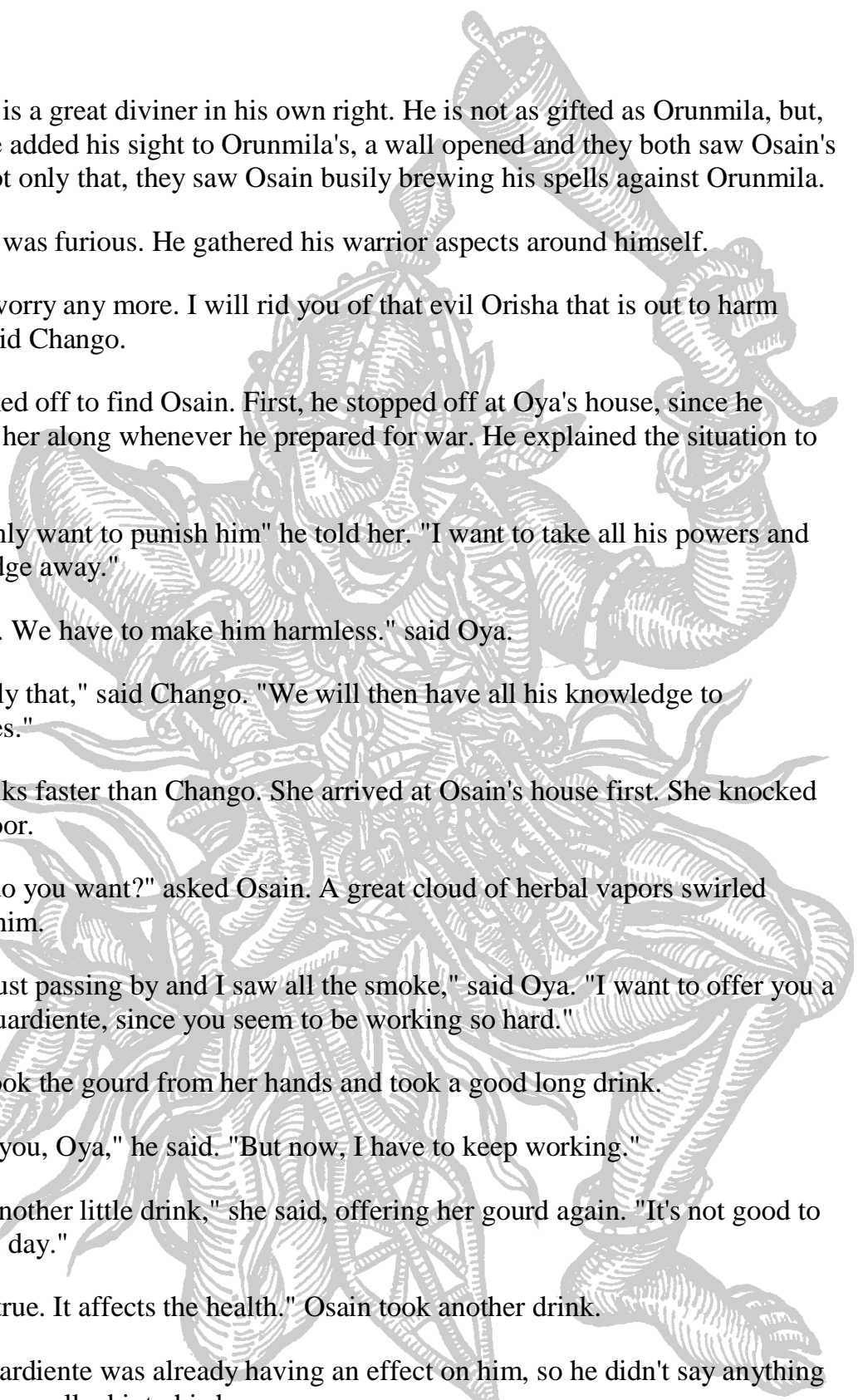
Osain began to cast powerful spells against Orunmila.

All Orunmila knew was that spells and evil influences were weaving a black web around his person. He began to have slight accidents and his health began to suffer. He attempted to use his oracular powers to find out who wished him harm, but Osain had been very careful to hide the source of his attack. Finally, Orunmila went to Chango's house.

"You must help me, Chango," said Orunmila. "My powers are not enough to see who is trying to harm me." "I will join my vision to yours and we're sure to discover who your enemy is." said Chango.

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Chango is a great diviner in his own right. He is not as gifted as Orunmila, but, when he added his sight to Orunmila's, a wall opened and they both saw Osain's face. Not only that, they saw Osain busily brewing his spells against Orunmila.

Chango was furious. He gathered his warrior aspects around himself.

"Don't worry any more. I will rid you of that evil Orisha that is out to harm you." said Chango.

He stalked off to find Osain. First, he stopped off at Oya's house, since he brought her along whenever he prepared for war. He explained the situation to her.

"I not only want to punish him" he told her. "I want to take all his powers and knowledge away."

"I agree. We have to make him harmless." said Oya.

"Not only that," said Chango. "We will then have all his knowledge to ourselves."

Oya walks faster than Chango. She arrived at Osain's house first. She knocked at his door.

"What do you want?" asked Osain. A great cloud of herbal vapors swirled around him.

"I was just passing by and I saw all the smoke," said Oya. "I want to offer you a little aguardiente, since you seem to be working so hard."

Osain took the gourd from her hands and took a good long drink.

"Thank you, Oya," he said. "But now, I have to keep working."

"Have another little drink," she said, offering her gourd again. "It's not good to work all day."

"That's true. It affects the health." Osain took another drink.

The aguardiente was already having an effect on him, so he didn't say anything when Oya walked into his house.

"I think I'll have another little drink." said Osain.

"Drink up. I have plenty. " said Oya.

Osain drank and drank until he had to lay down. He fell asleep. Oya put her hands on his head and began to take his secrets. But, she had underestimated Osain's capacity for drink. He woke up and grabbed her wrists.

"So, that's why you came," he shouted. "You wanted to steal my secrets."

Oya broke away and ran out into the garden with Osain close behind her.

"You can't get away. I'm going to kill you," he shouted.

He leaped and landed on Oya's back. Oya bit and clawed him. They rolled over and over among the herbs. "Chango! Chango, help me!" screamed Oya.

Chango heard her screams. He ran around the house and jumped over the garden wall.

"You are brave enough to fight a woman," yelled Chango. "Let's see if you are brave enough to fight a warrior."

He threw a thunderbolt that tore off Osain's left arm. Holding the spurting stump, Osain ran back to his cauldrons and grabbed a gourd that held his most potent and dangerous magical herbs. Before he could throw it, Chango let loose with another thunderbolt meant to strike Osain blind. Osain ducked his head just in time. It only tore off his ear, leaving a little nub. The pain made him drop the gourd. It shattered on the ground.

"I'm going to take chunks off you until there is nothing left." growled Chango.

He would have whittled Osain down to nothing but, he only go to strike him a couple of times. As Chango was winding up more thunderbolts, Ogun, that terrible warrior and Chango's sworn enemy, appeared. Ogun changed himself into a lightning rod and prevented any more thunderbolts from reaching Osain.

Since that fight, Osain has been a small shrivelled Orisha. He only has one arm and one leg and a very small nub of an ear. He gets around by giving little hops, like a bird.

Notes:

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In Santeria, each plant has its own ashe, its magical power, which can be either harmful or beneficial. Osain knows them all. Cultivated food plants hold no interest for him.

The Babalawos and Iyalochas that serve Osain are great herbalists. They follow an oral traditions which describes the properties of thousands of plants.

The Babalawo or Iyalocha must refrain from sex the night before going out to gather herbs. Once deep in the woods, an offering of aguardiente and a little package with tobacco and a few coins is left as payment to Osain.

When a plant is going to be used, the necessary offerings must be made to Osain to ensure the effectiveness of the herb's ashe.

Osain never possesses anyone at a "golpe de santo".

◇

OSHOSI

Saint: St. Norbert.

Day of the Week: Tuesday.

Colors and Collars (Ilekes):

Green. The collar is made up of green beads. Brown and green are also popular.

Sacrificial Animals: Deer, red roosters. Sheep, goat, pigs.

Sacrificial Foods:

Smoked fish and smoked jutia. Yams. Mango is his favorite fruit. All his food should be liberally covered with corajo butter. He drinks aguardiente. Oshosi's water should come from a well.

Herbs:

espinilla, cercelera, jia blanca, chincha, Leadwort, esparto grass, fulminate, incense, tobacco, vine arbor, Jamaican rosewood, castor oil plant, and basil among others.

Ornaments: A bow and arrow. A model of a jail.

Apataki:

Before becoming an Orisha, Oshosi earned his livelihood and supported his mother by his skills as a hunter. He knew every nook and cranny of the forest.

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He knew all the habits of the animals. One day, as Oshosi was walking along a forest path, Orunmila appeared to him.

"Oshosi, hear me." said Orunmila.

"I am yours to command." said Oshosi, bowing low. "Please stand up," said Orunmila. "I am here to ask for your help."

"It is not for me to help an Orisha." said Oshosi.

"But, I will do what I can."

"I have need of your skills as a hunter. Olodumare wants one of the fat delicious quail found in this area. I promised I would get him one, but I have been here for three days and haven't had any luck," confessed Orunmila. "I just don't know how to hunt them."

"Why, that would be no trouble at all," said Oshosi.

"If you get one of those quail for me, you will have my and Olodumare's blessing for the rest of your life," said Orunmila.

"Meet me at my house tomorrow," said Oshosi. "I will have a quail for you."

Orunmila disappeared. Oshosi immediately set about hunting quail. With his skill and knowledge, it wasn't very long before he had a beautiful hen struggling inside his sack. Whistling, he made his way back home.

Oshosi put the quail hen in a little cage and went back into the woods to hunt. He travelled a long ways and, as was his custom, spent the night under a tree.

The following morning, he hurried home to meet Orunmila. Visions of all the wonderful things he would ask Olodumare made his head spin. His mother would be so happy!

Orunmila was already waiting when Oshosi arrived home.

"Good morning, Oshosi. Were you able to trap a quail?" Orunmila asked him.

"I trapped the fattest and most beautiful quail in all the forest," said Oshosi.

He went in the house. He came out with an empty cage.

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"Where is it?" asked Orunmila.

"I don't understand it," said Oshosi. "I left it in this cage yesterday afternoon, and now, it is gone."

"Are you playing with me?" Orunmila was becoming angry.

"Of course not, sir. I would not dare," said Oshosi. "Mother!"

Oshosi's little mother came out of the house, drying her wrinkled hands.

"Yes, my son?"

"Mother, do you know anything about the quail I left in this cage yesterday afternoon?"

"No, dear," she said. "I don't know anything."

Oshosi's mother was lying. She had seen the quail in its cage the day before. She had been happy that her thoughtful son had brought her such a tasty bird to eat. She had killed it, plucked it, and eaten it, but she was afraid of admitting it to Orunmila.

"Don't worry, Orunmila. I will go out right now and I will have another beautiful bird for you by this afternoon," said Oshosi.

It was not hard to keep his promise. In just one hour, he had another beautiful quail hen struggling inside his sack. He returned to his house. Orunmila was waiting for him.

"You see," said Oshosi, proudly taking the fluttering quail out of the sack. "I have brought you another beautiful quail."

"You have done me such a great favor that I will take you directly to Olodumare so you can present him with this quail yourself," said Orunmila. "It is not just that I should receive the credit when it was your skill that made Olodumare's gift possible."

They went to Olodumare's house. He was delighted with the quail.

"You have made my heart glad today," said Olodumare.

"It is my pleasure to honor you, great sir," responded Oshosi.

"I thank you too, Orunmila, for having had the wisdom to turn over your task to this great hunter," said Olodumare. "I have decided to make you an Orisha, Oshosi. You will be a king among hunters."

Praise and treasures were heaped on Oshosi. He did not let it go to his head. He kept a pleasing humility before Olodumare. After all the ceremonies were over, Oshosi approached Olodumare.

"Sir, I would ask that you grant me one more boon," said Oshosi.

"And what might that be?" asked Olodumare.

"I have not forgiven the one that stole the first quail that I trapped for you," said Oshosi. "I want vengeance. Please allow that, when I release my arrow, it will find the thief's heart."

"I cannot deny you what you wish," said Olodumare sadly. "But you will not forgive yourself for asking such a boon."

Oshosi released his arrow and, guided by Olodumare's will, it went straight into Oshosi's mother's breast. Horrified, Oshosi watched his mother die by his own hand

After the funeral, Oshosi stood before Olodumare, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"I will no longer be a hunter. I will fulfill my duty and help all hunters, but I will never forget that it was my need for vengeance and my lack of foresight that caused my mother's death."

Notes:

Oshosi lives in the forests and is a close friend of Osain. Osain has revealed many herbal secrets to him.

Oshosi often battles alongside Elegua and Ogun. Together, they form an invincible combination.

When Oshosi comes down during a "golpe de santo" and possesses a believer, the person always pretends to be shooting with a bow and arrow.

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ORISHAOCO

Saint: St. Ysidro (St. Isidro).

Day of the Week: Sunday.

Colors and Collars (Ilekes): Lilac. His collar is made up of lilac beads.

Sacrificial Animals: Red roosters, monkeys.

Sacrificial Foods: Yams and all produce from the garden.

Herbs:

bejuco guarana, bejuco lechero, jiba, Yam, Sweet potato, Datura, bejuco colorado, (*serjania diversifolia*), and everything that grows in a garden and is cultivated.

Ornaments: A hoe and all the tools of the gardener.

Notes:

Orishaoco is in charge of crops and agriculture. He settles fights among the Orishas, and always acts as a judge in delicate cases. He spends a lot of time resolving the arguments between Chango and his wives.

During full moon, the women whose task it is to do the gardening, make offerings to him. The majority of his followers are women and it is mostly Iyalochas who serve at his ceremonies.



THE IBEYI (Taebo & Kainde)

Saint: St. Cosme and St. Damian.

Day of the Week: Sunday.

Colors and Collars (Ilekes):

The colors and collars are the same as Oshun's and Chango's, the Ibeyi's parents.

Sacrificial Animals:

Pigs, sheep, goats, bull calves and donkeys. Men who suffer from impotency or other sexual problems only offer the testicles of these animals.

Sacrificial Foods: Candies and sweets.

Herbs: Palm, gourds, coco plum, corn, gemip, sago palm, sapodilla, tomato.

Ornaments:

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The Ibeyi should always be dressed identically. Their figurines should be tied or chained together to insure that they won't separate.

Apataki:

Obatala was known among the other Orishas for his generosity. His thrifty habits assured him of having enough money to help anyone who needed help. Unfortunately, word spread that he kept money in his house.

He was robbed many times. He tried putting his money under the bed. He tried putting his money on the roof. He buried his money in the yard. No luck. Every time he found a new hiding place for his money, thieves would break in while he was taking a message to Olodumare. Obatala always came home to an empty house. He could not stand it anymore. Olodumare was too noble to resent the robberies, but he was tired of having his floors dug up and his walls caved in by industrious thieves. He went to Oshosi.

"Make me the longest ladder in the world and a big strong sack," he told Oshosi.

When Oshosi had finished working and brought him the ladder and the sack, Obatala went to his house and filled the big sack with money. He then went to the middle of the forest. He found the tallest tree in the world and used his ladder to climb to the top. There, Obatala hung his money bag.

The Ibeyi had seen everything. They ran to find Chango.

"Chango, Chango! We know where Obatala's money is," they shouted. "We saw him hide it at the top of a tree!"

This news made Chango very happy. His drunken parties had been financed many times by Obatala's money. He now had the chance to get the month's drinking money. Chango was proud of his boys.

"Show me where it is," he told them. And, they set off for the forest.

Chango and the Ibeyi found the tree, but Obatala had surrounded it with fierce wild animals that attacked anyone that came close. Chango thought and thought and came up with an idea.

"Give me your candy," he told the Ibeyi. "When we get the money, I will buy you twice as much."

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"Make it three times as much," said the greedy twins, "and it's a deal." Chango agreed and the Ibeyi gave him all their candies and pastries.

Chango spread the food around the tree and, while the wild animals were busy eating it, climbed to the top and dropped the bag with Obatala's money down to the twins.

Chango was not seen for a month. The Ibeyi had a feast.

Notes:

The Ibeyi are identical twins who represent fortune, good luck and prosperity. In all the ceremonies, their images are always tied together to prevent their separation. If they do separate, all of their power to bring good luck disappears.

They are practical jokers like Elegua, but, unlike him, they never injure anyone.

They do not come down during ceremonies to possess anyone but, dancers dance for their pleasure and honor by imitating the little hops and skips that very small children make while playing.

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