

# Gundogdu Gencer



# MOCTEZUMA

**a tragedy in two acts**



# MOCTEZUMA

**a tragedy in two acts by:**

**Güngör DILMEN**

**translated by**

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playwright

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## **CHARACTERS:**

### **THE AZTECS:**

**MOCTEZUMA**

**CUAUTEMOC**

**CUAUPOPOCA**

**THE MESSENGER**

**1. AZTEC**

**2. AZTEC**

**3. AZTEC / 2ND AMBASSADOR OF TLASCALA**

**4. AZTEC / 1ST AMBASSADOR OF TLASCALA/ TLASCALAN**

### **THE SPANIARDS:**

**HERNANDO CORTÉS**

**BERNAL DIAZ DEL CASTILLO**

**PEDRO DE ALVARADO**

**FATHER OLMEDO**

**LOPEZ**

**1. SPANIARD**

**2. SPANIARD / TAPIA'S OFFSIDER**

**3. SPANIARD / TAPIA**

**& DOÑA MARINA (MALINCHE)**

## PROLOGUE

**AZTECS:** Then came the pale strangers  
The fake gods of civilisation  
And captured all that we had  
Came the ungodly gods of civilisation  
Their eyes on our life's blood  
Our laws are trampled upon  
They stalk our streets like starving wolves  
They rob, they rape, they kill, they steal,  
Gods of civilisation

**1. SPANIARD:** Make a careful note of all the strategic points  
distances, shelters and access points, Pedro

**SPANIARDS:** C'mon you gods of civilisation,  
Let's show this mob what it's like  
Let us, to this underdeveloped backwater,  
Be the harbingers of light and of science

**AZTECS:** And came the gods of civilisation  
Yes, they have taught us a skill or two  
Yet their eyes are on our life's blood

**SPANIARDS:** C'mon the chosen horde of Christ  
Blazon forth all things useful  
Think hard of the things we can do  
To develop this torpid backwater

**AZTECS:** The fake gods of civilisation  
Their eyes are on our life's blood  
Their blood-shot eyes

**SPANIARDS:** Let's develop this torpid backwater

**AZTECS:** They look upon us with disdain  
Their eyes on our life's blood

**2. SPANIARD:** The secrets of our arms can not be revealed  
They are our military secrets

**AZTECS:** They look upon us with disdain  
How much longer are we to abide

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**SPANIARDS:** Our hearts ail incurably  
Gold is the only remedy

**AZTECS:** Mexica, Mexica,  
Mexica is the heart of gold

**LOPEZ:** Fight in this army like we do  
Even your stirrups can be gold

**AZTECS:** Mexica, Mexica  
Mexica is the heart of gold

**1. AZTEC:** They will run amok when they see this treasure  
Only four hundred came today  
Tomorrow, four hundred thousand

**3. SPANIARD:** We have nothing to do with troops or the army  
All we want is fair trade

**1. SPANIARD:** Fairly give them coloured glass  
To be paid for with gold

**2. SPANIARD:** We may be taking their gold

**LOPEZ:** But to this underdeveloped backwater  
We bring science, we bring light

**2. AZTEC:** The pale strangers must go

**SPANIARDS:** Our sufferings have more than paid off  
They have sent us  
Their most beautiful maidens, their noblest

**AZTECS:** How much longer can we abide this disdain

**SPANIARDS:** All this gold with not one drop of blood  
Greater prizes lie in waiting

**AZTECS:** They've enslaved every man  
Sent them to quarries, gods of civilisation  
Except the old, the infirm  
Whom they killed

**SPANIARDS:** Permanently pregnant is the soil  
spouting unseen before plants and fruits  
Permanently pregnant is the soil  
in her womb stirs gold, stirs silver  
Mexico, Mexico  
Mexico is the heart of gold

**AZTECS:** They will run amok when they see this treasure  
Only four hundred came today  
Stop them before four hundred thousand arrive

**SPANIARDS:** More gold than we can ever lift  
and gilded glories await us, hallelujah

**OLMEDO:** Hallelujah!

**1/2 AZTECS:** The pale strangers must go

**SPANIARDS:** Mexico, Mexico  
Mexico is the heart of gold

**3. SPANIARD:** Now that we have them cowering  
we should raid the towns, the villages  
for all the gold that there is

**AZTECS:** Is a blind eye blindly accepting the laws

**SPANIARDS:** Lift all the gold that there is

**AZTECS:** Only four hundred came today  
Stop them before four hundred thousand arrive  
The pale strangers must go

**SPANIARDS:** Mexico, Mexico  
Mexico is the heart of gold

**AZTECS:** The pale strangers must go  
The pale strangers must go

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**SPANIARDS:** We are your friends, and so shall we remain  
Trust us, trust us

**AZTECS:** By capturing the king  
They now rule his realm

**SPANIARDS:** A blessed future awaits this domain  
You must trust us





I want your faces yellow

yellow in a hateful blaze

your hate pouring

yellow like

out like molten gold

molten gold

blazing with hateful fire

with the gold of hate

of gold, of hate

**ACT ONE****SCENE 1**

**CUAUTEMOC:** What seek you, out of your beds at this ungodly hour?

**1. AZTEC:** We've come to relate our dreams to great Moctezuma.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Return to your dens, and quick, keep to yourselves those warped imaginings. Moctezuma has nought to learn from you.

**2. AZTEC:** Do not come between the king and we, brave Cuautemoc.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Thirst you for your death? Down I say, make haste.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Is that my nephew brave Cuautemoc's petulant voice that I hear? What is it again, what is happening? Who are you? Yes, I can see why you're here.

**3. AZTEC:** We've come to relate our dreams to great Moctezuma.

**MOCTEZUMA:** And our valued commander Cuautemoc was trying to forfend this.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Take no heed of their ramblings Moctezuma. Rid yourself of this pitiful mob.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Pitiful they are not. At this twilight hour, when the pyramids' cool shadow lulls Tenochtitlán into slumber, only they show concern for the fate of the realm. Speak old woman.

**1. AZTEC:** I was in the presence of the god of darkness, Tezcatlipoca, the Smoking Mirror. His lips of stone quivered, his words shot forth as sparks through the smoke. "My enemy, Quetzalcoatl, the Plumed Serpent, whom I had robbed of his realm and sent to exile, the great god, is returning", he said, and "Moctezuma, Moctezuma", he cried in pain.

**2. AZTEC:** I saw a winged serpent descend on the Aztec capital. Tenochtitlán was all aflame amidst the tranquil lakes.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Great Moctezuma, our army has concluded the Tlascalala campaign with exceptional success. We have made peace with Tlascalala once again.

**3. AZTEC:** I see three eagles defending Aztec in three directions. The great god burns one, breaks the wings of the second and smashes him on the ground, and the third... ah, my bravest eagle, he strangles. And amidst the tranquil lakes, Tenochtitlán's all aflame.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Not only these sights, but dark omens throughout the whole realm, all speak the same tongue. Citlaltepētl bursts forth untimely fire, the lakes surge thrice as if to swallow up Tenochtitlán. Aztec women give birth to strange creatures as if mated with snakes in the grass.

**CUAUTEMOC:** These are but common events. You are vexed needlessly. Which foe have we not subdued? Tlascalala, the Totonacs, Tabasco, the entire Yucatan coast have submitted to our rule. Doubtless, you are the most fortunate of Aztec kings. You make shine the eternal star of Aztec.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Look at this star, Cuautemoc, unblinking. Is it not a serpent in flames?

**CUAUTEMOC:** The tale haunts you still.

**MOCTEZUMA:** My unchanging faith.

**1. AZTEC:** Great god Quetzalcoatl, who shall return at the change of time... The source of all our dreams.

**DREAMERS:** Aztec, Tlascalala, Totonac, Maya, Olmec

Instead of these, where enmity rules

Once was only Tollan, one and only Tollan

Where the earth and the sky were one

And eternity was the ever-reigning king

**2. AZTEC:** Quetzalcoatl was the god of Tollan

A white hot ember was his heart

He lived singly and all alone

Lest his divine virtues be tainted

And eternity was the ever-reigning king.

**3. AZTEC:** Tezcatlipoca, the smoking mirror, of the dead

His eternal enemy, crept up on him

brandishing his mirror of darkest coal

**1. AZTEC:** The God saw himself unsightly

And writhed in endless pain

**2. AZTEC:** Then the sorcerer Tezcatlipoca

Tempting the God with mortal joys

Stole, stole away his realm

**3. AZTEC:** Quetzalcoatl, now the self-exiled God

Bared his breast to the salty winds

And with his last remaining spark

Burned himself there and then

Becoming a shooting star

As he rose above the salty seas

Thus he promised: "I shall return"

**MOCTEZUMA:** No more rest, no sweet sleep for Moctezuma. Quetzalcoatl returns.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Look my lord, watch your city reflecting in the lakes, listen to the sounds of your people awakening.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Tenochtitlán might not awaken one day. Perhaps another city, in its place.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Hear you what you say Moctezuma? Utterances that would be judged treason on anyone else's lips.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Look in this direction Cuautemoc. What see you?

**CUAUTEMOC:** Nought, my lord, there is a heavy mist.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Look this way now, in this direction.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Had there been no mist, Citlaltepetl, my lord,.

**MOCTEZUMA:** And beyond?

**CUAUTEMOC:** The mountain range beyond, had there been no mist.

**MOCTEZUMA:** And further beyond?

**CUAUTEMOC:** I could see no further than the ranges, even if there had been no mist.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Whereas a king must, Cuautemoc. Beyond the ranges, the purple valleys, the red valleys, all the way to the Yucatan coast, all the way to the purple foaming waves, a king must be able to see all of Aztec, mist or no mist. The king must know his realm like his own body, Cuautemoc, or he wreaks misfortune upon Aztec.

**CUAUTEMOC:** I almost understand what you say, Moctezuma, but why say these things to me? You are the king, I am Cuautemoc, the falling eagle, I am a mere commander in your service. The red tip of my flint sword is the furthest I can see.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Why say I this to you? If only I knew, Cuautemoc. Perhaps I am unsure of my body. I feel an illness, starting far away, I feel a clot that sits here, right here.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Moctezuma speaks not like the king who gave our armies victory after victory, but a soothsayer trying to divine clues from the unknowable.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Your victories please us, my eagles. You have, once again, Tlascala on its knees. Once was only Tollan, one and only Tollan, where the earth and the sky were one, and eternity was the ever-reigning king. Now that we have been brought down, chained to the soil, come to know no better toil, how am I to account for this to the great god?

**CUAUTEMOC:** Your fears are unfounded. He will never return. Our great god will never return.

**MESSENGER:** Moctezuma.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Who is this? Another dreamer perhaps?

**MESSENGER:** What I saw was no dream. From beyond the seas, in their winged floating houses, white strangers have landed on the Yucatan coast.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Tell me.

**MESSENGER:** We saw them up close. Superhuman creatures, with red and black beards, their bodies covered with shimmering shells - sparks flew when they were struck-. Then those never-before-seen four-legged monsters with foaming, smoking flying manes unleashed on us like a tornado. But the most fearful, I shudder as I remember... Black-green dragons, thundering in fury, their anger uprooting trees, moving huge boulders... Their growl was more frightening than this sacrificial drum.

**2. AZTEC:** Such were the creatures in our dreams.

## SCENE 2

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**AZTECS:** *In the year of one reed was Quetzalcoatl to come  
On a nine wind day  
This was the year, this was the day*

**SPANIARDS:** *We landed on holy thursday, April the twenty first, 1519*

**AZTECS:** *Year of one reed, on a nine wind day*

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**DIAZ:** The horse show really impressed the natives. The neighing, bucking, galloping stallions confused them totally. Not to mention the cannons... That really scared them out of their wits. As the cannonballs uprooted the trees, their eyes nearly

popped out. Well Pedro Alvarado, any new developments in your map? I mean, where are we now? It makes me feel secure being in a place with a name I know. The coastline looks fine. What about inland? Rio de Alvarado! Well, well, well, you've already immortalised your name, eh? Why don't you find me a river too, or a modest volcano? It must be active, though.

**LOPEZ:** What about the commander? Shouldn't the honour go to him, you know, before you or me...

**ALVARADO:** I did offer it to Hernando first, but he just shrugged and smiled.

**LOPEZ:** I don't care what the Velasquez mob says, I like Hernando, you know, he's sort of humble.

**DIAZ:** You cretin. A mere river or mountain will not do Hernando Cortes, that's why he would have shrugged it off.

**CORTES:** Silence the cannons, that will do for today. We mustn't show all our cards at once. We can accept the ambassadors of the native tribes now. This distance of fear must always remain.

**DIAZ:** And how about our lot Hernando? How do we keep them tamed?

**ALVARADO:** Velasquez's men started grumbling even before we landed. They're openly accusing you of hijacking the fleet from Cuba.

**CORTES:** The best would be to win them over. These gentlemen will soon stop being the merchant seamen of Velasquez... I don't want to go into this now. Call the ambassadors.

**ALVARADO:** Those who want to return to Cuba are the land-owners, the others couldn't care less. Some are glad to be rid of gaol, some of their wives.

**1. AMBASSADOR:** We, the ambassadors of Tlascala  
offer these meagre gifts of our lord  
to the white stranger  
by the grace of great Moctezuma

**2. AMBASSADOR:** Our lord Mase Eskase says  
let the white men accept  
these worthless gifts of mine  
and my endless respects, regards

**D. MARINA:** The children of saltless plains  
- a fighting nation-  
their gifts are but poor

**ALVARADO:** Is this all you have to offer? You can't even match the Tabascans. They have sent us their most beautiful maidens, their noblest. Don't you have any gold?

**CORTES:** I speak to the ambassadors Pedro. Tell them Doña Marina, our hearts ail incurably and gold is the only remedy.

**AMBASSADORS:** Mexica, Mexica  
Mexica is the heart of gold

**CORTES:** And this Moctezuma, mentioned in reverence by other tribes, and now by the Tlascalans... Who is he?

**D. MARINA:** The supreme ruler of Mexica, and the protector of all subject nations. His name is mentioned in reverence everywhere in the country. One does not say "the lords of Totonac" but "the lords of Totonac by the grace of Moctezuma".

**1.AMBASSADOR:** We offer these gifts in shame. We have only just finished fighting Aztec. We have made peace only recently.

**CORTES:** Is that why you brought no gold?

**2. AMBASSADOR:** Gold be damned. We have no salt.

**1. AMBASSADOR:** Our plains bear no salt.

**2 AMBASSADOR:** Tlascala is dying for want of salt.

**1.AMBASSADOR:** Their lakes are full of salt. Their mountains full of rock salt. They begrudge us the salt.



**CORTES:** That is despicable behaviour by the Aztecs. And why do they do this?

**2. AMBASSADOR:** So that we can not fight well. Because Tlascala is a fighting nation. They send us salt when they feel like it, in return for sacrifices.

**CORTES:** Sacrifices?

**1. AMBASSADOR:** They put our young girls, our young men on the black stone on top of the pyramid and offer their hearts to their dark god. We have been at war with Aztec as far back as we can remember.

**CORTES:** If Moctezuma is so powerful, why doesn't he just capture Tlascala?

**2. AMBASSADOR:** Moctezuma says: "If there are no enemies to fight, how would the Aztec youth become men? If Aztec and Tlascala do not fight, the Aztec blood would thicken, altars would lose their flame, the sun would fall ill."

**1. AMBASSADOR:** Great Moctezuma says: "War is the only universal harmony".

**CORTES:** Where is this king's land?

**D. MARINA:** Beyond the ranges, beyond the purple valleys and the red valleys, past the volcanoes. On the highlands lies Tenochtitlán, on the islands in the middle of three interconnecting lakes.

**AMBASSADORS:** They're coming, they're coming.

**CORTES:** What's going on?

**AMBASSADORS:** The Aztec ambassadors, the Aztec ambassadors.

**CORTES:** Let the Aztec ambassadors wait.

**2. AMBASSADOR:** Moctezuma might get angry if he finds out that we are friendly towards the white strangers without his knowledge. We have only just made peace.

**CORTES:** Your fears are unfounded. A new age is dawning for the Totonacs, Sempoala and Tlascala. You shall no longer fear Moctezuma.

**AMBASSADORS:** Whom shall we fear instead?

### SCENE 3

**CUAUTEMOC:** We must attack with no delay. Or else they will turn against us all the coastal nations.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** We must send them back to the sea before they can spread their evil seeds to Mexica.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Let our warriors set forth immediately.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Let us ponder first, my daring children, what it would mean to engage them openly? If it is Quetzalcoatl who has arrived, if it is the children of Quetzalcoatl, we must beware actions that would endanger the realm. We must first test if they are hostile. Let us overcome them with guile. Who can compete with us in this? I will set my sorcerers upon them.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Let us fight them openly, not with sorcery.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** The Tabascans have already started handselling their women, their girls to the strangers. Where will all this fraternity lead?

**CUAUTEMOC:** The fake god has a lover called Malinche. She has learned the strangers' tongue quickly and changed her name to Marina. It appears that this woman is now their guide.

**MOCTEZUMA:** If they are the enemies of Aztec as you think, I can let loose a hundred thousand warriors upon them in one day, and another hundred thousand the next.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Mobilise one tenth of that, and Mexica would be secure. They are only a handful. Observers have counted three hundred, perhaps three and a half. But they have not been idle, the danger is growing, I am releasing my archers.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Have we a self-appointed advisor in Cuautemoc?

**CUAUTEMOC:** These white strangers are no gods, they are flesh, blood and soul just like us.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He can appear in a multitude of guises. Quetzalcoatl will not show us his true face naturally. He will gradually resemble us as he approaches Tenochtitlán. What can be more obvious? He may be the lover of Malinche now, the beautiful Tabascan maiden, or the commander of the white strangers. But all signs point to him being the exiled god of Aztec. He walked through tempests day after day, and as he approached our coast he shed his celestial dimensions and donned flesh and blood.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Gods, like stone carvings, must keep distant from us.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Quetzalcoatl is coming, from beyond the stirring seas.

**CUAUTEMOC:** What is to happen when he comes? Are you to remain the ruler? What is to happen to the centuries-old order?

**MOCTEZUMA:** Is it not such questions that discompose my mind, that thrust me into the merciless dilemma of apprehension and joy? He perhaps shall judge us. Have we reason to fear this? We have done deeds of which we are proud, in his absence. Finds he a Mexica such as he left? Has nought changed, in him, in us? Had we faults, can our sacrifices not be penance enough?

**CUAUTEMOC:** What if the whole of Aztec is that sacrifice? Remind yourself of the apparitions those evil-tongued somnambulists described. Tenochtitlán was all aflame. Was it not you, who one night heard the cries of your ancestors deep from the foundations of the pyramid?

**MOCTEZUMA:** The white strangers must go. Let my sorcerers set forth immediately.

**CUAUTEMOC:** The army, Moctezuma, not the sorcerers.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Let my sorcerers descend upon them, frighten the white gods with the worst of spells, and make them return whence they came. Let their incenses

contrive nightmares for them, worse than our nightmares. Let them set forth poisonous vermin, let bitter-green and black bugs discompose their minds, just as they have discomposed our minds. Let my sorcerers set forth.

## SCENE 4

**LOPEZ:** Poor Velasquez has no luck with his admirals. Remember Grijalva before us... He was such a pious prick.

**2. SPANIARD:** He was loyal, though. He was no double-dealer like Cortes. He did return to Cuba.

**DIAZ:** Yes, with the few ships even he couldn't manage to sink. He was a black coat all right. All he could think of was converting every native he could get his hands on. He knew nothing about fighting or trade.

**LOPEZ:** Hernando is a commander to his boots.

**DIAZ:** What Velasquez needed was someone as loyal as Grijalva, and as resourceful as Cortes. But, I mean, who can be both?

**2. SPANIARD:** Some people have convinced the governor that Cortes is the only person to succeed on this mission.

**DIAZ:** Velasquez likes people being recommended.

**3. SPANIARD:** And those bastards will get a share of our gold for their bloody services.

**2. SPANIARD:** But when they said: "Cortes is the best man to command the troops", the governor blew his top, "I have nothing to do with troops or the army, my men are going to the new country for trade", he said.

**1. SPANIARD:** "And take our lord, Jesus to those heathens", he added.

**LOPEZ:** Yeah, all we want is fair trade, giving the natives coloured glass, to be paid for with gold.

**1. SPANIARD:** We take the gold, right, but we give them Jesus, to save their souls.

**LOPEZ:** Hernando has other things in mind.

**1. SPANIARD.:** All I know is that Velasquez dismissed Cortes as the fleet commander the night we left Cuba. That was a bit late, though.

**DIAZ:** We were weighing anchor at the same hour. He sent the only remaining ship to tail us. He kept sending signals all night: "Cortes is dismissed as the fleet commander. I order you to return". "I order you to return, I order you". Then it became "Please return", "I plead with you to return".

**LOPEZ:** Sailed before the wind

Sailed before the wind

A cool northerly wind

At the stern, Hernando

Like he was lovestruck, sighed he

Like a young boy sighed he

Made a pledge and sighed he

He will never return

**2. SPANIARD:** Hernando not obeying orders counts as mutiny.

**DIAZ:** Only time can tell what counts as what.

**LOPEZ:** Sailed before the wind

Sailed before the wind

**1. SPANIARD:** Cortes, sir, tell us plainly now. Are we going back to Cuba, or are we mutinous seamen hijacking the fleet?

**2. SPANIARD:** Come on Hernando, no one can hear us now. A mutiny against the governor is a mutiny against the Emperor, right?

**3. SPANIARD:** I escaped the noose once. I don't mind risking it again for you, but let us know what for, eh?

**LOPEZ:** We have families in Cuba.

**CORTES:** Drunkards. You've loaded the ships with more wine than gunpowder.

**DIAZ:** That is all we needed.

**LOPEZ:** Where did these come from?

**1. SPANIARD:** Moctezuma's men.

**2. SPANIARD:** They're chanting and praying. Let's hope for the best.

**DIAZ:** The incense smells wonderful.

**CORTES:** They're trying to send us to sleep.

**3. SPANIARD:** I'm getting dizzy.

**DIAZ:** What are they trying to do? I mean, do you think they mean well?

**1. SPANIARD:** I feel sort of ecstatic, everything is so colourful.

**DIAZ:** They must be blessing us.

**LOPEZ:** I'm feeling really giddy, like a different sort of being drunk. Colours are pouring out of my eyes.

**DIAZ:** You might as well join them with your guitar.

**CORTES:** Shut your eyes and pretend to be asleep. We'll wait.

**DIAZ:** Just look with the corner of your eyes, these people are trying to put us to sleep.

**1. SPANIARD:** We'll all lose our faith.

**DIAZ:** I see the pretty Doña Marina stark naked in front of me.

**2. SPANIARD:** God be with you, I'm going back to Cuba.

**CORTES:** I am in Castilla, in audience with the Emperor. We are awake but dreaming, and we know it's a dream. This is too much.

**DIAZ:** Drink Hernando, it'll do you good.

## SCENE 5

**MOCTEZUMA:** My sorcerers have failed to overcome the white god, and this surprises me not. Our own malice came back to haunt us, they made us drink our own poison.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Command me to accomplish what the sorcerers could not. Let me drive them back to sea before they have time to take shelter in their white winged houses.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Think you that the sorcerers were my sole device? I had secretly sent Malinche, whom the Tabascans offered to the white man. We should soon hear from her. She was to know him well. She shall sidle up to him like a she-snake. In her red hot embrace, she shall fathom if the stranger is our god. She prostrated herself before me and promised that she would fulfil her great duty to her nation. If the white man is no god, she will kill him with the flint dagger in her bosom. Malinche... Malinche, you have my faith.

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*D. MARINA: Moctezuma offered me to the white strangers. I have always been taught that the greatest virtue for a bronze-skinned woman is loyalty to her man. The whites' commander was my man, I served him.*

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**D. MARINA:** He is the plumed serpent, the lost god of Aztec, expected to come in floating winged houses from beyond the tempestuous seas, the white god, Quetzalcoatl.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He is Quetzalcoatl coming to Tenochtitlán. I shall show him the power of Aztec in a different way. I shall send him the holy relics that adorn the great temple, the Aztec sun fashioned from the softest gold and the silver Aztec moon of the same size. They shall discern the power behind such opulence, they shall be overwhelmed with a sense of what Aztec is capable of, and go away from our coast.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Send you the holy relics of Aztec to our enemies as gifts? Call them back Moctezuma. Send me in their stead to bring you the heads of the accursed.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I wish not that you speak in such manner. Our words can reach him. For words, for thoughts, distance is no obstacle for the white god.

**CUAUTEMOC:** You will wreak misfortune upon Aztec with this call of gold. Only four hundred came today, tomorrow, four hundred thousand.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Should he desire to come, who is to stop him. Quetzalcoatl, I send you the golden sun of Aztec, I send you the silver moon of Aztec. I send you, Quetzalcoatl, the insignia of the plumed serpent. Be content with these, go back, come not to Tenochtitlán.

## SCENE 6

**2. SPANIARD:** These hell's flies will eat us up before the natives do. The local tribes no longer send us food, they've just disappeared into the continent. Fever, on top of hunger...



**LOPEZ:** This damned sand has already swallowed up thirty five men. You are silent and this indecision is costing us very dearly señor.

**CORTES:** Things will soon get better.

**2. SPANIARD:** You are indeed working very hard every day in your tent with that native girl, Doña Marina, to make things better

**1. SPANIARD:** All right, we hijacked the fleet, but what for?

**3. SPANIARD:** How much longer do we wait?

**CORTES:** You have asked me that question, the same question asked of Caesar, Alexander and of Tariq. The sign that my fortune is changing.

**2. SPANIARD:** Back to Cuba, back to Cuba.

**LOPEZ:** Let's beg forgiveness from Velasquez.

**3. SPANIARD:** Back to Cuba, back to Cuba.

**SPANIARDS:** Back to Cuba, back to Cuba.

**DIAZ:** The king, Moctezuma sent us a couple of gifts. Come on, see for yourselves, there in front of the tents. A solid gold sun as big as a cart-wheel, and a silver moon the same size.

**CORTES:** Gold as big as a cart-wheel, you said Bernal, you're not sunstruck, are you?

**DIAZ:** I mean, it's right there, go and see. It's flaming gold.

**ALVARADO:** It's true Hernando, Bernal's not exaggerating. The porters are dead tired, ready to drop. They have carried it all the way from Moctezuma's capital, over the mountains, through the valleys. We have realised the purpose of our mission in one day.

**CORTES:** The purpose of our mission, did you say?

**1. AZTEC:** Aztec's golden sun gives he, great Moctezuma, to Quetzalcoatl, Aztec's silver moon

**2. AZTEC:** Bronze-skinned Malinche, you send word time and time again to Moctezuma that this stranger whose love you have earned is the exiled god of Aztec. We know not if you deserve our faith, but we are bound to convey Moctezuma's wishes.

**MESSENGER:** Expects he, great Moctezuma, that you betray not the soil that nourished you. Says he, great Moctezuma, that you do your very best and make the white god turn back, not come to Tenochtitlán.

**1. AZTEC:** Sent he also, great Moctezuma, this emerald ring.

**D. MARINA:** Moctezuma's wishes are to be obeyed. He calls me to Tenochtitlán with this ring.

**ALVARADO:** Our sufferings have more than paid off. Even those feverish in their tents are cured once they saw the gold.

**DIAZ:** We have a unique opportunity Hernando, we can make the men do whatever we want now. We must divide up the gold fairly, though.

**CORTES:** The gold will be divided up fairly.

**1. AZTEC:** Aztec's golden sun gives he, great Moctezuma, to Quetzalcoatl, Aztec's silver moon.

**2. AZTEC:** Let the children of Quetzalcoatl be content with these gifts, enter their winged houses and go beyond the seas.

**CORTES:** Who is this Quetzalcoatl?

**D. MARINA:** You, the lost god of Moctezuma, expected to come in floating houses from beyond the tempestuous seas, the white god, Quetzalcoatl.

**CORTES:** Then we must now don the vestments of Quetzalcoatl.

**SCENE 7**

**1. AZTEC:** We come with joyous news from the coast. The danger has passed. The white god departs for the sun country, never to return.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Say you Quetzalcoatl leaves, not come to Tenochtitlán?

**1./2. AZTEC:** Are you not pleased?

**MOCTEZUMA:** What heavy-hearted joy this is. Said he this, himself, that he would depart the Mexican coast?

**MESSENGER:** His lover, the bronze-skinned Malinche shook with your sacred name and said: "Moctezuma's wishes are to be obeyed."

**MOCTEZUMA:** How knows she what wishes Moctezuma when I am a stranger to my own heart?

**2. AZTEC:** It was not her word alone.

**1. AZTEC:** We have searched for the thoughts of the white god's men, also.

**2. AZTEC:** All wished to load the gold into their winged houses and return whence they came.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Woe, our sacred adornments are now in undeserving hands. Has he accepted to go, he is no Quetzalcoatl, a shrewd pirate at best striking at our deep blue gulf.

**SCENE 8**

**CORTES:** I was thinking Bernal, perhaps you should write to the Emperor.

**DIAZ:** What, me, to the Emperor? I mean, what undeserved honour. What do we say?

**CORTES:** Something more than a letter. More of a chronicle outlining the mission we have undertaken in the new continent in the name of Spain. Write as you please, no need to praise me, but tell the truth. Give Don Carlos the good news that we are in the process of establishing the first great Spanish city in this new land.

**DIAZ:** City, Hernando? What city?

**CORTES:** Villa Rica de la Cruz, the city we are going to build on those hills, - the rich city of the cross - . This city will be the naval base for our excursions inland. Our liaison with Spain will be through Vera Cruz.

**DIAZ:** So there is no returning to Cuba. I'd suspected that. I said, Bernal, my son, we are permanent here.

**CORTES:** I have here a draft that I have prepared. Of course, you don't have to follow it verbatim.

**DIAZ:** I shall follow my inspiration, but I mean, give it to me anyway, in case I leave anything out.

**CORTES:** Then go into every tent, one by one, and choose the men who will be office-bearers in the first government of Vera Cruz.

**DIAZ:** Government?

**CORTES:** I studied law Bernal, in my youthful days, and the law says any Spanish municipality with elected officers answers directly to the Crown.

**DIAZ:** With prior royal sanction.

**CORTES:** It'll come. If nominated, I wouldn't be averse to accepting the position of Chief Judge.

**SPANIARDS:** Divide up the gold

-Let's share the gold

-Divide up the gold.

**2. SPANIARD:** We've waited long enough, Hernando.

**CORTES:** Everything in good time, gentlemen. Unfurl the banner first. From this day on, we answer direct to the Emperor. Between Vera Cruz and Spain, there is no Cuba. No Velasquez comes between Don Carlos and Cortes.

**SPANIARDS:**The gold, Hernando, the gold

-The gold, the gold, the gold.

**CORTES:** I ask you. Do you want to return to Cuba to serve your fat governor, or shall we march into this gold-filled Mexico?

**2./3. SPANIARDS:** Back to Cuba, return to Cuba

**1. SPANIARD/LOPEZ:** March on Mexico

-Gold-filled Mexico

**1. SPANIARD:** Now that we have the natives cowering, we should raid the towns, the villages for all the gold there is.

**CORTES:** I promise you a far greater honour.

**3. SPANIARD:** We've had a gutful of these promises of honour. I want my share of the gold.

**2. SPANIARD:** It would be madness to go inland. We're only a handful here. Once they recover from the shock, the natives will wipe us out. We have the gold, I say we sail back to Cuba.

**ALVARADO:** You don't know these men, Hernando.

**CORTES:** We will get to know each other soon enough. I will turn this horde into the best fighters Spain has ever seen. The merchant seamen of Velasquez will transform into the conquistadors of Cortes.

**SPANIARDS:**The gold, the gold

-Divide up the gold

-Come on, let's see the gold

-Divide it up

-The gold, the gold

**CORTES:** Now I shall divide up the gold. First, the Emperor's share.

**SPANIARDS:** The Emperor's share...

**LOPEZ:** That is one fifth.

**1. SPANIARD:** Put aside one-fifth.

**LOPEZ:** Put aside Don Carlos' share.

**SPANIARDS:** Long live the Emperor.

**CORTES:** Your loyalty to the Emperor is most gratifying for me. Which encourages me to put a proposition to you. I am fully confident that every one of you who loves the King, his royal highness, will gladly accept it.

**SPANIARDS:** Come on, Hernando, tell us

-Get on with it

-Come on, spit it out

**CORTES:** Let us not divide up Moctezuma's gifts. Let us not vandalise this golden sun and the silver moon. Let us send the whole lot to our Emperor, and let this be the one-fifth. Let us go to the heart of the gold to take our share. Let these spoils for which we have shed no tears, no blood go to Spain. Greater prizes lie in waiting. Those who do not support my proposition... Those who do not willingly and loyally wish to send Moctezuma's gifts to our Emperor, please sign this declaration. If there are any such people among us.

**LOPEZ:** Just a point of order, sir. Naturally, I don't oppose the gold being sent to our Emperor. But we were told...

**CORTES:** I told you to sign this declaration, those who are against all the gold being sent to our Emperor. Agreed unanimously that all the gifts be sent to our Emperor. Set sail immediately, we have no time to lose. Everything must happen quickly. Do not go near Cuba, keep your distance, keep a long way away from it. As for the other ships... As long as these remain in Vera Cruz, anyone who gets a little bored will just sail away. This poses a grave danger for the unity of the army. Tariq, the great conquistador too had burnt his ships after he landed in Spain.

**DIAZ:** You don't mean...

**CORTES:** We are not going back to Cuba.

**LOPEZ:** What's to become of the sailors?

**CORTES:** Foot soldiers.

**1. SPANIARD:** The ships must burn.

**CORTES:** Let us march under the Emperor's banner. More gold than we can ever lift and gilded glories lie in wait for us. Let us gain these new countries for Don Carlos. Conquistadors, we have been chosen by fate to build the greater Spain.

**DIAZ:** Compadres, let us all follow Hernando Cortes, let us all march under this holy banner.

**LOPEZ:** Let's all follow Cortes. Long live Hernando.

**1. SPANIARD:** Conquistadors, let's march on Mexico.

**LOPEZ:** Commandante.

**3. SPANIARD:** Let's see this Moctezuma.

**SPANIARDS:** Long live Cortes... Long live Diaz, Alvarado...

-Long live Cortes... Long live Diaz, Alvarado...

-Down with Velasquez... Down with Velasquez...

-Let's march conquistadors... Conquistadors, march...

**CORTES:** Farewell everything that I leave behind. Farewell all my faithful beloved, release me now from all my vows. Tell me Doña Marina, tell me in all detail my grand story, tell me the story of the great lost god. I am Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent, the dragon whose eyes can melt gold. I have returned to my country, I am marching on Aztec. My desire is my vanguard, secures the road I take.

## SCENE 9

**MESSENGER:** The white strangers are on the march, they're nearly in Totonac country.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He is coming? Was he not content with the gifts? Was he not to go beyond the ocean?

**MESSENGER:** That was the word of the bronze-skinned Malinche.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Surely he will leave, not come to Tenochtitlán.

**MESSENGER:** They have burnt their white-winged houses.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Where will they take shelter in the face of danger?

**MESSENGER:** They have built houses on the coast hastily, a whole city.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Surely temporary shelters?

**MESSENGER:** Stone buildings, with roots deep in the soil.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I sent him our sacred adornments. He should have been content with those.

**MESSENGER:** They are also curious about Tenochtitlán.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Far, far away is Tenochtitlán, so far.



**MESSENGER:** The dragons called horse are like the wind.

**MOCTEZUMA:** They will get lost in the valleys of death.

**MESSENGER:** He holds a mysterious scorpion in a box pointing the way.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The way is full of peril.

**MESSENGER:** He foresees all perils in his mirror.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Where say you, the strangers are?

**MESSENGER:** They are nearly in Totonac country.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Send messengers to the Totonac king. He must not allow them to set foot there, or he shall pay with the blood of his young.

**CUAUTEMOC:** We must not leave the task to the bumbling Totonac king.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He is to turn them back, not let them through the mountain passes.

**CUAUTEMOC:** We must start fighting, or they will have the Totonacs on their side.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The sight of my sacrifice collectors will make him stop Quetzalcoatl. But if he is Quetzalcoatl, who is to stop him from coming to Tenochtitlán?

## SCENE 10

**CORTES:** This is the day of liberation for the brave Totonacs. Gao! the impudent sacrifice collectors of Aztec.

**3. AZTEC:** The Totonacs refuse to pay their dues.

**4. AZTEC:** They are emboldened by the white strangers.

**3. AZTEC:** They have rounded up our sacrifice collectors and gaoled them.

**CUAUTEMOC:** And we wait still?

**MOCTEZUMA:** We shall not. Have all of Aztec mobilise. Let my warriors march on the white strangers.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Now speaks the real Moctezuma. I shall convey your wishes to the army.

**CORTES:** Release the esteemed Aztec sacrifice collectors, send them to great Moctezuma with pleasing gifts, let them convey to him my very best wishes. Because I am Moctezuma's friend, and so shall I remain. As for the insolent Totonacs... I shall make them reckon with Moctezuma's power. Let Moctezuma leave this task to me.

**1. AZTEC:** He saved us, the white god, from the cruel Totonacs.

**2. AZTEC:** He released us from gaol.

**1. AZTEC:** He gave the good news of Aztec's wonderful days to come.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Was it Quetzalcoatl who saved you?

**2. AZTEC:** I am Moctezuma's friend, says he, and of the Aztec nation.

**CORTES:** I am the friend of the Aztec nation, and so shall I remain. Moctezuma must trust me.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Friend, says he? Aztec's god should speak differently. Friendship is between humans. This stranger is a mortal, and released you out of fear, when he heard I have decided on war.

**1. AZTEC:** He knows nought of war.

**2. AZTEC:** He fears nought, Quetzalcoatl.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Saw you him with your own eyes? What was he like?

**1. AZTEC:** When his eyes touched ours, lightning struck our hearts.

**2. AZTEC:** Lightning in our hearts.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Stop the army. I take back my war command.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Too late, your army is already pouring down the mountains.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Stop the army. Tell Cuautemoc.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Too late, no messenger, even with winged feet can reach the Falling Eagle  
now.

**MESSENGER:** It is night, and fire has winged feet.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Stop the army.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Hold not back this avalanche Moctezuma, let it complete its task.

**3. AZTEC:** Hold not back...

**4. AZTEC:** Complete its task...

**MOCTEZUMA:** It is imprudent to fight openly.

**CORTES:** Send messengers to all the Totonac lords, not to allow Moctezuma's men into  
Totonac country. Tell them to swear allegiance to the white god in place of  
Moctezuma.

**MESSENGER:** The Totonac country is lost. It is Tlascala's turn now.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Approaches Mexica in guile, no Quetzalcoatl can he be. I shall  
respond in kind. I shall have Tlascala fight them. I shall repeat the white god's  
message of friendship. Mase Eskase, the Tlascalan king, that revengeful blind old  
man, will equate Moctezuma's friend with his own enemy in his barren old head.

**SCENE 11**

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**SPANIARDS:** *13th of August, 1521, Tenochtitlán fell*

*The king of kings, the great Catholic Don Carlos spoke*

**ALVARADO:** *I recognise Hernando Cortes, he be my commander,*

*My banner flies he in the new land*

\*\*\*\*\*

**CORTES:** 13th of August, 1519, the king of kings, the great Catholic, Carlos the fifth, the blue blood of Spain, I call your name.

**LOPEZ:** We had our first major battle in Tlascala. It was an unexpected attack.

**CORTES:** Thanks to the courage and intelligence of the native girl, Doña Marina, and the superhuman efforts of the men, the danger was averted. Tlascala is an important stage in our mission for Mexico. The grandson of Isabella the Great, every time I call your name, I see Velasquez between us, casting his dark shadow on you.

**SPANIARDS:** With its slaves in chains, crying under the whip

Cuba is the darkest face of Spain

**CORTES:** One word, and I shall bring myself to you in chains, but my neck will not accept Velasquez's noose. One word from you, one word: "I recognise Hernando Cortes, he be my commander, my banner flies he in the new land, in my name opens he the richest realm". One word from you is all I need, so I stand tall.

**SPANIARDS:** Spain on the march, Spain on the march.

**CORTES:** They accuse me of mutiny. All I want is the opportunity to prove in action how lofty a virtue loyalty is.

**LOPEZ:** The king of kings, the great Catholic, Carlos the fifth, we continue our march on Mexico.

## SCENE 12

**MOCTEZUMA:** Let the white strangers go back, not come near us. Let them return into the sunrise, not come to Tenochtitlán.

**CORTES:** I am coming to visit Moctezuma in Tenochtitlán.

**MESSENGER:** Let them go away, says Moctezuma, not come near us, let them go back.

**CORTES:** I shall come face to face with your king.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Far away is Tenochtitlán, far away, so far, the way is fraught with danger. My enemies are his enemies. Let the white god not come to Tenochtitlán, let him return into the sunrise and wait. I am to rule Aztec for many more a year. My children are to rule Aztec for many more a year. Let Quetzalcoatl go away now and come back when the last in my line dies.

**MESSENGER:** Far away is Tenochtitlán, far away, so far, the way is fraught with danger. Let the white god not come now.

**CORTES:** I am Moctezuma's god, coming to see him in Tenochtitlán.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Knew I of some harmony between your divinity and my royalty, the way to Mexica would be clear.

**AZTECS:** They approach Cholula country.

**MOCTEZUMA:** They shall not leave Cholula alive.

**1. AZTEC:** Their monsters green and black  
Burst lightning and thunder

**2. AZTEC:** Echoed between land and sky  
Land and sky, land and sky

**3. AZTEC:** Our ears were in pain  
In pain, in pain, in pain

**4. AZTEC:** The four legged dragons then  
Racing the wind, the wind, the wind

**MOCTEZUMA:** Enough, enough! What news of Cholula?

**MESSENGER:** Four thousand throats they have slit.

**MOCTEZUMA:** They must not come.

**MESSENGER:** And they come. The Orizaba volcano is behind them now. They are camping at Uehotzingo.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Uehotzingo can not be trusted.

**MESSENGER:** Can not be trusted.

**CORTES:** We are grateful to Moctezuma for warning us. But we have no fear. We foresee all traps, all ambushes.

**1. AZTEC:** Keep marching, the white strangers

**2. AZTEC:** The blue volcano is now on their right

**3. AZTEC:** They have crossed the ranges now

**4. AZTEC:** They are now on the highlands

**MOCTEZUMA:** They must stop there. Come no closer.

**MESSENGER:** Quetzalcoatl must stop there. No closer.

**CORTES:** I am Moctezuma's god, coming for communion face to face.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He must not come to Tenochtitlán. Let us not come face to face. I am to rule Aztec for many more a year. He must go away now, and come back when the last in my line dies.

**CORTES:** I wish to see Aztec while Moctezuma breathes, I am coming to Moctezuma to multiply his line.

**1. AZTEC:** Keep marching, the white strangers

**2. AZTEC:** Now at the icy fires of Izcatlíoatl

**MOCTEZUMA:** Go back, go back!

**3. AZTEC:** They've left behind Popocatepetl

**4. AZTEC:** They've circumvented the five thousand warriors  
Lying in wait on the road to Tlamanalco

**MOCTEZUMA:** Stop there Quetzalcoatl, come no closer, no closer!

**CORTES:** I am Moctezuma's god, coming to see him in Tenochtitlán.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Halt all messages, I want the ambassadors back in Tenochtitlán.

**1. AZTEC:** Keep marching, the white strangers

**2. AZTEC:** Yotzingo, Mixquick, then Quatliuak

**3. AZTEC:** They are at Istapalapa's doorstep

**4. AZTEC:** The sister city of Tenochtitlán.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Go away, go away!

**CORTES:** We shall come together, Moctezuma, when I arrive at Tenochtitlán. We shall speak of higher things, of rulers and of god.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Yes, Quetzalcoatl. Let him come to Tenochtitlán.

**CORTES:** You must open up your heart, Moctezuma. I come to add your name to mine.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The true owner of the realm. Destroy you this scarlet-black order of the night god in Mexica... Like bats, my thoughts hang. Come Quetzalcoatl, and release them all.



**ACT TWO****SCENE 1**

**MOCTEZUMA:** This is Tenochtitlán, your city, lying under your feet. We are now on top of the highest pyramid. Welcome to your own country Quetzalcoatl, you bring joy to Tenochtitlán. I am so fortunate that you came in my days. Surely, I am the happiest king of Aztec. For long years, I have waited for this day.

**CORTES:** Make a careful note of all the strategic points, distances, shelters and access points Pedro. Yes, Moctezuma, this must be the most beautiful spectacle in the universe, under our feet.

**MOCTEZUMA:** These floating bridges are the arteries of the capital, the bridges that connect Tenochtitlán to the three sister cities.

**CUAUTEMOC:** What draws the stranger there?

**MOCTEZUMA:** Cuautemoc must desist from disrespect for our holy guests. Give back those drawings.

**CUAUTEMOC:** You seem to overlook their disrespect.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The children of God wish to know well the changed Tenochtitlán. Your doubts are misplaced, give back those papers. And now introduce yourself, prostrate yourself before the white God, kiss the dirt on which he treads and apologise.

**CUAUTEMOC:** My name is Cuautemoc, that means the falling eagle. The Great Moctezuma wished that I prostrate myself before you and kiss the dirt you tread on, I obey Moctezuma's order.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You fulfil my wishes with gritted teeth, Cuautemoc.

**CORTES:** Get up falling eagle, you look like a noble young man.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Whoever you might be, stay away from me white man.

**CORTES:** We must keep an eye on this young man. I salute the brave Aztec lords.

**MOCTEZUMA:** These buildings are the heritage of the god of civilisation and light, Quetzalcoatl, and Tenochtitlán shall perish not.

**CORTES:** Let Tenochtitlán perish not, let its hearths be alive amidst the salt lakes with its eternal beauty. Let Tenochtitlán perish not, the realm that is dedicated to me.

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*AZTECS: Ninety three days long was the siege. Then Tenochtitlán was razed to the ground. Nothing was left. Thus was Aztec ended, and us dismembered.*

\*\*\*\*\*

**DIAZ:** The stones have red-black stains.

**OLMEDO:** Who are those approaching in their ceremonial robes?

**MOCTEZUMA:** You will now witness the brave lord of Tescoco sacrificed voluntarily to the white god.

**OLMEDO:** Sacrifice? We must prevent this, Hernando.

**CORTES:** It all depends, reverend father. For now, nobody move.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Has the sacrifice been brought?

**1. PRIEST:** He waits by the red stone, if to be sacrificed.

**MOCTEZUMA:** What means this, if to be sacrificed?

**CUAUTEMOC:** Your faith might be shaken, once you see the sacrifice.

**MOCTEZUMA:** My faith be shaken?

**CUAUTEMOC:** You might see that this uninvited guest is no god.

**MOCTEZUMA:** And the sacrifice will make me think that?

**2. PRIEST:** Is a sacrifice not the measure for god?

**MOCTEZUMA:** You, the priests of the night god, doubtless, you welcome not Quetzalcoatl's return. This order that haunts us even in our sleep is to be dismantled by our god of light. And stands he here, in front of us, Quetzalcoatl in human disguise. The dark era of the cruel night god will thus end.

**1. PRIEST:** The night god will never yield his rule.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Let the ceremony begin, let the sacrifice be laid down on the red stone.

**CORTES:** I henceforth forbid human sacrifice.

**D. MARINA:** The white god wants no sacrifice.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Your word confounds me.

**2. PRIEST:** Gods glory in sacrifices. We see these strangers decry it. It is plain for us that those who fear token blood know no bounds to the bloodshed their own power yields.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Let the ceremony begin. Your divinity this sacrifice shall confirm.

**1. PRIEST:** Exacting is time in Aztec. Certain days demand certain sacrifices.

**MOCTEZUMA:** And your second coming Quetzalcoatl demands the heart of the brave lord of Tescoco. There are daily, monthly and yearly sacrifices.

**2. PRIEST:** Also, I fear as I speak, are "epochal sacrifices". Comes the realm to the cross-roads of epoches, this sacrifice can be an Aztec king or an Aztec god.

**MOCTEZUMA:** For keeping mundane misfortunes at bay, captives and slaves suffice. But to receive a major occurrence, volunteers are selected a year in advance. During this year of preparation, the candidate is shown great respect by all. He is given the most beautiful girls of Aztec as his lovers and concubines, who fulfil his every wish.

**PRIESTS:** And impending death deepens every pleasure.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The noble sacrifice you will receive also had lovers, who have left him in tears at the foot of the pyramid.

**PRIESTS:** He had no lovers

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Save his loving parents.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He will now perform the dance of Quetzalcoatl.

**PRIESTS:** He is, alas, too young

**CUAUPOPOCA:** For a dance so harsh.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He looks smiling at the flint knife.

**PRIESTS:** He is, oh, too young

**CUAUPOPOCA:** To face the flint knife with no fear.

**MOCTEZUMA:** A noble and willing sacrifice.

**PRIESTS:** Noble, that he is

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Willing, I think not.

**MOCTEZUMA:** What means this? Your answers are all perverse. Have you another sacrifice in his place?

**PRIESTS:** Another sacrifice.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Who?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** One much closer to your heart.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Closer than the lord of Tescoco? Has Cuautemoc volunteered?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** One closer than Cuautemoc in heart.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Who can closer be? My son.

**PRIESTS:** Your beloved.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Mock you me? Take him away, I say. Bring here the sacrifice, the lord of Tescoco.

**PRIESTS:** This here is the sacrifice.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Are you all demented? Is my beloved lord of Tescoco not sacrifice enough for the god?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** In place of the brave lord of Tescoco, for whom your love is tinged with some grudge, we have chosen one more suitable.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Take him away.

**1. PRIEST:** Let the blood of your most beloved  
Be the final proof of your faith

**2. PRIEST:** Thrust you the flint knife, priest  
Into the tender bosom of your son

**CUAUPOPOCA:** I have nought more to say.

**MOCTEZUMA:** What expect you me to do?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** For all that we hold dear, we wish to warn our ruler, for one last time. Despite all that we see extraordinary, we believe not that this stranger is the exiled god, Quetzalcoatl.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You will, perhaps show more proof of your divinity, so unbelievers will relent and the sadly ashen embers in our hearts are once more fanned. We wish to

hear the story of Quetzalcoatl once from the God himself. You and I will now enact that scene. Recognise you me? Who am I?

**CORTES:** My enemy Tezcatlipoca. The sorcerer who stole away my realm.

**MOCTEZUMA:** How lost you your realm to me? Relate and enact.

**CORTES:** Tezcatlipoca, the smoking mirror, of the dead

My eternal enemy, crept up on me

brandishing his mirror of darkest coal

I saw myself unsightly for the first time

and writhed in endless pain.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Have your share of mortal joys

Listen to the command of your flesh

Share your bed this moonless night

With your sister, like you, all alone

**CORTES:** We just stood there, my sister and I

Endless dim mirrors were our groins

eternally reflecting a blood-red rose

and time was a river of mystery

flowing between our eyes

There we stood still and smiled

I first pushed back the drink

the fatal drink that she offered me

**MOCTEZUMA:** Taste with the tip of your tongue

**CORTES:** I tasted it with the tip of my tongue.

Then drank down the whole cup

"Bring me my sister", I cried out

Remorse filled us in the morn

We woke up cold, and shivered

The king of the dead I saw then

rising on my very own throne

Tezcatlipoca, night-faced and  
cruel I looked at Aztec  
for one last time I cried and  
exiled myself

Bared my breast to the salty winds

sought refuge in tempestuous seas

and with my last remaining spark

burned myself there and then

became a star and went afar

As I rose above the salty seas

Thus I promised: "I shall return"

**MOCTEZUMA:** He relates the story as he lived it. What better proof can there be?

**PRIESTS:** We await your judgement.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Is the child to be taken to the red stone, is the black drum to be beaten?

**MOCTEZUMA:** He could have learnt the story from a bronze-skin. Perhaps even from Malinche, whom we so much trust. No, no, no, not enough. Show me other proofs of your divinity. Quetzalcoatl, do not for nought make me shed my son's blood. If you be not Quetzalcoatl, tell me plainly. I make a pledge on my honour, on my realm I make a pledge, tell me the truth, I shall forgive you all, I shall send you all back with more gifts than you can carry. Only tell me you be not Quetzalcoatl. If you be not Quetzalcoatl, if you be not Aztec's god, tell me. Let me not tear away my only son's heart. Tell me you be not Quetzalcoatl.

**CORTES:** I am the true god of Aztec, expected to return one day in floating winged houses from beyond the tempestuous seas, the great god.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Not enough, not enough! Show me a more incontestable proof of your divinity. As loud to my ears it must be as the beating of this black drum.

**CORTES:** Let me show you the universe through my mirror, Moctezuma. See for yourself if it is anything like the mirror of Tezcatlipoca.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Popocatepetl is only a league away, I could touch the flowing fires.

**CORTES:** Look at the sun now, look well.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I'm blinded.

**OLMEDO:** Stop this satanic ritual.

**CORTES:** Nobody move, or we are all finished.

**OLMEDO:** Listen to your heart Hernando.

**CORTES:** You too, reverend father, and pray for an innocent martyr.

**OLMEDO:** And Abraham's god told him to sacrifice his only son on top of Mount Moriah.

**DIAZ:** Tell us Hernando, will a ram be sent down from the heavens now?

**CORTES:** Could Moctezuma look at the sun more carefully, he would see the sun a golden ram.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I have no doubt. My faith is complete. Let the blood of my son be the witness that he is Quetzalcoatl. My white god, I pray to you.

\*\*\*\*\*

**OLMEDO:** *Can you hear me, Moctezuma? Seek shelter in Jesus Christ before you die and save your soul.*

**MOCTEZUMA:** *Who casts this cross shadow on me? My country you have taken, now my heart you reach to take.*

\*\*\*\*\*



**SCENE 2**

**1. SPANIARD:** C'mon, you gods of civilisation, let's show this mob what it's like. Let's bring light and science to this underdeveloped backwater.

**LOPEZ:** I've invented the wheel and I'm building the first wheelbarrow. Mine is the most useful invention.

**2. SPANIARD:** I'm inventing the compass.

**LOPEZ:** And me, glass.

**3. SPANIARD:** And sails and windmills are from me.

**1. SPANIARD:** It won't take them long to harness the wind.

**LOPEZ:** Funny that... They can smelt gold and mould it into a cartwheel you know, yet they know nothing about the wheel.

**2. SPANIARD:** We'll teach them that the earth is round, too.

**LOPEZ:** And the ways of the world, with its continents and oceans. That the sun is fixed in the heavens, and that Mexico flies around the sun.

**3. SPANIARD:** All this knowledge will turn their minds topsy turvy.

**LOPEZ:** The Aztec sorcerers' curses are upon us.

**2. SPANIARD:** I meant to teach them winemaking, but they are miles ahead of us in drinks and smokes.

**1. SPANIARD:** And leagues ahead as goldsmiths and silversmiths.

**LOPEZ:** What about architecture? The pyramids, the palaces, the cedar mansions...

**1. SPANIARD:** They are living the stone age together with the gold age. They've skipped the iron age, and they're going to suffer for it.

**2. SPANIARD:** You mean in war?

**1. SPANIARD:** No, no, no, we are troops of peace.

**LOPEZ:** Human sacrifice has been totally banned in the whole of Mexico.

**2. SPANIARD:** We must be careful about knowledge that could threaten the Quetzalcoatl myth.

**1. SPANIARD:** What about Christian ethics?

**LOPEZ:** There is a time for everything. Hernando's divinity mustn't lose currency for a while yet.

**3. SPANIARD:** What was that?

**LOPEZ:** Another one of the white god's miracles. He's just blown up the night god carving on top of the pyramid.

**1. SPANIARD:** C'mon, the chosen horde of Christ. Put forward everything useful, think hard of all the things we can do to develop Aztec.

**LOPEZ:** But the secrets of cannons and gunpowder can't be revealed. They are our military secrets.

### SCENE 3

**CORTES:** The men thought they were dreaming when they saw the noble city on the lakes.

**SPANIARDS:** Its red towers, its white pyramids  
Reflecting in the water's mirror

**CORTES:** They looked in moonlit nights, they thought they were dreaming, they looked in daylight, they thought they were dreaming. It is this Mexico that I dedicate to my king.

**SPANIARDS:** It was the eighth of November, 1519  
that we entered Tenochtitlán  
its palaces unequalled in Seville

**LOPEZ:** even Granada

**SPANIARDS:** We saw the great Moctezuma  
proceed to his temple  
with more magnificence

**LOPEZ:** than the Pope after the Lateran council.

**1. / 2. SPANIARDS:** Seventy thousand move daily in its markets

**LOPEZ:** Male and female slaves, tiger, panther, jaguar pelts

**3. SPANIARD:** Coyote, deer and antelope pelts

**1. SPANIARD:** Desert lizard skins, snake and iguana skins

**LOPEZ:** Aromatic plants, soothing, arousing

**2. SPANIARD:** Marijuana, other smokes to inhale

**LOPEZ:** Black flintstone, obsidian knives, volcanic glass

**1. SPANIARD:** Quartz carvings, ornaments, jewellery

**LOPEZ:** Warm-coloured fruits, amber, cacao

**3. SPANIARD:** Ointments to heal

**1. SPANIARD:** Piquant oils that sooth the skin

**LOPEZ:** And gems known, unknown, spread on green-dyed mats

**SPANIARDS:** Rubies, turquoise, rock crystal, sapphire, calcedony  
And the tiresome light of abundance.

**CORTES:** It is this Mexico that I dedicate to my King.

**SPANIARDS:** Permanently pregnant is the soil  
spouting unseen-before plants and fruits  
Mountains like salamanders  
stirring with fire, silver and gold

**LOPEZ:** Good tidings to our Spain

**CORTES:** It is this Mexico that I dedicate to my King.

**ALVARADO:** Bad tidings from Vera Cruz, Cortes, sir. Moctezuma's eastern armies  
commander Cuaupopoca has raided our naval base and launched Juan Escalante  
and a few other squires into eternity, took their scalps. Three of the carrier  
pigeons came home with this frightful news.

**CORTES:** The news of the raid must not reach Moctezuma.

**DIAZ:** The Vera Cruz raid will be repeated in Tenochtitlán soon.

**ALVARADO:** Time is against us, our divinity has started to wear out.

**DIAZ:** Let alone divinity, they are openly debating if we are superior to them now. And our  
cannons are no longer thundering dragons, Hernando.

**LOPEZ:** The natives are riding our horses now.

**DIAZ:** The men have gone berserk with gold in their hands, they create fracas in the market-  
place. The initial fear and astonishment has dissipated, the feelings are turning to  
hate now.

**ALVARADO:** We are trapped in this corner we painted ourselves into. What are we to do?

**LOPEZ:** What are you thinking, sir?

**CORTES:** We will make the king a prisoner in his own home.

\*\*\*\*\*

**CUAUTEMOC:** *By capturing the king  
They now rule his realm*

**CUAUPOPOCA:** *Orders are issued from Moctezuma's mouth  
But it is the fake gods who issue his orders*

\*\*\*\*\*

## SCENE 4

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Just wish it and I'll bring you the scalp of the commander of the white men, Cortes.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Hush, hush, Quetzalcoatl might hear you.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Forget that tale, there is no longer a Quetzalcoatl.

**MOCTEZUMA:** To whom did I sacrifice my son?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** To the cold stones.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Are you mocking me, impertinent boy? Tell me to whom I dedicated his warm heart, I can still feel beating in my hand?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Your gift never reached a god.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Was the sacrifice all for nought?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** And you are about to sacrifice the whole of Aztec now.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The whole of Aztec?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** We are running out of time, give your order.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I'll make Quetzalcoatl pay for this.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Still talk you of Quetzalcoatl.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Malinche, who knew him the closest, kept saying he really was a god.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Malinche has betrayed Aztec.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I ordered not that you kill our guests.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** You told us to find out if the strangers were mortal or not. How could we find out, without killing a few?

**MOCTEZUMA:** You have warned me enough. Let the bridges lift, let no messenger enter the city, let not the whites find out about the ambush on Vera Cruz.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** They shall not. I had the bridges lifted as soon as I arrived.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You have done well.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Let us not waste time with a lot of planning. Let us ambush, let us engage in open war.

**MOCTEZUMA:** That much counsel from you will suffice. I, too have my plans. Go, now, join Cuautemoc and wait for my wishes. Act not of your own accord. Stop... You know this ring, of course?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** The emerald ring is a summons to see you.

**MOCTEZUMA:** But this ruby ring, Cuaupopoca, with whomever I send this ruby ring, it means blood, it means war. Send I you this ring, whenever, wherever you are, join Cuautemoc, and start the war.

**CORTES:** Good morning, Moctezuma.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I called you not.

**CORTES:** I came on my own accord, I have things to discuss.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You never allowed your men to enter the palace like this before, you always came alone. And you are armed?

**CORTES:** Our swords are part of us. We invite you to a feast in our house. We came to fetch you. My fully armed men, in charge of your protection are lined up on the road.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I wish not to come.

**CORTES:** You will be my guest for a while.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Who is whose guest here?

**CORTES:** Each other's.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You said you had things to discuss. What want you to say?

**CORTES:** I looked at Vera Cruz this morning with my magic mirror, and saw some bad things.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You go, I shall come later.

**CORTES:** Get up and come with us quietly. My fully armed men control the roads.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Call me my commanders. Call Cuautemoc, call Cuaupopoca.

**CORTES:** Good. I wished to see your eastern army commander Cuaupopoca, too. He has just returned from Vera Cruz with his fourteen men, is that right?

**MOCTEZUMA:** He was here just then. He is probably in Tescoco. Send him this ring with a messenger, he shall not be delayed. My wishes are clear with this ruby ring.

**CORTES:** You just keep walking with my men. I wish to see you smile, Moctezuma. Your Aztec guards and the people should not think we are taking you against your wish. It is like blood.

\*\*\*\*\*

*AZTECS: Fake gods of civilisation*

*Yes, they have taught us a skill or two*

*Yet their eyes are on our life's blood*

*The Aztec laws are trampled upon*

*They stalk the streets of Tenochtitlán*

*like starving wolves*

*They rob, they rape, they kill,*

*they steal*

*And they denigrate Aztecs*

*How much longer*

*are we to abide*

\*\*\*\*\*

## SCENE 5

**CUAUTEMOC:** The realm is ruled by the strangers. It is they who speak through Moctezuma.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Be I the ruler, I would finish in Tenochtitlán, what I started in Vera Cruz.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Instead of saying "be I the ruler", we should do what is necessary.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** That is only Moctezuma's prerogative.

**CUAUTEMOC:** This is an extraordinary situation.



**CUAUPOPOCA:** What propose you that we do?

**CUAUTEMOC:** Open war against the Spanish.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** I said that myself to Moctezuma.

**CUAUTEMOC:** You believe not your own counsel?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** With all my heart. And I raided Vera Cruz to alert him, I killed white men, captured horses.

**CUAUTEMOC:** So, Moctezuma needed to be alerted.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Alert him, that's our duty, but assume a ruler's authority while he is alive, no.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Moctezuma has lost his competence.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** The laws make no mention of rulers losing their competence, and Aztec laws are as old as Aztec itself.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Is a blind eye blindly accepting the laws?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Moctezuma was determined to act, he perhaps waits for the right time.

**CUAUTEMOC:** The right time has come and is passing. By capturing Moctezuma, they now rule the realm. They dare do this because they know all citizens obey him unconditionally.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** He remains the ruler of Aztec still.

**CUAUTEMOC:** It is the fake gods who command him. They issued orders through Moctezuma, the bridges are down again. Waver we in indecision, to mobilise the army or not, future generations will drown us in curse.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** If there are any future generations.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Your intuition speaks more loudly.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** The laws are clear, the ruler's authority can be divided not between commanders.

**CUAUTEMOC:** I can see we have caught some of Moctezuma's ailment, too. We talk still, instead of acting quickly.

**MESSENGER:** Moctezuma's wishes. He summonses the eagle lord Cuaupopoca, in the white men's palace.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Summonses, you say. Let us fully understand the order. Sent he a ring as well?

**MESSENGER:** From his finger.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** The hour has come, Cuautemoc. Good tidings. The ruby ring means war. What? The emerald ring? Moctezuma summonses me to the palace.

**CUAUTEMOC:** You must not go. They shall avenge Vera Cruz. That means your death. Stay.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** It is Moctezuma's wish. I must go.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Who gave you the ring?

**MESSENGER:** The white god.

**CUAUTEMOC:** No. This is a trick. Stay.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Said he: "with whomever I send it". What he wants is plain. He says not war. He summonses me with the emerald ring. I must go. Stay well. If I return not, the country is entrusted to you.

## SCENE 6

**CORTES:** Where is Cuaupopoca, is he not coming?

**MOCTEZUMA:** He shall, surely. Hear you voices?

**CORTES:** No, what voices?

**MOCTEZUMA:** Cuautemoc, Cuaupopoca, my eagle lords, where be they? Ah, here they come.

**CORTES:** Yes, here they come, the Aztecs, with bundles and piles of bows and arrows.

**MOCTEZUMA:** What is it they do?

**CORTES:** You should know. They are piling all the bows and arrows and shields in all the depots of Aztec into the square, on your orders.

**MOCTEZUMA:** My orders? It is Cuaupopoca, preparing for war.

**LOPEZ:** Moctezuma's commander is here. And his fourteen men have been detained in the courtyard.

**MOCTEZUMA:** What do you here?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Your summons.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The ruby ring.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** I received this.

**CORTES:** I fancied that ruby very much, Moctezuma, and kept it. I sent instead the emerald ring that Doña Marina had. You know, the same as the one you have. The one you'd used to call her back to Tenochtitlán. I hope you don't mind. It has done the same job, anyway. We have the commander right here. We can start now. You have raided Vera Cruz and killed some people. Is that true?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** We did.

**CORTES:** Who ordered you to kill the white men? Moctezuma?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** No.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I did.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** He says this to save me.

**CORTES:** I think so, too. I can not believe that our friend would issue an order such as this.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I did, and I am ordering again, now.

**CORTES:** Why did you do this?

**MOCTEZUMA:** Brave Cuaupopoca, go find Cuautemoc. I want to see the sparks flowing from your flint swords. Be not late, it is dusk now. Multiply for me the example of Vera Cruz.

**CORTES:** Why did you do this?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** To show how easily our enemies could be eliminated.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I want to see the heads of all the Spaniards atop your spears.

**CORTES:** So you confess to your crime?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Have I a crime, it be only against Moctezuma. I should not have been captured so easily.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Go Cuaupopoca, go to the head of your army, go find Cuautemoc, start the war. Why wait you? Go!

**CORTES:** All of you, all fifteen of you will be burnt alive in the palace square, on Moctezuma's orders.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** Release my warriors.

**CORTES:** And for fuel, the spears, bows and arrows and shields in the great pyramid and the other depots will be used. **(TO LOPEZ)** All taken out yet? **(LOPEZ NODS)** Take away the commander. Tell the crowd his punishment is to be carried out on Moctezuma's orders.

**MOCTEZUMA:** It shall be you, to be sacrificed on Moctezuma's orders on top of the great pyramid. What wait you Cuaupopoca? These be my orders. Take charge of my

warriors, let the war begin. Let my Aztecs seize those weapons down there, let my Aztecs leave not one enemy alive in Tenochtitlán.

**CUAUPOPOCA:** I be taken to be burnt, my lord. Give your belated orders to Cuautemoc, if you be able.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I order war on the whites. Where be my guards?

**CUAUPOPOCA:** May the gods save Cuautemoc. May him change the fate of Aztec.

**MOCTEZUMA:** My guards! Where be my guards? Call me my warriors!

**CORTES:** Easy, Moctezuma, don't force me to do anything I wish not.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Threaten you me? Think you Moctezuma will fear death?

**CORTES:** There are fears beyond death, as Moctezuma well knows.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Enough I had of these turbid words. Your destruction be between my two lips.

**CORTES:** Behave yourself Moctezuma. I did not wish to accuse you in front of your commander. You will carry these chains until he is burnt and his ashes scattered, perhaps even longer.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Dare you not touch me. Be I not the ruler? Be not my wishes everyone's command? I swear to you on the blood of my son, I swear to you on the entire Aztec nation, you shall be at the head of the flock of sacrifices such as Aztec has never seen before. The steps of the pyramid shall be with your blood all awash.

**CORTES:** Don't cause any trouble, now. See how composed Cuaupopoca and his friends are in the middle of the square.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Let me go! Touch me not!

**LOPEZ:** The order has been fulfilled.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The ruler of Aztec is no more.

**CORTES:** Don't leave his side, Doña Marina, I do not wish him causing himself any harm, and let no other red-skinned come near him.

## SCENE 7

**SPANIARDS:** Such torment is your persistent silence

When one word from you is all I need

Just say : "I recognise Hernando Cortes"

"He be my commander, my servant be he"

**CORTES:** Why still no reply from Don Carlos? Why no reply? Why? Why? After so many letters, so many messengers... Cuauemec can start an uprising any time now. We need his support in these difficult days. Why does Don Carlos not answer? Why? Why? The grandson of Isabella the great and Phillip he is supposed to be. Perhaps he is but a short-sighted king who can see no further than the sea.

**OLMEDO:** Utter the name of the Emperor with respect, Hernando.

**CORTES:** I am offering him a country much richer than our Spain herself.

**OLMEDO:** That it is such a great gift makes the Emperor wonder, perhaps. Velasquez's men in the Castilian court are not exactly sitting idly. They wheedle the Emperor with words like: "This man, this adventurer doesn't even recognise Velasquez, to whom he owes everything. Who can guarantee that tomorrow he will not disown the very crown of Castilla. They caution the Emperor saying: "If every commander drunk with a few successes starts a revolt, where will it all end?" "Whoever they might be, those who disregard the authority of the Crown deserve no protection, but punishment."

**CORTES:** Do they seriously think that I would revolt against the Emperor? Ah, if only Don Carlos knew what lies in my heart...

**OLMEDO:** If *Velasquez* only knew what lied in your heart...

**CORTES:** I see that you can repeat to me the conversations in Castilla between my enemies and the Emperor with great authority. Tell me then, what is the effect of all that we have written and sent to the Emperor?

**OLMEDO:** They carry considerable weight too, naturally. Don Carlos has shown his displeasure saying: "How could Velasquez make a navy commander of a man he doesn't trust?" The Emperor's task as a judge is a difficult one. Perhaps he has already made up his mind.

**CORTES:** You, reverend father, are very well informed.

**OLMEDO:** I have been charged with the duty of removing you from your post as commander, Hernando.

**CORTES:** Well, well, well, so the reverend father is involved in politics after all. What a surprise.

**OLMEDO:** We have all been, from the start.

**CORTES:** And who is it that charged you with this task, then, Velasquez?

**OLMEDO:** A higher office than him, I am afraid. The Emperor himself. Don Carlos does not cherish the prospect of two Spanish armies fighting each other in the new country.

**CORTES:** Two Spanish armies?

**OLMEDO:** An armada much bigger than ours sent by Velasquez has already dropped anchor at Vera Cruz. Under the command of Narvaez. They outnumber us four to one. All of them Spaniards, too. I mean, these men all know what horses, rifles and cannons are.

**CORTES:** So I am not to be regarded as god, eh? Idiots! That fierce eagle, Cuautemoc would wipe them all out.

**OLMEDO:** Velasquez's army is not coming to fight Aztec. His only mission is to punish you. Apparently Narvaez is to ally himself with Cuautemoc, if necessary.

**CORTES:** They will join Cuautemoc to wipe us out?

**OLMEDO:** They expect our men to desert you and join Narvaez. According to the decree Narvaez is supposed to have, those who do not join the new commander will be regarded as revolting against the emperor.

**CORTES:** So, this is the grand plan to take away my army. Do you really think Cuautemoc will just sit back and watch this?

**OLMEDO:** Aren't you putting too much faith in your mortal enemy, Cuautemoc?

**CORTES:** His wrath will not be satisfied with just one Quetzalcoatl. He would want to fondle the hearts of all Spaniards, and quite rightly, too. Only I can deal with that fighting eagle. If it's not me who leads the troops, Cuautemoc will throw the hearts of the Spaniards to the dogs.

**OLMEDO:** Be a little realistic, Hernando.

**CORTES:** This... This Narvaez is coming to steal away my conquest.

**OLMEDO:** What matters is the glory of Spain, and of Jesus Christ.

**CORTES:** Yes, Spain and Jesus Christ. But if my name is to be left out of the book of Spain, I would gladly offer my heart to the king of the dead.

**OLMEDO:** We have visitors.

**CORTES:** Who are you? What business have you in Tenochtitlán?

**TAPIA:** We are the bearers of the Emperor's decree for the arrest of Hernando Cortes. If he co-operates, he will be given a fair trial in Cuba.

**CORTES:** And a fair hanging.

**TAPIA:** So it is you. I shall read to you the decree.



**CORTES:** All in good time. Let's first find out who you are.

**TAPIA:** Officers of Narvaez.

**CORTES:** I don't know who this Narvaez is, but considering he came to capture Cortes, he must be an important commander. Forgive me, I have been away from home a long time, I don't know these newly-famous heroes. Which great islands has this Narvaez conquered?

**TAPIA:** None, but he is the holder of the Emperor's decree, all signed and sealed. We here have a copy of it. He is charged with the task of taking you to Cuba.

**CORTES:** Compadres, whoever you might be, I greet you warmly.

**TAPIA:** The Emperor doesn't cherish the prospect of two Spanish armies fighting each other in the new country.

**CORTES:** That is exactly what the reverend father was saying. So, it is I or Narvaez then, one of us has to surrender.

**TAPIA:** Only you, Hernando Cortes, that is the decree.

**CORTES:** It hasn't been delivered yet.

**TAPIA:** Allow us to read it to you.

**CORTES:** If you in fact have such a decree, it must be read officially in front of all the troops, not in private like this.

**DIAZ:** We are fighting in the Emperor's name too, isn't that right Hernando? We wouldn't dream of disobeying the Emperor.

**TAPIA:** That is your business. We came with an armada much stronger than the one you hijacked from Cuba.

**CORTES:** So we've heard.

**TAPIA:** We've come to secure your surrender señor. It is up to you to prevent two Spanish armies fighting each other.

**CORTES:** You are right, it must be prevented. And it will be. Take the gentlemen inside, let them rest.

**TAPIA:** Look at the bastards gambling with gold bullions.

**DIAZ:** Fight in Cortes's army like we do, even your stirrups can be gold. Here, catch, melt it and make bracelets for your sweetheart in Cuba. Here, one for you, too. But if you follow inexperienced commanders you'll all end up on the sacrificial altar.

**CORTES:** These well-fed pigs from Cuba want to steal the conquest we have been carrying on for months with blood and with fear. It must all happen tonight. It is either us or Narvaez.

**ALVARADO:** They are four times as many with heavy cannons and young horses.

**CORTES:** Load these two Spanish-speaking beasts with gold and silver and send them to Narvaez's camp. And you, reverend father, you go with them and preach brotherly love and peace. We'll ambush them tonight and try to capture Narvaez. We'll have his men join us.

**ALVARADO:** Isn't this madness, Hernando?

**CORTES:** When you have no choice, nothing is.

## SCENE 8

**MOCTEZUMA:** You and I, Malinche, have betrayed this land both, in different ways. The ancestral beliefs led me into error, and now the ancestral home is trampled upon. And you Malinche, how console you yourself, when the death cry of the land rings in your ears?

**D. MARINA:** Moctezuma offered me to the white strangers. I have always been taught that the greatest virtue for a bronze-skinned woman is loyalty to her man. The whites' commander was my man, I served him.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You were to find out if the stranger was Quetzalcoatl and inform me.

**D. MARINA:** I did.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Time and time again you said: "He be the real god, he be Quetzalcoatl, I doubt not, he be the white god."

**D. MARINA:** He created his first miracle with me. Quetzalcoatl made a new woman out of me. My beliefs changed alongside my name. The sweet little compliant Tabascan maiden disappeared, in its place came the Christian Doña Marina, who commanded respect from Hernando Cortes the conquistador and all the other Spaniards, like a queen.

**MOCTEZUMA:** How long known you he was no god?

**D. MARINA:** Since our first night together.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You knew well what you were to do. You were to kill him.

**D. MARINA:** I already had his seed in me.

**MOCTEZUMA:** He turned the neighbouring tribes against me with your help.

**D. MARINA:** His child was then in my womb.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You foiled our raid in Cholula.

**D. MARINA:** His child was already kicking.

**MOCTEZUMA:** You led him into Tenochtitlán.

**D. MARINA:** I had borne him a son.

**MOCTEZUMA:** My son... My son cries to me from every star tonight. I still feel his heartbeat in my hands. What does Cuautemoc?

**D. MARINA:** He is sent an emerald ring as well.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Cuautemoc, if only saw you me like this, you would give yourself the order that I no longer can.

**SCENE 9**

**ALVARADO:** We ambushed Narvaez's camp last night, carrying guitars and singing songs. They all thought we were there to join them and none of them even touched their weapons. Narvaez was screaming his head off : "Fire! Fire! Fire!" "What do you mean 'fire' señor, these are our brothers."

**DIAZ:** In the commotion, we wrapped the novice up tight.

**ALVARADO:** Father Olmedo wasn't exactly idle, either.

**DIAZ:** I mean, with a bit of gold and a good dose of threats, all of Narvaez's troops have joined us now. We are four to five times stronger. Aztec can not raise its head again.

**ALVARADO:** What about Cuautemoc?

**DIAZ:** His end is near, too. He is probably captured by now, on Moctezuma's orders, as if Moctezuma had a clue.

**ALVARADO:** What is this noise?

**DIAZ:** Have a look at these, Pedro.

**CORTES:** The hour of reckoning is here, boys. The Aztec uprising is coming.

**ALVARADO:** Cuautemoc's leading them to the palace.

**DIAZ:** So he wasn't captured?

**CORTES:** He didn't obey the order. Place the cannons in the bastions.

**ALVARADO:** They are coming in waves. How are we going to deal with them? A war would spell disaster for Tenochtitlán.

**DIAZ:** I'd hate to think what it would spell for us.

**CORTES:** Move back from the windows and balconies, all Spaniards. They are in a rage. Bring Moctezuma here, only he can calm down this horde.

**DIAZ:** It's not as if he is calm himself exactly. At one point, he apparently started hitting himself with the end of his chain, using it like a whip, and nearly killed himself if it wasn't for the guards.

**ALVARADO:** He seems to have calmed down now.

**D. MARINA:** He stares at the clouds, his face like a weeping rock.

**CORTES:** Forgive me for treating you like this, but it was for your own good, so you wouldn't harm yourself. We can unchain you now. There... You are free now.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Bother not, Hernando, I am so used to these chains.

**CORTES:** You are still king, and you must regard this as your own palace.

**MOCTEZUMA:** My own palace? Stepping inside here, something was lost in me. Something... Something that can never be replaced. Like a gelded animal. What is this buzz?

**CORTES:** Cuautemoc's rising against you.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Could that be against you, perhaps?

**CORTES:** Go out, Moctezuma, talk to your people. They must stop this riot or Tenochtitlán will be flattened.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I be their ruler no more.

**CORTES:** Go out Moctezuma and talk. There must be no unnecessary bloodshed. You can calm them down. You are the only one they will listen to.

**MOCTEZUMA:** The body belongs to Moctezuma, the will to Quetzalcoatl. We have perpetuated this myth very well, the two of us, have we not Hernando?

**CORTES:** I too have a Quetzalcoatl, far away, over the seas. I can just see him draped in purple-gold robes. With his merest frown an armada sails for Algeria. When he

smiles, all of Castilla bathes in light. You and I must feel honoured to serve him Moctezuma.

**MOCTEZUMA:** We must feel honoured.

**CORTES:** In the name of our lord, the Emperor, let Aztec accept my rule. A blessed future awaits this domain.

**MOCTEZUMA:** A blessed future awaits.

**CORTES:** Go out Moctezuma and talk. Only you can make them see sense.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Make them see sense.

**CORTES:** Cuautemoc rioted without your orders.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Cuautemoc rioted without my orders.

**CORTES:** Against the laws of Aztec.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Against the laws of Aztec.

**CORTES:** Go out into the balcony. Calm them down with the right words. Your people must not follow this despicable provocation by Cuautemoc. Make them disperse, go home, go about their business.

**MOCTEZUMA:** This despicable provocation. I shall speak Quetzalcoatl, and my Aztecs shall obey me. Give me back those chains too, the chains you have taken off me. Let me put the traitor Cuautemoc to chain with one single word for disobeying the law of Aztec, for rebelling against Moctezuma and his guests. Like Cuaupopoca, burn him too.

**CORTES:** Now has great Moctezuma spoken in a manner fit for an Aztec king.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I shall show them the real Moctezuma. My people shall understand me.

**LOPEZ:** He silenced them with just his appearance. Moctezuma is speaking now.

**CORTES:** Can you hear what he says, Marina? The city is deadly quiet.

**LOPEZ:** Moctezuma is king again, he silenced them with just his appearance. What?... He is tying the chains around him.

**CORTES:** Pull him in.

**DIAZ:** He is signalling his captivity.

**D. MARINA:** Aaaah!... Cuautemoc!...

**LOPEZ:** He picked up a stone and threw it at Moctezuma. They are all stoning the king.

**D. MARINA:** Stoning, they are stoning Moctezuma. Save him, save him!

**CORTES:** Pull him back, take him in, I say.

**DIAZ:** You shouldn't be seen Hernando, keep back.

**CORTES:** Take him in!

**LOPEZ:** Blood's pouring from his face, he is staggering. They are all stoning Moctezuma. But he stands firm. He is tying himself to the railing. He faces the hail of stones as if carved of stone.

**D. MARINA:** Save him, save him!

**LOPEZ:** He is staring without a blink. One more hits his chest... Oh, another hits him on the forehead.

**CORTES:** Take him in, I say.

**LOPEZ:** All those men can not prize him from the railing. The whole of Aztec is stoning him now. His face all bloodied, he stares at them, he smiles with affection at Cuautemoc. Now he is staring at the clouds. The stones land on his face, on his body as if they are gentle little birds.

**D. MARINA:** Moctezuma, Moctezuma!

## SCENE 10

**1/2/3 AZTECS/MESSENGER:** Tlascal, Tlascal, with Aztec make peace.

**CUAUTEMOC:** Let us put behind our past enmities. Let all nations of kin unite, against the pale-faced strangers in war.

**1 /2 AZTECS:** Tlascal, Tlascal, with Aztec make peace.

**TLASCALAN:** Too late Aztec, too late to ask for Tlascalan mercy. We withhold our helping hand against the white strangers. We shall march into pompous Tenochtitlán alongside the white strangers.

\*\*\*\*\*

**1/2/3 AZTECS/MESSENGER:** *Aztec, Tlascal, Totonac, Maya, Olmec*

*Instead of these, where enmity rules*

*Once was only Tollan, one and only Tollan*

*Where the earth and the sky were one*

*And eternity was the ever-reigning king*

\*\*\*\*\*

**CUAUTEMOC:** Let nobody speak to me of peace, nor of the generosity of the pale strangers.

**1. AZTEC:** They have captured all our resources

**2. AZTEC:** They control all bridges

**3. AZTEC:** They've cut the water supply



**1/2/3 AZTECS/MESSENGER:** The land strangles her own children now

Tenochtitlán became Aztec's own trap

No escape

**CUAUTEMOC:** We have now gone beyond all hope, but this also means that the vultures of vacillation shall no longer pick at our hearts. Look at my face my friends. I want to see every face yellow with the sulphurous fire of hate.

**1./2. AZTECS:** Take arms, take arms, cried the bronze-skinned

**3. AZTECS/MESSENGER:** The white man they have befriended

**4. AZTEC:** Stabbed them in the back

## SCENE 11

**OLMEDO:** Can you hear me, Moctezuma? Seek shelter in Jesus Christ before you die and save your soul.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Who casts this cross shadow on me? My country you have taken, now my heart you reach to take. It is all for nought. Your pale-faced god can never save me.

**D. MARINA:** Not everything is finished yet, the situation can change. Can you not hear the buzz? Aztec is up in arms.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Cuautemoc, my inimitable eagle. He was right all along. But it is too late now.

**D. MARINA:** He attacks tirelessly.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Defense is a courageous attack for Cuautemoc.

**D. MARINA:** He attacks tirelessly.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I made him delay, I, the accursed of my land.

**OLMEDO:** Seek shelter in Jesus Christ, seek salvation.

**MOCTEZUMA:** Salvation I wish not. I want every cell in my body tortured endlessly. But whatever those masters of hell contrive will be laughable for my crime.

**D. MARINA:** Cuautemoc is getting his warriors ready for yet another attack.

**MOCTEZUMA:** I feel star ashes fall on my forehead. A distant universe dissolves with me now.

**CORTES:** What's he saying?

**D. MARINA:** Face to face with the king of the dead now.

**OLMEDO:** He is dead. Lord have mercy for the soul of this heathen. He remained a follower of his pagan gods till the very end.

**CORTES:** Mexico is orphaned, and we are alone. It is a pity we have to have the funeral in the middle of this commotion. Make the service quick, but suited to a king. Then, on with the war.

## SCENE 12

**AZTECS:** Then they came again

With black-green dragons

thundering in fury

They moved over the hills

and into our lakes

their new floating houses

They've turned the neighbouring

tribes against us

and multiplied

They came with

avenging Tlascalca with the  
 Totonacs in tow A  
 twilight of fear lay siege to Tenochtitlán  
 But alas, the worst of all  
 Tescoco, our sister city too  
 joined this ring of treachery  
 The pale-faced stranger  
 made brother slaughter brother

**2. SPANIARD:** While Diaz marched on land

**1. SPANIARD:** Cortes moved his ships over land into the lake.

**AZTECS:** Then we moved to where the waters part

for one last battle to the death

And there, where the waters part

we became one again, on our last day

We had no provisions and we ate nought

All night clotted rains rained on us

My warriors kept falling and

falling

still, like bloodied

carvings of stone

**SPANIARDS:** We knocked down the aqueducts

that carried water into the city

Let them drink their salt lakes dry

Let them drink their heart-drying salt,

the Aztecs

**AZTECS:** Ninety three days long was the siege.

Then Tenochtitlán was razed to the ground.

Nothing was left.

It was the year of three houses when Tenochtitlán fell

the month of changing flowers

on the day of the serpent fell the city  
and us dismembered.

**SPANIARDS:** Its palaces were unequalled in Seville

and even Granada

We saw the great Moctezuma

proceed to his temple

with more magnificence

than the Pope after the Lateran council.

**AZTECS:** Homes with no ceilings, no roofs

Brains splattered on rocks

On the day of the serpent fell the city

and us dismembered.

**1. AZTEC:** They ripped off the skirts of women and girls

to check if they were hiding gold or gems

**2. AZTEC:** They've enslaved every man

Sent them to quarries, gods of civilisation

Except the old, the infirm

Whom they killed

**3. AZTEC:** Tlascalala did not escape a similar fate

**SPANIARDS:** 13th of August, 1521, Tenochtitlán fell

And the king of kings, the great Catholic Don Carlos spoke

**ALVARADO:** I recognise Hernando Cortes, he be my commander,

My banner flies he in the new land

**AZTECS:** Aztec fell like a body with its heart stolen

In the year of three houses

in the month of changing flowers

on the day of the serpent fell Mexica

us dismembered

Tell me of Cuautemoc  
how the last eagle of  
was

Aztec  
smashed to the ground

Tying his now bone-dry wrists  
they pushed and shoved him  
to face the white god

**SPANIARDS:** We treated him like a hero

Cortes had his wrists untied  
made him sit by his side  
gave him food, and to his wife  
He consoled him and his tears  
with softly-spoken words

**AZTECS:** They asked about the gold, later

the lost treasure of Moctezuma  
lying so many leagues under the mud  
They believed not that he let it sink  
-the legendary treasure of Moctezuma  
lying so many leagues under the mud-

**SPANIARDS:** Then Cortes had him untied

made him sit by his side  
with softly-spoken words...

**AZTECS:** Then, later, one day...

**CHORUS:** Cuautemoc must die, said the white god

All Cuautemocs must die  
for the new universe to survive

**THE END**

**Gundogdu Gencer**

**MOCTEZUMA**



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