

EXT. MAYAB TERRITORY, YUCATAN, MEXICO - 1562

The sun sinks creating a magnificent yet ominous twilight. The colors are sublime.

WE HEAR insects sing and the distant roar of Sarahuato monkeys, and perhaps that of a jaguar's. Thousands of birds chirp as they begin to gather in the canopy.

EXT. RUINS - DUSK

Deep in the umbrage, a number of abandoned Mayan ruins, hidden, reclaimed by the jungle.

CLOSE ON a snake as it slithers along a tree branch.

The serpent advances toward the ruins. As it nears, we hear a peculiar MUSIC of drums and flutes.

The serpent reaches the base of a great wall where, through a tiny hole, a smoky beam radiates. The snake enters the hole and disappears.

INT. RUINS - NIGHT

The interior is lit by torches and bonfires. The roots of trees have penetrated the walls and hang from the ceiling like giant tentacles.

The serpent twists itself onto a root and remains still, observing, listening to the music and the ritual that unfolds below.

Standing, forming a semicircle are thirty people - men, women, and children - In the center, on some rocks, lies a statue of the god Itzamna, represented as a dragon serpent. There are four piles of hot, burning coals around her.

A MAYAN PRIEST, assisted by two men, spreads the coals around the statue. A SECOND PRIEST of higher rank lifts a clay chalice and places it underneath the body of a dog tied to a small stone altar.

The priest takes out a knife, severs the animal's throat, collects the blood in the cup and raises it to the deities.

WE HEAR angelic MUSIC from a children's choir.

INT. CHURCH CONVENT - NIGHT

A chalice is raised to the heavens. FATHER JERONIMO DE AGUILAR, 75, without knowing, holds the cup like the Mayan priest.

JERONIMO

(in Latin)

Take and drink all of you, for this is my body that shall be given up...

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Dozens of horses in full gallop. Threatening dogs, mastiffs, run alongside. Furious cavalrymen hasten the march.

JERONIMO

... for you so that your sins may be forgiven. Do this in memory of me.

The clang of weapons and armor of Spanish soldiers and the incessant barking of the mastiffs shatters the serenity of the full moon.

INT. RUINS - NIGHT

The Mayan priest, now barefoot, begins to walk on the hot coals, drinking the dog's blood and spitting it over the god Itzamna.

A partially nude woman approaches. She is IX MU CUY, 35, different from the others in that she is a mestiza with light eyes. She has a mole shaped like a crescent moon that rises from the corner of her mouth.

Ix Mu Cuy smears her face with the dog's blood and walks on the coals with her bare feet.

INT. CHURCH CONVENT - NIGHT

Father Jeronimo lifts the host.

JERONIMO

This is the body of Christ.

He puts the host in his mouth.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The soldiers advance on the ruins at full speed.

INT. RUINS - NIGHT

The Mayan ceremony peaks. The faces and bodies of the participants are covered in blood. Without exception, they all appear to be in a trance.

Suddenly, the Spanish soldiers and their rabid mastiffs raid the ceremony with unimaginable wrath.

The SPANISH CAPTAIN strikes down the Mayan priest.

A pair of soldiers destroy the idols.

The mastiffs ferociously attack a man thrown to the ground. He screams as he tries, in vain, to free himself from the vicious beasts.

The soldiers yank semi-nude women by the hair and drag them over the coals and the jagged shards of the broken idols.

Others relentlessly beat whomever they find. Children cry and scream in panic.

The scene becomes a chaos of pain, screams, barks, fire, and smoke.

The terrified serpent flees.

INT. CHURCH CONVENT - NIGHT

Jeronimo gives communion to the fifteen Mayan children kneeled in front of him. The Canticles rise up to the heavens.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

The bodies of Mayan men and women, bathed in blood, are dragged by the horses at great speed. The proud mastiffs playfully chomp on their prize hunt.

INT. CHURCH CONVENT - NIGHT

Jeronimo hears a disturbance at the entrance of the convent. Spanish soldiers rush in with their Mayan trophies; several are dragged in by horses, while others are tied together in a column.

Some women cry in pain, some in shame. Others can barely stand. The children cling to their parents.

Jeronimo observes the heartbreaking spectacle with great anxiety.

EXT. JUNGLE - SUNRISE

The moon surrenders its place to the sun . . . the jungle awakens, oblivious to what has occurred.

INT. RUINS - DAY

Cautiously, the serpent emerges from its hiding place and observes the corpse of a Mayan child. Oddly, it advances and with his tongue tastes the reddish, warm liquid that drips down the shattered face of the god Itzamna.

EXT. CONVENT ATRIUM - DAY

A cross rises from the bowels of a bonfire. Seated nearby are the INQUISITOR, a military COMMANDER, and a friar who acts as DEFENDER.

On the left are the Mayans accused of heresy. They wear yellow, coned hats called "Sambenitos," indicating the nature of their heresy. Jeronimo stands with them.

To the right various soldiers armed with swords and spears guard the gallows.

The Commander addresses the Inquisitor,

COMMANDER

(pointing at friars and Mayans)

Just a few months ago, these same friars predicted the end of idolatry and assured that the Indians' acceptance of Baptism was inevitable.

(beat)

Nevertheless, this group of savages was hauled off as they offered the blood of a black dog to the devil, dancing naked without shame. It is just, your eminence, that they be made slaves so that they may pay for their sins.

The Commander sits, the Defender stands. Jeronimo observes the Indians, takes out his glasses and stares coldly at Ix Mu Cuy, the woman who danced semi-nude.

DEFENDER

Your eminence, rather than indoctrinating the Indians the Commanders have only managed to subject them to miserable cruelty. Instead of teaching them about God they have made them desperate. They think one cannot preach the word of God without torture.

Jeronimo approaches Ix Mi Cuy discretely and studies her, his tired, old eyes preventing him from seeing her as well as he would like.

DEFENDER (cont'd)

We all know that the true interest of the Commanders is not saving these people's souls, but turning them into slaves.

Jeronimo concentrates more on Ix Mu Cuy, staring at her intensely. He focuses on the mole at the corner of her mouth.

DEFENDER (cont'd)

They even rent them out to carry loads, using them like animals. Your eminence, I ask for kindness and understanding for these Indians.

The Defender sits. The Inquisitor stands.

INQUISITOR

Justice dictates that such wrongdoings cannot go without reparation, thus, it is my duty to take these lamentable acts into account, giving the Indians an opportunity to save themselves if they accept Baptism.

(beat)

Therefore, those who are baptized will be publicly lashed and later set freed. Those who do not respect the merciful disposition I offer in the name of our Holy Mother the Church, will be immediately hanged.

The Commander quickly stands.

COMMANDER

Your Eminence, I beg you to reconsider your decision. Two hurricanes have left a large part of the city and its church very damaged; there is so much left to be rebuilt. We need slaves.

The Inquisitor takes a moment to think.

INQUISITOR

Father Jeronimo, would you proceed?

Disgusted, the Commander makes a respectful gesture and departs. Father Jeronimo positions himself in front of the Mayans.

JERONIMO

(in Mayan)

He who is baptized into the Christian religion
will save their lives. Those who refuse will be
hanged.

The prisoners look at one another. Only a few separate from the group: two elderly,
three women, and four children.

Several soldiers lead them to the interior of the convent.

INQUISITOR

Captain, carry out the sentence!

The double beat of a small DRUM is heard.

Jeronimo looks Ix Mi Cuy and turns to the authorities.

JERONIMO

Your honor, I would like to ask a great favor.

The Inquisitor returns. Jeronimo joins his hands in an expression of supplication,
gesturing toward Ix Mu Cuy.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Allow me to interrogate this woman. I've noticed
an uncertainty in her face. Perhaps I could save
her soul for our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Inquisitor begins to leave without answering.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Your Eminence, may I remind you that his
Excellency, the Bishop, is arriving next week. I
assure you that it would greatly please him to
hear the patience that this Holy Tribunal has
demonstrated toward the Indians.

INQUISITOR

Is this a threat or a warning, Father?

JERONIMO

Humble advice, your Eminence.

The Inquisitor looks at Jeronimo.

INQUISITOR

Take charge of the prisoner until the last heretic has been executed. If by that time you have not convinced her, she will be hanged with the rest.

The Inquisitor leaves. Jeronimo bows reverently then goes to Ix Mu Cuy. He gestures for her to follow him and they go through one of the doors of the convent.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Jeronimo and Ix Mu Cuy settle in a small chapel that has one window with a view of the gallows outside.

There is a table and two chairs. A crucifix, whose Christ is depicted in profound agony hangs on the wall.

JERONIMO

(in Mayan)

I know who you are, young woman. It's urgent that we speak.

Ix Mu Cuy stares at the floor.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

(in Spanish)

Please, take off that silly hat and sit down.

Ix Mu Cuy does not react. Jeronimo lifts her chin.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

I recognize you by that mole next to your mouth. You are Gonzalo Guerrero's daughter. I am Jeronimo de Aguilar. He must have told you about me.

Ix Mu Cuy remains undaunted. Jeronimo pulls back his hand. She looks down again.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

You heard the sentence. We don't have much time. They will hang you if you don't listen to me.

Ix Mu Cuy does not react.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Please, girl, I am acting on good faith. Hear me out in the name of your father. I BEG YOU, PLEASE, sit, so we can talk calmly.

Ix Mu Cuy takes off the "Sambenito," and lays it gently on the floor. She looks at Jeronimo with a certain reticence. He smiles and signals for her to sit. She does.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

What is your name?

IX MU CUY

(in Spanish, challenging)

How do you know my father?

Jeronimo looks outside the window at the gallows. A long line, maybe two dozen people, await the executioner. Jeronimo goes to the table and sits.

JERONIMO

I met your father at sea. Not the one you imagine, beautiful and pleasant. No, this sea was different....This sea was one of life or death.

EXT. SEA - DAY

The immensity of the ocean under a relentless sun and an omniscient blue sky.

SUPER: YUCATAN SEA, MEXICO - 1511

There is something far off, something very small....

We slowly approach until we make out a wooden boat floating on the undulating waves.

It is empty....We get closer...

Suddenly, we discover a young man's HAND, his fingertips skimming the sea as if asking for pity.

The hand moves, retreating into the boat. As we follow it, we discover nine human beings -- or what's left of them.

No one moves, perhaps asleep...more likely dead.

The hand belongs to GONZALO GUERRERO, a young man of 25. Next to him is CAPTAIN VALDIVIA who pulls Gonzalo's lapel and tries to say something, but falls back and passes out.

Gonzalo opens his eyes and sees the dead Valdivia next to him. He wakes the others.

GONZALO

Our Captain is dead.

Father Jeronimo, now 25, opens his eyes and weakly sits up.

MARGARITA DE ANZURES, 40, beautiful, and CRISTINA, much younger, but just as weak can barely open their eyes.

INIGO DE BURGOS, 30, and two young sailors, PELAYO and SANTIAGO, awaken.

With great difficulty, Jeronimo moves over to Valdivia and makes a sign of the cross on his forehead.

JERONIMO

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

LATER

Gonzalo, Pelayo, and Santiago cast Captain Valdivia's body overboard.

The dispirited survivors watch their Captain's body float out to the open sea.

The dorsal fins of several sharks glide across the bow.

DON ALVARO and DON LUIS, father and son, both heavysset, from Andalusian nobility, are the first to see the sharks.

LUIS

Look, father, sharks.

ALVARO

Each day they get closer. One day they will eat us all; the living and the dead.

(shouting at the sharks)

Take that one out there. His body is as rotten as his soul. Go ahead, eat it all.

LUIS

Father, for God's sake, don't talk like that.

The sharks attack Valdivia's body.

ALVARO

Eat every one of his rancid bones.

INIGO DE BURGOS

Don Alvaro, please show due respect.

Margarita looks hard at Inigo.

MARGARITA

Do not speak, Don Inigo, unless you are man
enough to say what you really feel.

Absolute SILENCE...the survivors exchange looks.

LATER

Gonzalo watches Cristina who sits on the deck and sways with the monotonous
rocking of the boat. Suddenly, she collapses. Gonzalo rushes to her aid.

CRISTINA

(whispering)

Please, let me die with dignity.

Gonzalo looks at her tenderly, pulls a dagger from his boot, and slits his left wrist.

His blood gushes out. With his right hand he pulls Cristina up and pushes his wound
to her mouth for her to drink.

GONZALO

Drink, for God's sake. Drink. You cannot die
without a fight.

Cristina opens her eyes, looks at him gratefully, and with great effort, drinks his
blood.

EXT. BOAT - SEA - NIGHT

Gonzalo sleeps over Cristina's lifeless body. A hand grabs his shoulder. Gonzalo
opens his eyes. Jeronimo stands in front of him.

JERONIMO

She is dead, Gonzalo. God has her in his Holy
Glory.

Gonzalo turns to Cristina and stares at her.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Son, let me give her extreme unction.

Jeronimo takes saliva from his mouth and dabs it on her mouth and forehead in the
form of a cross.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Ego te absolvo...qui a pulvis eris et in pulvis
reverteris...Lord, have pity on her soul and grant
her eternal rest.

Gonzalo and Jeronimo lift her body and approach the edge of the boat.

MARGARITA

Stop! Do not do it! Her flesh and blood can save
our lives.

(pleading)

Father Jeronimo, our need is great. She would
have wanted that.

INIGO DE BURGOS

(vehemently)

NO!! The boat is moving faster than before,
obviously some current is carrying us, maybe
even, to land.

MARGARITA

Isn't it better to serve God by saving our lives
than by giving a the sharks a feast? Is there any
sin in that, Father?

Jeronimo looks at the others for an answer -- they look at him with expectation. He
looks at Gonzalo, who respectfully waits for a decision. Jeronimo thinks for a
moment and finally nods.

Gonzalo and Jeronimo place Cristina in the center of the boat.

EXT. COCOMES BEACH - BOAT - SUNRISE

Jeronimo awakens and looks at his comrades in disgust. Traces of blood are
smeared on the sleeping castaways.

Terrified, Jeronimo looks at his own hands and sees dry blood. He reaches
overboard to wash himself, but instead of water, he finds SAND.

They are beached. Jeronimo jumps onto the sand and limps a few paces. He kneels
and shouts with all his might.

JERONIMO

BLESSED BE THE LORD!!!!

Alvaro and Luis sit up, take a moment to react, then jump to the sand...

LUIS

We are saved!! God saved us!! Father...land...!!

ALVARO

Holy Mary has heard my prayers.

Gonzalo and the others step onto the sand. All jump for joy as they pray, cry, and hug each other.

EXT. COCOMES BEACH - NIGHT

Seated around a fire, the survivors recover their strength by eating clams, fish, roots, and drinking coconut water.

INIGO DE BURGOS

At sunrise, a group should go and find a high place where we could see the ocean and send signals in case a caravel passes. The rest should remain here gathering food.

ALVARO

We can also make a sail and some oars in case we need to escape.

GONZALO

We do not know if there are Indians here. We do not even know if we are on an island or on the mainland. We should not separate. We are still weak. It may be better to find a cave or some place with difficult access, get rest, and . . .

INIGO DE BURGOS

(interrupting)

Sailor, we cannot sit here and cross our arms waiting for you to feel well-enough to work. Has your brain dried up?

GONZALO

No, sir, my brain is just fine, but I think it is dangerous for us to separate before we have gathered our strength.

JERONIMO

Don Inigo is right. It is very important to find a place where we could see passing boats.

INIGO DE BURGOS

It is decided. Tomorrow we will split.

EXT. COCOMES JUNGLE - SUNRISE

Gonzalo, Jeronimo, Luis, and Alvaro hike through the jungle.

Gonzalo leads, separating thick leaves with his bare hands. They reach a clearance and look in all directions. A bird flutters up from the canopy. Jeronimo points at it and smiles.

EXT. COCOMES JUNGLE - CORN FIELD - DAY

They are standing in the middle of a corn field divided into small, simple parcels. The stalks hold small, weak ears of corn.

Alvaro takes one ear of corn, removes the husk, and looks at the grains. Luis snatches it away and takes a bite. He chews heavily and finally spits it out.

LUIS

Tastes like sweet dirt.

Gonzalo takes the corn and studies it.

GONZALO

These plants are not wild. They were planted by someone.

JERONIMO

We should join the others.

EXT. COCOMES JUNGLE TRAIL - DAY

The Spaniards are moving quickly when suddenly they hear HORRIBLE CRIES nearby.

LUIS

Listen, they are being attacked.

ALVARO

God have mercy on them.....

GONZALO

Hide. I'll get closer and see how many there are.

Just as Gonzalo moves forward, they hear the SOUND of rustling foliage. They hide.

Gonzalo moves stealthily toward the noise.

Staggering, covered with blood, Inigo de Burgos appears, half his brain protruding from a deep gash in his head. Upon seeing his friend, he collapses. Gonzalo looks at him -- Inigo returns the look, asking for mercy.

Gonzalo holds Inigo's head, takes his dagger out of his boot, and thrusts it into his throat. Inigo dies immediately. Gonzalo wipes the blade and puts it back into the boot.

Gonzalo and the rest of the group hide the body in the undergrowth when, in an instant, they are surrounded by the Cocomes Mayans. Margarita is with them, her clothes torn and her hands tied in front of her.

The group are made prisoners. Gonzalo tries to speak to the CHIEF, who, without warning, strikes him in the head with a wooden weapon and sends him unconscious to the floor.

The Chief shouts out orders and the rest of the Mayans force Luis and Alvaro to carry Gonzalo.

EXT./INT. PRISON CAGES - DAY

Gonzalo's face is cleaned with a wet rag. Margarita nurses him, dipping the rag into a wooden pail. He opens his eyes and gradually realizes where he is: imprisoned in a large cage with his five friends in an indigenous village.

MARGARITA

He is waking up.

The others approach.

JERONIMO

Relax, Gonzalo. We are still alive.

Gonzalo sits up with Margarita's help. He rubs his head, feeling a large bump.

GONZALO

Where are we?

LUIS

In the cages of savages.

JERONIMO

They have some type of civilization, and for what little we have seen, a ruling hierarchy and

religion. I think our lives depend on what these leaders decide. Look at the village, how busy it is.

Gonzalo stands and from behind the bars sees a village composed of huts surrounding two magnificent, yet deteriorating pyramids.

The villagers are very active -- the mothers clean and create beautiful hair-dresses for their daughters, who they dress in white outside their huts.

The elderly women light up "poom," a type of incense. The men make huge fires, dress their head with giant feathers, and paint their bodies in different colors.

A GUARD checks on the prisoners every now and then. Curious children try to get close to the cage, but the guard sends them away.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

They are getting ready for something.

GONZALO

Something that is not exactly welcoming.

A group follows the elder, HALACH UINIC, whose features and wardrobe projects authority. He nears the cage and deliberately studies the prisoners.

HA OP, a priest of lower rank, impatiently waits next to his chief.

HALACH UINIC

(in Mayan)

Only the two fat ones are worth anything. The others are too weak; let them eat and fatten them.

HA OP

(in Mayan)

Great Leader, the god Ah Puch has not had the blood of a woman in some time.

HALACH UINIC

(in Mayan)

Bring her close. I want to see her.

Ha Op opens the cage, shouting and gesturing for the group to separate. The Spaniards move to the rear of the cage. Ha Op grabs Margarita by the arm and takes her to his chief. Halach Uinic opens her mouth, and examines her teeth.

He pinches her breasts. Margarita is terrorized. Ha Op returns her to the cage.

HALACH UINIC (cont'd)

Ah Puch will receive her in the next moon, when
she is fat and healthy.

Halach Uinic moves away. Two WARRIORS enter the cage and take Luis and Alvaro
with them. Father and son look at each other in fear.

Ha Op looks at them and delivers an order. The guards rip their clothes leaving them
totally naked.

Another MAN, carrying a small pot with a cobalt blue substance, starts painting their
bodies.

IN THE CAGE

Kneeling, Margarita cries inconsolably. Jeronimo comforts her.

Gonzalo moves to a corner of the cage where the guard can barely see what he is
doing. He crouches down, pulls the dagger from his boot, and discretely starts
cutting the ropes that hold the wooden bars together.

EXT. PYRAMID - SUNSET

With the last rays of the sun come the sound of DRUMS.

The Cocomes are dressed for sacrifice.

The torches surrounding Alvaro and Luis are lit.

A group of priests, Ha Op, and several warriors approach them.

HA OP

(in Mayan)

Give us the prisoners chosen for the sacrifice that
we offer to the god Ah Puch.

A warrior hands over the two men. The group leads the Spaniards to the pyramid.

ALVARO

(holding the tears)

Luis, before we find ourselves in the next world, I
want to tell you that I could not have had another
son who I respect and admire so much.

LUIS

Let us show these savages how two noble
Andalusian face death.

Margarita and Jeronimo watch through the bars of their cage in horror.

Gonzalo, on the other hand, cuts the ropes of the bars faster.

IN THE PYRAMID

Father and son are held at the top of the pyramid, next to a large flat stone that is in front of a large deity.

Several warriors grab Luis and lay him on the rock. Luis tries to pull away from his captors.

Nearby, Alvaro screams and struggles when

...the head warrior, lifts a knife made of obsidian and, with one blow, thrusts it into Luis's chest.

AAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH.....

.... reactions of horror from Alvaro, Jeronimo, Margarita, and Gonzalo.

Seconds later, the head warrior extracts the heart and hands it to a CHACE, a priest, who raises it to the heavens and offers it to the god Ah Puch.

The SOUND of conch-shells and drums increase.

IN THE CAGE

Gonzalo notices that the guard is distracted by the sacrifice. He separates the bars and signals Margarita and Jeronimo to follow. The three prisoners squeeze through and escape.

Gonzalo looks back for a moment and sees Alvaro being held down on the sacrificial rock. He turns back and runs away.

The Spaniards disappear into the brush.

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Gonzalo, Jeronimo and Margarita stumble through the jungle.

Jeronimo falls on a mound of thick foliage, but quickly stands and continues running.

Margarita sweats and breathes heavily, brushing past a thorny branch that scratches her face. She screams and falls.

Jeronimo and Gonzalo stop and turn back to help her.

JERONIMO

Poor woman, Gonzalo. She is destroyed. She can't continue anymore.

GONZALO

Let's spend the night here, father. I think we are far enough from those savages.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY - SUNRISE

Jeronimo, Gonzalo and Margarita are deeply asleep.

The sun's rays touch Gonzalo's face as the small hand of a boy nears, creating a shadow on his face. The hand grabs Gonzalo's beard and tugs on it.

Gonzalo jumps, startled....

A Mayan family regards them with curiosity. Their smiles show they are friendly. The BOY hides behind his mother's huipil (skirt). The MAYAN MOTHER carries a small pot filled with food.

Gonzalo stands and takes several steps back. Margarita opens her eyes, sees the Mayans and shrieks. Jeronimo gets up.

The MAYAN FATHER takes the pot and opens it, takes out some tacos and offers them to the Spaniards.

Gonzalo approaches cautiously and takes the food. He puts a taco in his mouth and chews.

Jeronimo and Margarita come close. Each one takes a ration of food and begins to devour it.

The Mayans laugh, slapping their thighs with amusement, then they leave.

The boy walks backward, not wanting to miss the spectacle. The family stops and return to the Spaniards, signalling them to follow.

Gonzalo looks at Jeronimo who shrugs. He then looks at Margarita who does the same.

GONZALO

Maybe they will give us water.

The three follow the Mayans.

EXT. CITY OF HAMANHA - DAY

Led by the Mayan family, Gonzalo, Jeronimo, and Margarita enter a town called HAMANHA.

Busy VOICES are heard along with the sound of HAMMERING against stone.

The group arrive at a central plaza. Various men, guarded by a XIU WARRIOR, chisel a huge stone that lays on the ground.

The inhabitants of various huts come out and gather around the Spaniards, gawking at them with curiosity.

A YOUNG FATHER approaches with his WIFE.

YOUNG MAYAN FATHER

(in Mayan)

Who are these people who come with the morning sun? By the color of their hair and beards, they must be sent by Kukulcan.

The Wife also regards the Spaniards and smiles in contempt,

WIFE

(in Mayan)

No, no, they cannot be gods. It is obvious by their frail arms, and the hunger and thirst shown in their faces.

The bright SOUND of a conch-shell interrupts the scene.

Crossing the plaza is TAXMAR, supreme leader of the Xius, accompanied by a NACOM, a warrior chief.

Everyone becomes respectfully silent. Taxmar and the Nacom study the foreigners.

TAXMAR

(in Mayan)

Why are you here? Who sent you the sacred land of the Mayab?

Although Jeronimo does not understand, he deduces through Taxmar's gestures what is being said. Immediately he kneels and traces a boat floating on water on the ground.

JERONIMO

We come from a faraway land. We are Spanish and our boat capsized.

Taxmar listens, able to understand a little. He looks at Nacom and frowns.

NACOM

(in Mayan)

I can see that they are not sent by our enemies,
the Cocomes. They are only lost.

TAXMAR

(in Mayan)

They look more like animals than humans. They
are unfit to please the gods. We will enslave
them. Take them to Tzohom, so that he can deal
with them.

EXT. A TEMPLE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

The Nacom leads the Spaniards to the temple construction area. Several slaves are seen working around the site. Their foreheads are painted white.

They reach TZOHOM, who wears the simple tunic of a person of lower rank. He is facing away from them, supervising the slave labor.

NACOM

(in Mayan)

My master, Taxmar, sends me to you, Honorable
Tzohom, to hand over these slaves.

Tzohom turns and looks at the Spaniards. He frowns in disappointment.

TZOHOM

(in Mayan)

What kind of slaves are these in such terrible
shape, and such strange appearance?

NACOM

(in Mayan)

They were lost at sea.

TZOHOM

(in Mayan, unconvinced)

If my master Taxmar orders it.

Tzohom and the Nacom approach the Spanish.

NACOM

(in Mayan)

This is the priest, Tzohom, who you will obey
blindly, or else risk losing your lives. He will
assign you your duties.

Tzohom takes a small, leather bag from his waistband. He sticks his fingers inside
and dabs them in a white paint.

He smears the paint on the foreheads of the Spaniards, marking them as slaves.

EXT. TEMPLE UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

Gonzalo hammers a stake into a large piece of limestone in order to break off a
designated section. His face and body sweat profusely. One of his hands bleeds.

Jeronimo carries a cut section of stone. He stumbles under its weight. Sweat covers
his face.

Margarita labors to put together a bunch of stones. She is filled with bitterness and
grief. Her lips are blistered, her neck and shoulders parched by the sun.

EXT./INT. SLAVE CAGES - NIGHT

In a cage similar to the one at Cocomes, Margarita coughs and gasps. Gonzalo helps
her drink water. Nearby, Jeronimo prays the Hail Mary.

JERONIMO

...full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are
you amongst women...

Jeronimo stops praying.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

(to Gonzalo)

God is testing us, to prove our faith and pay for
our sins.

GONZALO

Hell and slavery must be the same, Father.
Purgatory is for saints.

JERONIMO

Have faith and you will live. Remember that well,
Gonzalo...

(returning to the prayer)

...and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...

Gonzalo looks at his surroundings. The situation couldn't be worse -- he's inside a cage, Margarita coughs and moans, and Jeronimo prays in the corner, almost in a trance.

Gonzalo looks defeated. He lays down and closes his eyes when.....BBZZZZZZZZZ....!

Near his face, a huge rattlesnake challenges him. Gonzalo remains still, looks at the serpent, and smiles wryly.

GONZALO

He sent you, didn't he? My prayers have been answered. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you.

Gonzalo sticks his hand out toward the snake. The serpent studies him, its rattle shaking.....BZZZZZZZZZ.....

GONZALO (cont'd)

Bite me, then. Bite me. What are you waiting for?
I want to get out of this hell. I beg you, bite me.

Jeronimo notices and for a few moments wonders if he should let him die....he can't. He gets up and slowly advances to his friend.

He grabs him from behind and carefully pulls him back. The rattle quiets and the snake retreats.

GONZALO (cont'd)

I don't want to live, Father. Why should I continue with this torture?

JERONIMO

The Lord keeps you alive for a reason, and for that we owe Him our devotion.

GONZALO

The Lord allowed his son to die on the cross. Why won't he let me die on mine?

JERONIMO

Life does not belong to us. It is the Lord who guides our destiny. Have faith, Gonzalo. I am sure we will see a sign soon.

Gonzalo lays flat on his back and focuses on the FULL MOON that he sees through the thatched ceiling.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Ix Mi Cuy watches Jeronimo in astonishment.

JERONIMO

Why do you look at me like that? You do not believe me, do you?

Ix Mu Cuy looks away bemused.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Why should I lie to you? For what reason? You haven't even told me your name yet.

Ix Mu Cuy does not respond.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

You are the daughter of my best friend... My only friend. The last time that I saw him he asked me to do everything possible to protect you. Have faith in me as your father did.

IX MU CUY

Did my father ever see a sign?

Jerónimo smiles.

JERONIMO

Of course he saw it.

EXT. TEMPLE IN CONSTRUCTION - DUSK

Taxmar walks proudly with his esteemed guest, NA CHAN CAN, the great leader of the town of Oxtankah. His daughter, IX CHEL CAN, walks with him.

Residents of Hamanka and Oxtankah follow. The large group walk to the temple construction site.

The Spaniards and Mayan slaves labor at the temple. Gonzalo and Jeronimo, now with long hair and full grown beards, and Margarita struggle to lift a large stone to the second level of the temple.

Tzohom respectfully receives the guests.

TAXMAR

(in Mayan)

I have told our guests about the foreigners, Tzohom. They want to see them. Bring only the men. The woman is very unpleasant.

Tzohom uses a small mirror to signal the warrior who guards the Spaniards. The guard reads the signal and immediately orders the Spaniards to stop working.

Jeronimo and Gonzalo descend from the pyramid.

Margarita remains alone in front of the huge stone they were carrying. A Mayan slave joins her and together they try to carry it up another level.

Gonzalo and Jeronimo are paraded for the guests. Like all slaves, they keep their eyes to the ground.

NA CHAN CAN

(in Mayan)

They are as strange as you told me, Taxmar.

Na Chan Can lifts Jeronimo's face.

NA CHAN CAN (cont'd)

I have never seen so much hair on a man's face.

Intrigued, Ix Chel Can looks at Jeronimo. Na Chan Can approaches Gonzalo and lifts his head.

NA CHAN CAN (cont'd)

I have never seen eyes the color of the sea.

The princess discretely glances at Gonzalo's eyes. Gonzalo notices -- he shivers as he looks, for an instant, into the eyes of the beautiful princess.

NA CHAN CAN (cont'd)

Do you think they are a good omen and that they will be accepted by our god Itzamna?

TAXMAR

(in Mayan)

I do not know, noble lord of Oxtankah. I can only say that despite being so weak and thin, they are very strong. The eyes of the one with the light hair...

(pointing at Jeronimo)

... are peaceful and kind. The other's are filled with fire.

Ix Chel Can looks back at Gonzalo -- aware of the consequences of his boldness, he avoids her stare.

AAAAAAGGGGGGHHHHHH -- a piercing scream is heard.

Ix Chel Can looks away and sees Margarita falling from the temple, dragging the massive stone with her. Her body tumbles down the steps until it lands, motionless at the foot of the pyramid.

Ix Chel Can covers her eyes in horror. The others try to ascertain what happened.

Gonzalo and Jeronimo try to go to Margarita, but Tzohom stops them.

Jeronimo obeys, but Gonzalo swings at Tzohom and knocks him on his back. He runs to Margarita. Three guards tackle him to the ground and pummel him. Gonzalo defends himself like an injured animal.

TAXMAR (cont'd)
(in Mayan)
STOP!

The guards stop immediately. Gonzalo painfully stands, bleeding. He looks at Taxmar, then at Margarita, then back at Taxmar. With a nod, Taxmar allows him to go to her.

Gonzalo limps to Margarita. Jeronimo joins him.

The two Mayan chiefs, the princess, and the others observe the Spaniards in silence, with great respect.

Jeronimo blesses her while Gonzalo prays on his knees.

NA CHAN CAN
(in Mayan)
Accidental death is an unfortunate thing that
rewards neither man nor the gods.

The sun sets, silhouetting the Spaniards as they carry the body of their friend away from the pyramid.

JERONIMO (O.S.)
From then on, our situation changed. As the
months passed, our master grew very fond of us.

DELETED SCENE FOR FORMAT

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

JERONIMO
With infinite patience, he taught us his language.

Jerónimo looks out to the gallows. There are a dozen and a half Mayans lined for execution.

JERÓNIMO (cont'd)

In appreciation, we made him a gift. We gathered beeswax and, for the first time, your ancestors saw a candle.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

Jerónimo and Gonzalo are physically much better, dressed with the "Ex", a type of indigenous loincloth.

They mold beeswax, making them into candles. In the middle, they place strips of cotton that will become wicks.

JERÓNIMO

I hope your idea works. My body can take only so many bee stings.

GONZALO

How can it fail? The only thing we are doing is giving a gift to someone who treats us with love and respect, despite the fact that we are his slaves. Tell me Father, which Spanish Commander treats a slave like he does? We have food, our own hut, sure, hard work, but tolerable. What more can a slave ask for?

JERÓNIMO

(stops working)

Are you insane? There are many slaves in the Fernandina who live decent Christian lives. Have you forgotten poor Margarita, how she died of exhaustion and disease? They did not let her rest one day. What about our friends whose hearts were pulled out right in front of our eyes?

GONZALO

How many Jews and Muslims are tortured in the Holy Inquisition? Didn't we let all the black slaves trapped in the hold of our ship die as it sank? Have you forgotten their screams?

JERÓNIMO

Gonzalo, it worries me to hear you speak like this. Are you questioning the holy mission that brought us here?

GONZALO

Father, I could never question the holy mission that you came to carry out here. But if you ask me what we really come here to do, I would say: rob, rape, and enslave these indians who have done nothing to us. It is gold and the riches that come with them that we want.

JERONIMO

They would burn you at the stake in Sevilla for these thoughts. You sound like a heretic.

GONZALO

Father, we have a great opportunity here. Now that we know their language, we can help them. We do not lose anything with our simple, yet useful gift. Taxmar will appreciate this. Then Father, and only then, will you have the chance to preach and convert them to our holy religion.

The two friends continue working.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The Spaniards walk quickly, carrying a tray of lighted candles. As they pass, people watch in awe at the miraculous light.

Some children run up to Gonzalo, watching the candles with immense curiosity. Gonzalo brings a candle under his chin playfully casting an evil look on his face.

GONZALO

(in Mayan)

I am the deeeeemon!!

Gonzalo chases the kids, as they run away laughing.

JERONIMO

Gonzalo, if you keep playing, we will end up with no candles.

Gonzalo waves at the children.

GONZALO

(in Mayan)
Come tomorrow to our hut and I will show you
how it is made.

The children jump for joy.

INT. TAXMAR'S PALACE - NIGHT

The slaves present the candles to Taxmar while his aides dress him for dinner.
Taxmar is very impressed with the candles.

TAXMAR
(in Mayan)
Your light is beautiful.

His children show their agreement with small, guttural sounds. Jeronimo and
Gonzalo are filled with satisfaction.

TAXMAR (cont'd)
(in Mayan)
Is this what you were using the wax from my
bees for?

JERONIMO
(in Mayan)
So that you can illuminate your home without
having to put up with the terrible heat of the
fires...

As Jeronimo speaks, we move to an EXTREME CLOSE-UP of his MOUTH, going in and
coming out of it. From now on, the dialogue of the Spaniards and the Mayans will be
in English.

JERONIMO (cont'd)
...good Master, we can show you many things of
our land. We will tell you about the true light of
lights.

Taxmar takes the candle, and brings it close, almost burning himself -- he smiles. He
holds the candle out to one of his children who gets scared when he feels its heat.
Everyone laughs. With the movement, the candle goes out, disappointing Taxmar
and the rest.

TAXMAR
The light of the Castilians is as fragile as your
skin.

Taxmar returns the candle to Gonzalo with a certain pessimism and begins to leave. Candle in hand, Gonzalo approaches a torch and lights it. Astonished, Taxmar stops. The children react happily.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

In the next full moon, come to my "cenote," with many of your lights. They are better than the torches or fires -- they do not smoke as much.

Taxmar leaves, followed by his entourage. The Spaniards bow.

JERONIMO

Gonzalo, do you know what this means?

Gonzalo does not answer. He is distracted by an attractive FEMALE SLAVE who is cleaning the area.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

(threatening)

Gonzalo, be careful of your temptations. Think of anything but that woman.

GONZALO

I am not thinking of her, Father. I have to confess that since seeing Princess Ix Chel Can, I have not stopped dreaming.

JERONIMO

For the nails of Jesus Christ, just mentioning loving an indian woman, slave or princess, our hearts will be offered to the demon of the day. We now have an opportunity to convert Taxmar. Do not ruin it.

INT. DZNIB CAVERN - NIGHT

Thousands of candles illuminate a magnificent cave which has a natural pool at its center. This is paradise, a gift from nature to the Mayans.

With the help of a wooden stick Gonzalo draws something in the muddy floor.

GONZALO

They are not deer, master. They are called horses. Animals who were domesticated hundreds of years ago. They are strong and skillful and they obey the commands we give

them with our heels and with some ropes attached to their mouths that we call reins.

TAXMAR

Reins? I do not understand.

Clearly exasperated, Taxmar stands and walks to a large stone block. He looks at Gonzalo and then at Jeronimo. Anxiously, the Spaniards wait to hear what Taxmar has to say.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

Jeronimo, be a horse.

Jeronimo looks at Gonzalo with contempt. Gonzalo returns the look with a shrug and a grin. Reticent, Jeronimo climbs the rock and gets on all fours.

Gonzalo helps Taxmar mount the "horse." Then he places "reins" in Jeronimo's mouth and hands them to his master. The rein is actually a long, strip of cotton. Taxmar rides him gently, pulling the rein and moving Jeronimo's head from side to side. Meanwhile, Gonzalo hands Taxmar a Mayan spear, who holds it in an attack mode.

GONZALO

The man who rides is called a cavalryman and fights with a spear. Being so high up, he has an advantage over his enemy.

Taxmar nods acknowledgment. The chief dismounts the "horse" and sits on the rug.

Jeronimo looks at Gonzalo furiously. Taxmar signals for them to sit.

TAXMAR

What are the colors that your warriors use? Ours is black, representing our arms which are made of obsidian.

GONZALO

(standing)

Our warriors neither paint their faces nor their bodies. They are dressed in armor made of steel, harder than obsidian, preventing them from being wounded or killed. To protect their heads, they use a helmet, the arrows bounce off and

Jeronimo interrupts Gonzalo.

JERONIMO

Leading our battalions are the shield and banners with the King's insignia and the Holy Cross which protects us.

Jeronimo stands and forms a cross with his arms. Taxmar watches attentively.

TAXMAR

The Holy Cross? Hum, it resembles the one we offer to our gods of corn, Yum Kax...!

JERONIMO

No, sir, the cross is a symbol of the Son of God who died for all men to save their . . .

Taxmar interrupts Jeronimo.

TAXMAR

Slave Jeronimo, our supreme priest, the Ahuacan, had a dream that disturbs me. In it, you spoke about your god and I covered my ears so as not to hear your words. Because if I did, the god of the Castilians would bring death to our gods.

The Spaniards look worried.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

I know that many times you have wanted to tell me about your God, but I have heeded Ahuacan's advice. Yet, now, my curiosity is great. I want to know about this god of yours whose greatness prevents you from accepting our gods.

JERONIMO

He is the true God. Who sacrificed himself for us all. He is a god of love, not death. He demands no sacrifices nor does he want to devour hearts. He asks us to love one another. He is

TAXMAR

(interrupting)

You cannot speak like that, Jeronimo. Our gods are good, great for giving us rain and food. All that surrounds us and makes us happy, all that your eyes can see, that your ears hear, that your tongue tastes, we owe to them. To OUR gods. You do not understand.

JERONIMO

I cannot understand what is not true.

TAXMAR

The Ahuacan was right. Your god will never accept ours and would want to destroy them. But you speak the truth because I asked you and for that I will spare your life and not have you sacrificed. Nevertheless, I forbid you, both of you, to ever speak of your god in the presence of my people.

Taxmar stands. Jeronimo and Gonzalo immediately kneel. Their master regards them for a moment.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

The Elders advise that we declare war on the Cocomes, our enemy. I am impressed by the way you Castilians fight. I want you to join our warriors in battle and prove that what you say is true.

Taxmar hastily leaves followed by his entourage. Jeronimo collapses on the floor. Gonzalo tries to console him.

GONZALO

Father, you cannot fight in a battle of infidels. You do not know how to fight. Why didn't you tell Taxmar?

JERONIMO

Because we are his slaves. We have to obey his every command.

Jeronimo stands, turns to leave, and stops.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

If you spoke only of our holy religion and not of war, we would not be in this predicament.

Jeronimo retreats. Gonzalo stays in the cavern, staring at the hundreds of dazzling candles reflecting off the pool.

EXT. XAMANHA PLAZA - DAY

Hundreds of Xius warriors painted in black and dressed for war let out BATTLE CRIES as they take their positions in the plaza.

AH PACH TOCK and other lead warriors, adorned with plumes, armed with spears, bows and arrows, and shields inspect the columns as they shout out instructions.

Gonzalo and Jeronimo are also painted in black. The only difference is that their spears are longer.

Ah Pach Tock stops in front of them.

AH PACH TOCH

You have lengthened your spears. Why?

GONZALO

It gives us an advantage over the enemy. Before they can even get close, they will impale themselves.

Ah Pach Tock takes Gonzalo's spear and studies it. He lifts it and lets out a ferocious war cry.

EXT. TEMPLE - DAY

Standing on the top of the pyramid, a priest, the old AHUACAN, Lord of the Serpent, raises his arms to the sky and exhorts the warriors.

AHUACAN

Our god Ek Chuah will give us the valor to defeat the Cocomes of Sotuta, our ancestral enemies. Itzamna and Ixchel hope to see their reflection on the blood of your prisoners. Their hearts shall be offered for the joy of heaven.

The warriors HOWL, as does Gonzalo. Jeronimo remains still and somber.

The CONCH-SHELLS and DRUMS sound with fervor.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD IN SOTUTA - DAY

The Xius and Cocomes rush each other in an open field.

HOWLS, SCREAMS, CONCH-SHELLS, RATTLES, and DRUMS.

Gonzalo fights with fury, leaving a path of dead Cocomes.

Jeronimo finds himself in the middle of the battle oblivious of what to do.

A Cocome advances on Jeronimo from behind, about to thrust a spear into his back, when a Xiue warrior intercepts him and splits his head with an ax.

The battle is grueling, cruel. There are dead and wounded everywhere. It is a relentless fight, one of utter annihilation.

The arrows blacken the sky. One pierces Jeronimo's shoulder. Surprised, he looks at it, yanking it with one pull. The blood spills over his clothes.

Gonzalo and Ah Pach Tock fight shoulder to shoulder, causing extreme havoc.

Gonzalo thrusts his spear into a Nacom Cocome's chest.

Ah Pach Tock shatters an enemy's neck with the blunt edge of his ax.

A Cocome tackles Gonzalo. The enemy lifts his ax when Jeronimo appears and pushes the attacker to the ground. Gonzalo rolls on his side and thrusts his dagger into the man's throat.

Gonzalo looks up at Jeronimo.

GONZALO
(shouting)
Behind you father!

Jeronimo spins, lifting his spear instinctively. A warrior runs into the spear so fast that the tip comes out his back. His legs buckle and he falls to the ground. Still gripping his spear, the anguished Jeronimo watches the man die. He remains frozen, until another SCREAMING Cocome charges him. Jeronimo pulls the spear out and defends himself.

A Xiue warrior snatches a banner from the enemy and holds it high, letting out a terrible YELL.

The battle loses intensity as the Xius near victory.

Cocomes prisoners are tied together into small groups by the Xius.

The long, drawn-out, mournful sound of a CONCH-SHELL announces the end of the battle.

INT. HUT - DAY

Jeronimo lays on his mat. He is naked waist-up. Seated next to him, Gonzalo tends to the wounded shoulder. Gonzalo's arms are filled with cuts and gashes, while his neck has a deep wound that has been covered with ointment.

GONZALO

I am surprised how many men you dispatched.
The indians are going to call you Hurricane
Jeronimo!

Jeronimo sits up, his whole body sore.

JERONIMO

(laughing)

Quiet, fighting is not my God-given talent. Could
you ever have imagined me swinging that spear
around -- I don't know if I killed more of ours
than of the enemy.

Gonzalo laughs.

A shadow is cast into the hut. Taxmar is standing in the threshold.

Gonzalo stops tending the wound, stands, and bows. With great difficulty, Jeronimo does the same.

TAXMAR

I would like to praise you. My Nacom told me
how you conducted yourself in the battle.

GONZALO

It was my honor, sir.

Gonzalo looks to Jeronimo, who remains quiet.

GONZALO (cont'd)

Both our honors.

TAXMAR

Jeronimo, I have seen that you are a good man, a
wise man whose heart is close to heaven. You
work hard. You are courteous and insightful. But
more than that, you are sincere and loyal to your
principals.

Taxmar takes Jeronimo's hand and squeezes it affectionately. He looks straight at him.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

For these reasons, I think you will be a good husband to my daughter Ix Mo Xiue. This union will be beneficial to me and my people.

Jerónimo turns pale. His lips tremble. He swallows painfully. Gonzalo opens his eyes wide in amazement.

JERÓNIMO

(stuttering)

Master Taxmar, this is a great honor, but... I cannot accept. I am a man of the Church and my religion prohibits me to marry. I have made a vow of chastity which forbids me to have carnal relations with any woman.

Taxmar studies him, then turns and leaves.

GONZALO

Father, I respect your principals, but if you refuse, our hearts will be splattered on the face of some idol.

JERÓNIMO

Cursed be Satan, who uses Taxmar's daughter to tempt me. You will not prevail. I have the power that God bestows on me and that's more than enough.

Jerónimo goes to a corner of the hut and begins to pray.

JERÓNIMO (cont'd)

Our Father, who art in Heaven...

GONZALO

Father...

JERÓNIMO

...hallowed Be Thy name...

Gonzalo becomes impatient.

GONZALO

Father, what are you doing praying? Get up now and go look for our master...Father....Father.

Jerónimo is in a trance. Nothing can distract him.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

A group of merchants arrive on small canoes.

Na Chan Can, his daughter Ix Chel Can, and their usual entourage await them.

The merchants lay down their goods over white blankets; cacao, bird feathers, animal skins, cotton clothes, artwork, etc.

Na Chan Can is attracted by a strange object, a metallic helmet completely rusted. He picks it up and holds it as if it was a vessel. He knocks on it creating a SOUND he's never heard.

NA CHAN CAN

What a strange vessel. Where did you find it?

A merchant is about to answer when a hand grabs the helmet. It is AH BALAM, a warrior whose entire body is tattooed. He is missing an eye.

AH BALAM

Excuse me, Master.

Ah Balam puts the helmet on his head.

AH BALAM (cont'd)

It must belong to the bearded men that came from the sea. I heard they fought furiously against the Cocomes. They were brave.

Ix Chel Can gets closer.

NA CHAN CAN

Take ten of my best slaves, fill them with gifts and give them to Taxmar in our name. Our gratitude must be shown.

IX CHEL CAN

(to Ah Balam)

Can I accompany you? There is no more danger in the roads. Nobody will attack us.

Ah Balam looks at Na Chan Can for an answer.

NA CHAN CAN

No. Ah Balam will take the gifts and slaves and must return by himself.

IX CHEL CAN

But father.

NA CHAN CAN

The words

IX CHEL CAN

...Yes, I know, the words have been spoken.

Ix Chel Can marches off. Ah Balam and Na Chan Can exchange a knowing look.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

The hut is illuminated by several candles giving it a mystical look. Two guards enter the hut.

GUARD

Slave Jeronimo. Our master Taxmar demands your presence. Come with us.

Jeronimo has a vacant stare. Gonzalo puts a hand in Jeronimo's shoulder.

GONZALO

Father...

Jeronimo follows them with his hands joined together in prayer.

EXT. STREETS - CITY OF XAMANHA - NIGHT

Carrying huge torches, the two guards lead Jeronimo down the same street where he first carried the candles.

This time the villagers do not approach. On the contrary, they regard him in total silence, hiding behind the windows of their houses.

An old lady and her husband whisper, guessing Jeronimo's destiny.

Gonzalo follows Jeronimo and the guards. Reaching a corner, one of the guards points his spear at Gonzalo who immediately stops. Jeronimo exchanges a last look with Gonzalo. They continue, leaving Gonzalo behind.

INT. DZINIB CAVERN - NIGHT

The place is fully illuminated by candles. Through a hole in the cave's ceiling we can see the stars and the brilliance of a full moon.

Jeronimo is seated on a pile of blankets at the edge of the pool.

The Ahuacan approaches and offers him a cup. Jeronimo smells the liquid, then after some hesitation ventures to taste it.

Nearby, two vessels burning incense create an orange smoke.

The Ahuacan chants quietly. A sacred, monotone mantra.

Jeronimo's eye are blank, seemingly hypnotized. The Ahuacan exits.

Three maidens, slender and beautiful, approach Jeronimo and lift him to his feet. They undress him and wash him with crystalline water. They dry him and rub his body with a yellow, fluorescent ointment.

The maidens step back, hold hands, and sing beautifully. Still singing, the women go to Jeronimo and lay him on a richly decorated, padded area resembling a bridal bed.

SMALL BELLS ring. Jeronimo turns to the sound. The Princess Ix Mo Xiue appears in a translucent tunic. She is dazzling.

Two elderly women accompany the Princess carrying incense vessels that expel a green smoke.

The maidens lift Jeronimo and walk him into the pool until he is waist deep.

The elderly women remove the Princess's tunic. Her body is painted in cobalt blue that accentuates her magnificent figure.

The elderly women and the maidens retire.

Ix Mo Xiue enters the pool.

IX MO XIUE

(seductively)

Come, Jeronimo. Come and enjoy me.

Jeronimo remains still, his arms hanging limply by his sides, the moonlight creating a supernatural halo on his head.

Ix Mo Xiue goes to him and caresses his body. She purrs in delight.

Jeronimo's lips tremble, his body becoming flush with intense desire.

Ix Mo Xiue pulls him to her and kisses him, his arms still by his side.

Slowly, Jeronimo lifts his arms, uncontrollably grazing and stroking her arched back.

He reaches her shoulders and STOPS! He pushes her away and looks at her as if she's the devil. He SHOUTS and SCREAMS and quickly exits the water.

Jeronimo runs and climbs to a niche in a corner of the cavern. He curls into a fetal position, trembling.

Ix Mo Xiue watches him, convinced that he is mad. She walks out of the water, covers herself with the tunic, and lays down on the bridal bed.

A CANDLE

Burns instantly in TIMELAPSE. We pull away from the candle and reveal that all the candles in the cavern have already been consumed. A massive shaft of morning light shines through the hole in the ceiling.

.... Taxmar and the Ahuacan stand in front of Ix Mo Xiue who sleeps peacefully on the bridal bed.

The Ahuacan turns, looking at the water, then the rocks. He finally finds Jeronimo asleep in the niche. The Ahuacan shows Taxmar, who reacts in astonishment.

AHUACAN

I have never seen anything like it. Lord, he has not touched your daughter.

TAXMAR

This man, Jeronimo, is unlike any other.

EXT. XAMANHA PLAZA - DAY

The plaza is filled with activity. Gonzalo carries two large containers of water to the palace. In one of the corners, a group gathers to watch ten slaves arrive from another town. They are guarded by Ah Balam and three warriors.

Ah Balam wears the plumes of a quetzal on his head and is covered with the skins of jaguars. The slaves carry large carpets filled with presents.

Ah Balam snaps his whip in the air so that the slaves continuing moving.

Intrigued, Gonzalo approaches.

Ah Balam greets the Spaniard. Gonzalo returns the greeting, lowering the containers of water to the ground.

JERONIMO (O.S.)

Gonzalo....Gonzalo...

Gonzalo turns and sees the Father running to him, who still has traces of the yellow, fluorescent ointment on his arms.

GONZALO

What happened to you, Father?

JERONIMO

I won't have to marry Taxmar's daughter. And they are not going to sacrifice us.

GONZALO

But how....?

JERONIMO

God gave me the strength to fight temptation. This convinced Taxmar that I am a man of God, one who he could have all the trust in the world. He sent me to find you. He wants to see us immediately.

GONZALO

For what?

JERONIMO

I don't know. Something strange is happening.

GONZALO

Whatever it is, it doesn't matter, Father. It is a miracle. I thought the other night was the last time I would ever see you.

JERONIMO

You can't kill this priest off so easily.

The two friends hug and jump for joy like old friends.

INT. TAXMAR PALACE - DAY

In a room filled with murals, Taxmar regards the gifts that Ah Balam offers. Kneeling, heads bowed, the Cheles slaves wait. Gonzalo and Jeronimo stand nearby.

AH BALAM

My Master Na Chan Can sends these gifts in gratitude for your victorious battle in Sotuta. Now our goods can pass without being robbed; finally our merchants can relax. Thank you great Leader of Hamanha.

Taxmar makes a gesture of great satisfaction.

TAXMAR

The grandfather and father of Na Chan Can were close friends of mine. We are close as well. When our enemy, the Cocomes, killed the princes of Xius and destroyed our village, the Cheles were our salvation.

AH BALAM

This is how the Elders of Oxtankah tell it.

TAXMAR

To show our friendship and gratitude, we will, as we have in the past, continue to support you and extend our assistance whenever you need it. This is why I have brought two of my best slaves. I have become fond of them. As a show of gratitude for your gifts, I offer one of them to your Master Na Chan Can. Choose the one you want.

Ha Balam approaches the slaves, observing Jeronimo, who cannot believe what is happening. He remains still, like a statue.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

Jeronimo is loyal and humble. He says he is a priest in his land. He has great power to overcome the temptation of women. His God forbids him to touch them or marry. He is a man of peace. He would be perfect to serve Princess Ix Chel Can. He would respect and defend her with his life.

Ah Balam makes an approving gesture for the qualities of the slave, as he looks at Gonzalo.

On hearing the name of the princess, Gonzalo dares to look into Ah Balam's eyes.

TAXMAR (cont'd)

Gonzalo is different. He has blood in his eyes, he has the instinct of the serpent, he knows how to fight and he enjoys it. Your enemies will fear him only on his reputation. He would serve the Cheles well.

(beat)

Take your master the one that pleases you the most.

Ah Balam walks in front of them, placing his hand on Jeronimo's shoulder.

Gonzalo closes his eyes, swallows, and takes a step forward.

GONZALO

Forgive my boldness, my Lord. Your words are a great honor to us. But before Master Ah Balam decides, he should know how valuable Jeronimo is to you. That he was sent to the sacred cavern and did not touch the Princess Ix Mo Xiue. Nobody in all of Mayab will take care of the Princess better than Jeronimo. Do you think that Na Chan Can, the great leader of Oxtankah would deprive you of this?

(to Ah Balam)

I beg you to accept me as your slave, Honorable Ah Balam. I promise to serve you with loyalty, bravery, and generosity.

Taxmar reacts with surprise. Ah Balam takes Gonzalo by the ears and looks into his eyes.

AH BALAM

(to Taxmar)

Sir, the words of the slave are sincere and brave. He will come to Oxtankah to honor your great generosity.

EXT. HUT - AFTERNOON

Gonzalo wraps his few belongings in a sheet as Jeronimo watches him with sadness.

GONZALO

I will miss you, Father. What am I going to do without you?

JERONIMO

You'll survive, son. Your qualities will bring you fame and respect.

Jeronimo puts his hands in Gonzalo's shoulder.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

But you must always remember that you are the son of Christians. You may encounter misery, agony, perhaps even become rich and powerful,

but you will always be in the family of our Lord.
Never allow your faith to weaken. Do not forget
that.

GONZALO

Father, I ask you to keep me in your prayers.
They will protect me.

Gonzalo and Jeronimo walk towards the door.

GONZALO (cont'd)

Take care of yourself, and make sure that
Taxmar keeps you informed of how I am. If you
hear that I am being tortured or starved, do what
you can to rescue me.

JERONIMO

(tearfully)

I promise, Gonzalo. I promise.

They hug for a moment.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Ah Balam had chosen me. I know why you
changed his decision. Be careful, Gonzalo, as a
slave, following your heart could be very
dangerous.

EXT. HAMANHA PLAZA - SUNRISE

Ah Balam leads Gonzalo across the empty plaza.

From the top of the pyramid, Jeronimo watches his friend disappear into the jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE - DIA

Gonzalo follows Ah Balam through the jungle. Every so often, Ah Balam stops and
leaves small offerings on the ground.

EXT. LAGOON - DAY

Ah Balam bathes. Gonzalo waits by a rock, sweating from the unbearable heat. Ah
Balam notices this, but ignores it.

EXT. JUNGLE - DIA

They follow a path covered by a high canopy. Ah Balam inserts a dart into a blowpipe.

AH BALAM

Quiet.....

Gonzalo follows close behind as Ah Balam scans the foliage above. He points and shoots the dart. A "sarahuato" monkey falls.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - DUSK

Gonzalo cooks the monkey in a small fire.

Ah Balam relaxes against a rock. Gonzalo brings the food to his master and watches him eat. Gonzalo is hungry, having travelled all day without eating one morsel. He waits.

When Ah Balam finishes, he leaves the scraps on the floor and retires next to the fire. Gonzalo eats the remains hastily.

AH BALAM

Our city is on the other side of those hills. We have two more days of travel. Tomorrow night we will sleep in Bactack. Be ready to leave before sunrise.

GONZALO

Do not worry. You can rest now and sleep peacefully, for I am here to serve you.

Ah Balam lays down by the fire and sleeps. Gonzalo finishes eating the leftovers.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - SUNRISE

A tree branch swings and hits the sleeping Gonzalo on his leg, leaving a bloody red gash. Ah Balam pulls the stick back and points at the sun. Gonzalo jumps.

EXT. SACBE PATH - JUNGLE - DAY

Ah Balam reaches a "sacbe," a flat path in the middle of the jungle that is slightly higher than the surrounding ground, almost like a sidewalk, made white by a mixture of lime and clay.

Following Ah Balam, Gonzalo steps onto the white road.

AH BALAM

Stop. You cannot walk here. This is a "sacbe," a very holy path for us. Its color symbolizes the brightness of the pupils of our god Itzamna. This is the southern "sacbe." There are many more in the Mayab. You should know this, because slaves are not allowed to walk on them.

Gonzalo steps off the "sacbe" and follows Ah Balam alongside the sacred path.

LATER

The sun painfully embraces Gonzalo. He looks exhausted. Ah Balam notices and walks to him. He pulls a fruit from his bag and offers it to Gonzalo.

AH BALAM (cont'd)

Slave Gonzalo, I have something in my mind that I still do not understand. Why did you do everything possible to come to Oxtankah? Why did you risk leaving a master who treated you with respect and generosity?

GONZALO

I am following a sign.

AH BALAM

What sign?

GONZALO

I do not know yet, but I am sure I will find it in Oxtankah. This "sacbe" leads to a new life. I follow it without asking questions, nor expecting answers.

EXT. PYRAMID IN RUINS - JUNGLE - NIGHT

A falling star traverses the firmament. Ah Balam points this out to Gonzalo.

AH BALAM

It is the goddess Ixtab looking for someone who killed himself by his own hand. She takes his spirit and keeps it on the ribbons that hang from her waist. She has many and is not moved by their screams of despair.

Gonzalo pulls out wrapped tortillas, pieces of meat, chiles and begins to prepare his master's dinner.

GONZALO

That goddess Ixtab is like Purgatory for us Christians. She holds onto the souls of the dead until Itzamna forgives them and receives them in heaven.

AH BALAM

I do not know about Purgatory, but Itzamna does not forgive those who take their own lives, she leaves them hanging from Ixtab's waist forever. There is no Purgatory for us.

Gonzalo points to a star.

GONZALO

Look, Sir, the North star. For sailors, we who travel on houses that float in the sea, it is very important, for it always shows us our way.

AH BALAM

For us, that star is one of the eyes of the god Hunhau. The eye that sees the beginning and end of time.

Gonzalo hands Ah Balam his food, who takes it and retreats to a nearby rock to eat, when....

....BBZZZZZZ....a RATTLESNAKE bites Ah Balam! It quickly disappears into the rocks.

Ah Balam immediately takes his ax and makes a cut across the bite. Gonzalo rips a piece of cloth and forms a tourniquet as he sucks the venom out of the cut.

Ah Balam shakes and goes into a delirium. He loses consciousness.

Gonzalo pulls back and looks around . . .

EXT. JUNGLE - NIGHT

Gonzalo carries Ah Balam on his shoulders. He sprints through the overgrowth with great effort.

EXT. SWAMP - NIGHT

Gonzalo crosses a swamp, the weight of Ah Balam sinking them into the mud. He drags himself across and continues.

EXT. PRAIRIE - SUNRISE

Exhausted, Gonzalo runs through a vast plain, Ah Balam's body bouncing on his shoulders. The beautiful and magnificent city of Oxtankah lies ahead.

EXT. OXTANKAH PLAZA - DAY

Gonzalo enters the main plaza of Oxtankah and collapses.

Some men approach and carry Ah Balam away. Gonzalo remains on the ground, ignored. He tries to stand, but cannot.

A strong, young man, his body covered in tattoos and dressed in a beautiful tunic comes over to Gonzalo. He is AH PETUCH -- he wraps Gonzalo's arm around his shoulders and grabs his waist and walks him to several jars filled with water.

Ah Petuch feeds Gonzalo water from a ladle. Gonzalo looks at Ah Petuch gratefully. The man smiles and walks away. Gonzalo sits back on a rock and rests.

Gonzalo looks up and sees the princess Ix Chel Can crossing the plaza with two young women. Along the way, several men stand straight, as if posing, flexing their chest muscles for attention -- the princess ignores them. She only pauses for Ah Petuch -- she blushes, turns her back to him and rushes off. The other girls laugh and run after her. Ah Petuch smiles while the other men look at him enviously.

Gonzalo seethes from within. A PRIEST'S APPRENTICE goes to him.

APPRENTICE

Follow me, slave.

INT. AH BALAM'S HOUSE - DAY

The Apprentice leads Gonzalo into the house. Assisted by helpers, the SHAMAN of the city does what he can to save Ah Balam, who is semi-conscious.

Na Chan Can is at his side. When he sees Gonzalo, Ah Balam tries to speak, but the Shaman covers his mouth.

SHAMAN

It is very dangerous for you to speak. You need all your energy.

Ah Balam obeys. Na Chan Can approaches Gonzalo.

NA CHAN CAN

Slave, in the name of the people of Oxtankah, I thank you for saving the life of one of our most cherished men. Your generosity will not be forgotten by the Cheles.

GONZALO

Master, I greatly appreciate your words. I am at your service.

NA CHAN CAN

I had a vision. The Jaguar Warrior will live.

Na Chan Can smiles at Gonzalo and leaves. Ah Balam signals to Gonzalo to approach.

AH BALAM

Slave Gonzalo, if I live, from now on we will be like brothers. You have a friend who will watch over you, the way you did for me.

The Shaman covers Ah Balam's mouth.

Gonzalo sits in a corner and observes how the Shaman continues to sing and rub ointments on Ah Balam's body.

EXT. JUNGLE - SUNRISE

As the sun rises over the horizon, we hear the MUSIC of thousands of birds and animals in the jungle. The city of Oxtankah slowly comes to life.

EXT. OXTANKAH PLAZA - DAY

Ah Balam walks, leaning on Gonzalo's shoulder. There is much activity. A group of merchants have arrived, the people surrounding them to see their wares. Ah Petuch approaches.

AH PETUCH

(excited)

The Cheles of Oxtankah are happy that the Jaguar Warrior survived the bite of the serpent. Itzamna did not want you to die. This is a good omen for our people. Welcome, we are happy to have you with us.

AH BALAM

Thank you, Ah Petuch; it is wonderful seeing life after being so close to death.

AH PETUCH

That is so. I should go and see what the merchants have to offer. Enjoy the day, Ah Balam.

AH BALAM

You as well.

Ah Petuch joins the crowd around the merchants. Gonzalo cannot restrain his curiosity.

GONZALO

Who is that warrior?

AH BALAM

He is Ah Petuch, one of the bravest Nacons and surely the prime candidate to marry Ix Chel Can, the Chief's daughter.

Gonzalo stiffens as he notices that the Princess Ix Chel Can has come to see the merchants.

GONZALO

Candidate?

AH BALAM

Yes. Breaking with tradition, the princess rejected Halach Uinic of Sotuta three times. This was a great insult as it would have created a powerful alliance between our two peoples.

GONZALO

Why did the princess reject him?

AH BALAM

The princess is much like her mother was when she walked the earth: stubborn.

Ah Petuch shows Ix Chel Can a very beautiful jade mask. She holds it. He whispers in her ear and she laughs.

AH BALAM (cont'd)

SHE DOES NOT WANT HER FATHER TO CHOOSE HER HUSBAND. SHE WANTS THE BEST MAN IN Oxtankah, a man who not only wins battles and has prestige, but who is also capable of taking care of her and her needs.

GONZALO

Is Ah Petuch that man?

AH BALAM

Perhaps. Is the princess Ix Chel Can the sign that you have told me about?

GONZALO

Perhaps.

Ah Balam almost falls from laughter. Gonzalo looks at him seriously, then laughs.

IX MU CUY (O.S.)

You were right, my father followed a sign . . .

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

For the first time, Ix Mu Cuy challenges Jeronimo.

IX MU CUY

. . . but who showed him the sign, your god or the rattlesnake?

JERONIMO

Your father managed to keep his Christian faith despite his constant exposure to your false gods. I know he never betrayed his belief. He always prayed to Christ, our Lord. Why do you refuse to believe in the one, true religion?

IX MU CUY

My gods are, and have always been, righteous. I do not want to deny nor betray them. If you, all of you, would try to understand them like my father did, we could worship them together.

JERONIMO

This is neither the time nor the place for this discussion. The important thing is that your

father won the freedom that he so longed for.
Now I offer you, beg you to do the same.

Ix Mu Cuy remains stoic. Jeronimo turns to the gallows -- the number of Mayans on line has dwindled to twelve.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - DAY

Na Chan Can, Ix Chel Can, and a group of Elders sit in a semi-circle around Gonzalo, standing with Ah Balam at his side.

Na Chan Can holds a small, carved cane.

NA CHAN CAN

Slave Gonzalo, we are aware of your heroism in battle. We know that you could have escaped when Ah Balam was injured, but you did not. Your acts prove your loyalty. My people and I want to thank you.

Na Chan Can gives Gonzalo the cane. The Elders murmur and nod in approval. Ix Chel Can smiles.

NA CHAN CAN (cont'd)

You are a free man. From this moment on, you can leave or stay. A free man walks for himself.

Gonzalo lifts the cane for all to see, smiling proudly.

GONZALO

This honor you bestow on me is great and my heart is filled with joy. As a free man, one who belongs to the Cheles, I would like to ask two questions.

The group exchange questioning looks. Na Chan Can nods for him to continue.

GONZALO (cont'd)

My friend and comrade, Jeronimo de Aguilar is still a slave. Can I buy him?

NA CHAN CAN

No, no, that is not possible. Taxmar gave you as a gift to our people. If he wanted your friend to be free, he would have done so already.

Gonzalo looks at Ix Chel Can timidly. He swallows hard....

GONZALO

As a free man of Oxtankah, do I have a right to be a candidate to marry, love, and protect the princess Ix Chel Can?

The question takes everyone by surprise. Ix Chel Can blushes. An Elder chuckles, soon the rest start laughing out loud.

Na Chan Can looks at his daughter. With a certain shyness, she nods.

NA CHAN CAN

As a free man, you have the right. But you need to have a house, food, animal skins, cacao. You will have to fast and hunt a live quetzal and present its blood as an offering to our god Acanum. Lastly, you must offer us, the people of Oxtankah, something very personal.

GONZALO

My Lord, I have fought against the best armies. I am a warrior and I carry that in my blood. I will share my wisdom with you and your people, to build a powerful army, one that will gain the respect of all the Mayab.

AH BALAM

Honorable Council of Elders, I offer to guide and teach our new brother the secrets of our race. I will take care of him for he saved my life and it is my duty.

Na Chan Can places his hand on Gonzalo's shoulder.

NA CHAN CAN

The words have been spoken.

EXT. OXTANKAH PYRAMID - DAY

In a corner of the pyramid, Ah Balam stands in front of a sacrificial altar where two incense burners release the smoke of poom. He cuts a fish in half, pulls out its entrails, and smears them onto a stone idol.

Standing with Ah Balam, Gonzalo holds a basket of fruit.

AH BALAM

This sacrifice to our god Chac will bring rain, swell the rivers, and be beneficial to all our crops. The Akines know when it is best to perform the sacrifices so that the earth will produce in abundance.

GONZALO

Does the god Chac always grant your wishes?

Ah Balam looks at him, frowning.

AH BALAM

If the god Chac is content with our sacrifices, he will give us water in abundance. On the other hand, sometimes the gods become angry and punish us with hunger and thirst...

GONZALO

And then, what do you do?

Ah Balam takes a fruit from the basket and smears the pulp onto another idol that represents the god of corn, Yum Kax.

AH BALAM

We try to placate them with better sacrifices. We make war and bring prisoners and give their hearts to the gods.

GONZALO

And if the gods do not respond to your sacrifices, then what?

Ah Balam changes his expression. He becomes serious and taciturn.

AH BALAM

We would have to abandon our cities. Like the Itzaes did many "katunes" ago in Chichen Itza, and later in Uxmal. We suffer much, until the gods forgive. Then we build a new settlement and make it into a city.

Gonzalo looks at him in admiration. Ah Balam sticks out his hand for another fruit. Gonzalo gives him one.

Ah Balam rubs it on the idol and lifts his face to heaven,

AH BALAM (cont'd)

Bless us god of corn. Give us plenty of food for many "katunes" to come.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A) Ah Balam crouches silently and reveals to Gonzalo a faint animal track in the dirt. He points into the jungle and tosses a small stone. A jaguar emerges from its hiding place and disappears into the growth.

B) Gonzalo and Ah Balam in an herbal sauna. A fire heats a vessel filled with water that Ah Balam throws herbs into. Gonzalo puts his face to the vessel and inhales the vapor, breathing deeply.

C) Ah Balam pierces Gonzalo's ears and nose.

D) Gonzalo dries the skin of a jaguar. Nearby, he has plenty more, including bird feathers and a live quetzal.

E) Gonzalo walks into a river, the water up to his waist. He aims a blowpipe into the trees and shoots. A "sarahuato" monkey splashes into the water.

F) Gonzalo pulls the entrails from a quetzal and holds it up to the heavens. He then smears it onto an idol of the god of corn, Yum Kax.

G) From a vantage point, Ix Chel Can watches as Gonzalo builds his hut. Gonzalo is bare-chested, his hair longer, and he wears a necklace made of animal fangs. He looks up and sees her watching. She turns away.

OMITTED SCENE FOR FORMAT

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - DAY

In a large hall, Na Chan Can and his daughter are seated on two carpets richly decorated with multicolored flower petals. To their right the Council of Elders, to their left the priests.

Five carpets are lined up in front of them. On top of each one, there are animal skins, jade and obsidian stones, cacao, quetzal feathers, sea shells, as well as other, exotic goods. They are the gifts to the princess from the suitors.

The suitors stand behind their respective carpets, and behind them, stand their parents. One of the carpets, the simplest one, belongs to Gonzalo, who stands with Ah Balam.

All the suitors are tattooed except for Gonzalo. All are dressed richly, except for Gonzalo who wears one of the animal skins that he hunted, jade earrings, and around his neck a necklace made of quetzal feathers.

NA CHAN CAN

You are the five bravest men in this town. My daughter will marry one of you. As a father, I am proud of this day. I hope that the chosen one will love and protect her like a good husband. And now it is time for her to speak, it is she that will choose the father of her children, my grandchildren, the future leaders of the Cheles of Oxtankah.

Musicians start to play diverse instruments as the Princess stands, carrying a flower in her hand.

She walks to the suitors and regards them one by one. She bows her gratitude for the gifts to each one. Gonzalo is third. The Princess looks at him and continues without stopping. Ah Petuch is last.

The Princess smiles at the young Mayan, appearing that he will be the chosen one. The Elders and priests exchange looks of approval.

Nevertheless, the princess returns to Gonzalo. She studies him with an undecipherable expression. Suddenly, she smiles and gives the flower to Gonzalo.

Gonzalo cannot hide his joy. The suitors and their families murmur angrily.

Ah Petuch separates from the others and goes to Na Chan Can.

AH PETUCH

(upset)

Lord of Oxtankah, your daughter has picked Gonzalo who is not a Chele. A Chele princess should marry a man of distinction who wears the tattoos of the gods on his chest.

The Elders, priests and families show their agreement with voices and gestures. Na Chan Can looks at Gonzalo.

INT. OXTANKAH TEMPLE - DAY

Gonzalo lies on a flat stone. A HIGH PRIEST, whose long black hair covers his face, leans over Gonzalo and traces a falcon on his right breast.

A SECOND PRIEST, painted entirely in a pale blue color and wearing leather bracelets in his forearms, oversees the procedure. He gently touches the edge of several obsidian razors that he carries in his hands.

The high priest finishes tracing the falcon. The second priest feels the trace with his finger tips, picks a sharp obsidian razor and makes the first incision.

Gonzalo breathes deeply, makes a gesture of pain but does not complain.

The second priest continues cutting the flesh while the high priest fills the cuts with a red tint and a blue powder.

This is a slow, painful process. Small drops of blood splatter in Gonzalo's face.

DISSOLVE TO:

... A WHITE CLOTH covers Gonzalo's face. A hand wipes his face with the cloth.

We pull out to reveal Gonzalo unconscious, sweating profusely with high fever. Both priests spread dry cloths over his chest.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

A JAGUAR is still, listening. It takes a few steps back and freezes. It smells something, danger. It jumps onto a low branch and claws against the tree trunk. Again, it freezes, sensing something . . .

A SPEAR flies from below and into the Jaguar. The wounded animal drops onto the ground and is immediately attacked by a man who has his back to us.

The man pins the animal down and slits it's throat.

AH BALAM (O.S.)

You caught him?

The man turns to us -- it is Gonzalo, an incredibly beautiful tattoo of a falcon emblazoned on his chest, its wings spread in flight. Serpents are tattooed, one on each arm. He is the picture of a true Mayan.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - DAY

The floor is covered with flower petals, the walls with rugs. Several women wait impatiently in the room.

The door opens and the bride and groom enter, dressed in rich vestments. They are followed by the high priests and several important guests dressed in formal attire. Finally, the majestic Na Chan Can arrives.

The guests form a circle around the bride and groom and the Elder priest, ATANZAH. A COUNCIL WOMAN approaches Atanzah.

COUNCIL WOMAN

Where have we seen you? Where did the paths that guide your feet originate? Was it the snake's rattle that called your attention? Are you the ancient Bacabes who come to tell us about the end of the world?

ATANZAH

Truth is found in our grey hairs; we are as respected as the flower blossoms from the ceiba tree.

Atanzah swings a cane to the floor.

ATANZAH (cont'd)

(to wedding party)

Here is a dignified young man, a noble warrior, our new son.

A handsome young woman enters through a side door. She carries a large mantel that she places on the floor next to the couple. Na Chan Can approaches Gonzalo.

NA CHAN CAN

So you have come in peace to sing with us of the greatness of our illustrious people, to give your life, if necessary, for the Cheles of Oxtankah?

Gonzalo steps on the mantel and addresses his future father-in-law.

GONZALO

My great Lord, you should be happy for here is someone who loves and respects you as a father. The falcon that lives in my heart has extended its talons to catch your daughter. My wings will shine with the warmth of your grandchildren, so all who see them fly will recognize them as the descendents of Na Chan Can, the powerful lord of the Cheles.

Ix Chel Can steps on the mantel followed by Na Chan Can and Atanzah.

NA CHAN CAN

I accept you as my son, Gonzalo, knowing that you will always care for and protect my daughter from her enemies. Her heart chose you as her husband, so your children could have the color of your skin, and give greatness to all of us.

Atanzah throws small cotton balls into the air. The women try to catch them.

Many slaves enter with alcoholic drinks. They are followed by musicians and dancers. Everyone dances.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - ROOM - NIGHT

Ix Chel Can and Gonzalo make love passionately. She hums a strange melody...

INT. GONZALO'S HUT - NIGHT

... which transforms itself into moans and heavy breathing.

Many candles are lit. Several incense burners smoke the room.

Two women and a priest move about frantically.

Lying on a richly decorated mat, Ix Chel Can is in labor. She screams heavily as one of the women stands between her legs.

EXT. GONZALO'S HUT - NIGHT

Ah Balam comes out of the hut and goes to Gonzalo.

AH BALAM

Gonzalo, the God Itzamna has blessed you with a son.

Gonzalo embraces his friend. He looks at the door of his house -- which INSTANTLY, IN TIMELAPSE, IS LIT BY THE RISING SUN. The CHIRPS of birds and the distant SOUND of a bamboo flute and

AH TOK,

a two year old boy, runs out of the door. WE FOLLOW him to a table where Gonzalo is eating a meal.

Next to him, Ix Chel Can, seven months pregnant, lays more food at the table, humming the same melody as in the previous scenes. Her face shines with joy.

Something catches her attention and her expression changes. She gestures to Gonzalo.

Ah Petuch and a prisoner approach. Gonzalo stands and meets Ah Petuch halfway, leaving the prisoner behind with several men.

AH PETUCH

Gonzalo, we have important news. Our enemy, the Cocomes, saw giant ships in the water, near Tulum. This prisoner saw them. He can tell you about them.

Gonzalo looks apprehensive. Ah Petuch signals his men to bring the prisoner.

The PRISONER looks at Gonzalo in fear. Gonzalo speaks to him slowly, calmly.

GONZALO

What did they look like?

The Prisoner kneels and, with a twig, draws what appears to be a boat.

PRISONER

(terrified)

They landed on the beach. They have much hair on their faces like you. They drank water, then went north.

GONZALO

(to Ah Petuch)

They are Spanish caravels. On them come the Castilians. And with them, war.

Gonzalo returns to the table. Ah Petuch takes the Prisoner away.

IX CHEL CAN

Gonzalo...?

GONZALO

They have seen Castilian ships in Tulum. They have arrived, just like my friend Father Jeronimo told me.

Ix Chel Can's face darkens.

IX CHEL CAN

And you want to go to them?

Gonzalo does not answer, preoccupied.

IX CHEL CAN (cont'd)

If you want to go with them, the children and I
will go with you.

Gonzalo pulls her to him and hugs her.

GONZALO

I will never allow you or our children to be
exposed to the cruelty and greed of the
Castilians, who only come to conquer our people
and enslave them.

He then holds Ix Chel Can firmly and looks her in the eye.

GONZALO (cont'd)

My home is here, in this land, and in your womb
that carries my seed. I will fight for the freedom
of the Cheles of Oxtankah and for all the Mayan
nations, even against my own race.

IX CHEL CAN

But how can you speak like that about your own
people?

GONZALO

No, no, they are not my people. We have nothing
in common. Home is not where you are born,
home is where you are willing to fight for.

Ix Chel Can hugs him.

EXT. OXTANKAH TRAINING CAMP - DAY

Gonzalo, Ah Petuch, and Ah Balam finish inspecting the tautness of the bows of the
Cheles archers.

Now they look over the columns of a battalion of lancers, whose spears are, to the
eye, much longer than the one that Ah Petuch carries. Gonzalo shows Ah Petuch a
small hoop made of leather that has conch-shells hanging from it.

GONZALO

I insist that the warriors remove these conch-shells they wear on their ankles. They make too much noise and they give us away.

(shaking the shells)

We cannot ambush the enemy with this noise.

AH PETUCH

It is the practice of the Cheles, of all the Mayans, to wear them. It is an ancient custom. The warriors always go to battle with the music that springs from their feet. It signifies good luck.

Gonzalo is angered by their blindness.

GONZALO

If I am going to lead the battalions of Oxtankah, my fighters will not wear shells.

AH PETUCH

If we do not wear them, the arrows of our enemies will run through our bodies and we will die. We cannot tempt the gods like you are doing. They will stop protecting us and we will lose the battle.

GONZALO

If you do not remove the shells, you will not go. You will remain behind with the women and children.

Ah Balam leans over and removes the conch-shells from his ankle. The other warriors do the same. Ah Petuch remains alone.

AH BALAM

You are tempting the gods, Gonzalo. I hope you know what you are doing.

Ah Petuch finally removes his and angrily throws them against a tree.

GONZALO

(to the battalion, strong)

Valiant warriors, today we will confront a very dangerous enemy. Some will ride deer that have no antlers. Shoot at the animals first, then at the men, in the neck and face. Fire will come from their weapons. It will sound like thunder. Many

of you will die. Fight as I have taught you and the battle will be ours.

The warriors' SHOUTS of victory echo through the training camp.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Gonzalo and his warriors hide behind thick bushes on the side of a wide trail.

The SOUND of clanging metal and distant VOICES are heard.

Down the trail, a company of over sixty Spanish soldiers march through the dense vegetation. Ten are on horseback. Their weapons and armor reflect the occasional rays of the sun.

As the Spaniards pass the Cheles, they are furiously attacked. A shower of arrows and spears rains on them.

Surprised Spanish voices shout out:

SPANISH SOLDIERS
Mother of God, these beasts are killing us!! FIRE
your weapons!! FIRE!!!!

The first victims are horses. Almost all are buried in arrows. The cavalymen that fall off their mounts are cut down with spears. Only one soldier remains on his horse.

Other soldiers are struck down by arrows and spears. Some are tangled in hand to hand combat.

Ah Balam kills several Spaniards.

BUMMMMM.... The report of an arquebus reverberates through the foliage. Ah Petuch and other warriors drop to the ground.

Spears rip through flesh, knives slit throats, axes split heads

Gonzalo fells the last horseman. They wrestle on the ground. Gonzalo stabs him and he falls back, still.

Soon after, the Cheles defeat the Spanish.

The Cheles warriors lift the sole Spanish survivor onto his feet -- it is the horseman that Gonzalo stabbed.

Gonzalo sees Ah Petuch on the ground badly wounded. He crouches next to him and takes him in his arms.

AH PETUCH

Do not change too much what is Mayan. The gods will punish us.

Ah Petuch dies.

AH BALAM

Do not blame yourself, Gonzalo, it is an honor to die in battle. The victory has been great. Your way of fighting was good. We will all follow you.

Gonzalo looks up to see the jungle filled with bodies, mostly Spanish.

MAYAN WARRIOR

There is a prisoner.

Gonzalo goes to him.

GONZALO

Who are you and where do you come from?

The prisoner looks at Gonzalo terrified.

PRISONER

You spe...speak Spanish?

GONZALO

I asked you who you are and where do you come from?

PRISONER

(stammering)

I am Pedreros...Tulio Pedreros.

I disembarked with my companions where the sea meets the river that the natives call Champoton to scout the area before my Captain arrives.

GONZALO

Who is your Captain?

PRISONER

Juan de Grijalva.

Gonzalo steps away.

PRISONER (cont'd)
What are you going to do with me?

GONZALO
(in Mayan, to Ah Balam)
Is he good for sacrifice?

AH BALAM
(shakes his head, in Mayan)
Too thin.

PRISONER

Are you going to kill me? Please, have mercy, I am like you.

Gonzalo stops and turns to him.

GONZALO
I am not like you!!!

Gonzalo disappears into the jungle. We hear a PIERCING SCREAM from the Prisoner.

EXT. OXTANKAH PLAZA - DAY

The warriors march into town in columns as Na Chan Can watches from his palace. The soldiers are greeted with cheers and flowers. Ix Chel Can runs down the pyramid and greets Gonzalo with a hug.

IX CHEL CAN
We have a daughter, Gonzalo.

Gonzalo squeezes her tight.

INT. GONZALO'S HUT - DAY

Ah Tok, the boy, runs across the room with a wooden toy. WE FOLLOW him to Ix Chel Can who nurses a baby whose head is wedged between two boards, a ball of wax hanging from her forehead to her nose.

Ix Chel Can lifts the baby and shows her to Gonzalo.

IX CHEL CAN
(proudly)
Her name is Ix Mo. It means healer.

Gonzalo holds his daughter.

GONZALO

Ix Mo.

Gonzalo examines Ix Mo, her light eyes, the boards and the wax ball. He changes his expression and returns the baby to her mother.

IX CHEL CAN

She has your eyes.

GONZALO

Why have you put the boards and the ball?

IX CHEL CAN

Because she is different. She has the eyes the color of the sea. The priests say we must flatten her forehead and cross her eyes..

GONZALO

You could hang all the earrings that you want on her ears, even on her nose, but do not make her cross-eyed!

Ix Chel Can hands the baby to a maiden.

IX CHEL CAN

Take the children outside.

Ix Chel Can faces Gonzalo.

IX CHEL CAN (cont'd)

Gonzalo, please understand that for us, a flat forehead and eyes that are crossed are attributes of nobility.

GONZALO

Ix Chel Can, they are my children as well. I have a right to decide their fate.

(exhales, calms down)

Our children are a new race. They have two bloods running through their veins, into their hearts. They are not Cheles, nor Castilian, they are . . .

(beat)

...what do I know what they are!

Ix Chel Can smiles.

IX CHEL CAN

If we let our children be different, the priests, the people, everybody will blame us for every disease, plague, and disaster that happens. Our gods are very jealous of our traditions.

GONZALO

Ix Chel Can, I have sacrificed everything for all of you. I fought against my own people, and turned my back on my land to love you. I never asked you for anything. But now, I am asking...Let Ix Mo look like me, let her keep my mother's features.

Ix Chel Can walks to him and hugs him tenderly.

IX CHEL CAN

If that is what you want, my love, so be it.

They hug and kiss passionately.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

JERONIMO

Your father challenged your traditions. You have light eyes like your sister. He wanted you both to look like him, like his race, not like the Mayans.

IX MU CUY

That's not true. He always told us, proudly, that we were the product of two great races. He simply did not want us to be deformed.

Jeronimo sees that the line to the gallows has shortened to ten. He approaches Ix Mu Cuy.

JERONIMO

The Mayans have been conquered. The only way for you to live is to adapt to our culture and accept our God.

Ix Mu Cuy thinks. Jeronimo feels that he is close to turning her.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Think of the great remorse that your father endured each night over the killing of the Spaniards. He did it for you, so that you could live. You are the only one left in your family. Don't let yourself die.

IX MU CUY

Since I was a little girl I heard about that first battle against you Spanish, and how my father suffered over it. But I can assure you, that he never regretted having spilled the blood of the Spaniards.

JERONIMO

Look at this mole on your mouth.

Ix Mu Cuy touches the mole and smiles.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

(happily)

This is your birthmark, a Castilian moon rising over the land of the Cheles. The new race that you and your father speak of. Don't you realize that everything your father fought for will be lost with your death.

EXT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - TERRACE - DAY

Na Chan Can holds his new granddaughter in his arms. She has a mole in the shape of a crescent moon over her lips.

NA CHAN CAN

Ix Mu Cuy, the smallest of my family. How much lies ahead of you.

Not far, Gonzalo plays with his children Ah Tok and Ix Mo. The children climb on top of him and they jump on his head and grab his beard. They shout joyously.

The sun's rays begin to sink. Several large clouds cover the sky. We hear the distant roar of THUNDER.

Some drops of rain fall. Everyone gets up and finds cover from the rain, except for the children who play excitedly in the rain.

A warrior comes to the terrace. He is drenched. He nears Gonzalo, whispers in his ear, and points.

EXT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - STEPS - DAY

The rain is intense. Gonzalo races down the steps followed by the warrior. He crosses the plaza quickly, bumping into the people looking for shelter from the downpour.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Gonzalo and the warrior, who remains several paces behind, reach a clearing. They stay in the rain, the water dripping down their faces and bodies.

Sixty yards ahead, Gonzalo sees refugees under a giant ceiba tree. There is a light-haired man seated with a Mayan warrior.

The light-haired man lifts his head, it is Jeronimo. Their eyes meet.

Jeronimo stands, but does not move. Gonzalo advances several steps.

Jeronimo approaches cautiously.

Both hasten the pace and come together. Jeronimo stops in front of Gonzalo and studies him.

JERONIMO

Gonzalo?

GONZALO

It's me, Father.

They hug each other hard.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - ROOM - DAY

Jeronimo wipes the water off his body. Gonzalo dries his face with a cloth.

Near them, we hear the shouts of Ah Tok and Ix Mo and the cries of Ix Mu Cuy.

JERONIMO

Finally, Gonzalo, they have come to rescue us.
Just like I told you years ago. My faith has
triumphed.

Gonzalo flings the cloth across the room. His face is serious.

GONZALO

You say, Father, that they have arrived?

Jeronimo is astonished by Gonzalo's attitude. He takes him by the shoulders and shakes him.

JERONIMO

How can you not jump for joy? Spain, Gonzalo, our land is waiting. Your home, your parents, your loves, my son. Aren't you moved by this news?

Gonzalo steps back.

GONZALO

My loves? My love is here in this land, Father Jeronimo. In these cities and this jungle inhabited by beings that, in the eyes of our people, are savages and idol worshipers. But to me they are the most noble and wise in this world.

Jeronimo is visually shaken.

JERONIMO

What are you saying? What sort of folly? Are you insane? Have they drugged you?

GONZALO

No, Father, I am neither crazy nor drugged. When I came here, I came as a slave, and you know how much I hated it. Now, I am Captain of many warriors, married to the daughter of the Leader of Oxtankah and I have certain privileges; furthermore, I am an apprentice priest of the god of the hunt, Acanum...

JERONIMO

(loudly, indignant)

God of what? You have one God on this earth, heaven, and all the universe; the God of the Christians, our God. What blasphemy do you speak of? Of a god of clay and blood?

GONZALO

Father Jeronimo, do not reproach what is in my conscience. The nights are hard enough.

JERONIMO

You were responsible for the deaths of all those poor Christians that died in Champoton, weren't you?

GONZALO

(angrily)

They were not poor Christians, Father. They were soldiers, mercenaries, men of war who came to conquer and enslave these people. They want nothing but gold. You know that.

JERONIMO

I can not forgive you for what you have done. May God have mercy on your soul.

Jeronimo walks away upset. Gonzalo is steadfast. Jeronimo takes out a crumpled paper and hands it to him.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Read it. It is the letter that Captain Hernan Cortes sends us from the island of Cozumel. He asks us to join his expedition; he sends us money to pay for our release.

Gonzalo looks at the money.

GONZALO

How little you know these people, Father. How little you understand them. Do you think that my father-in-law's affection for me can be bought with these trifles? Do you think that the love of my wife and children can be exchanged for some shiny pieces of crystal? I am married to a Mayan princess and I have legitimate children with her in a lawful marriage.

(laughing)

Could you imagine me in Seville?
What would they say if they saw me like this?

Ah Tok and Ix Mo run into the room. Behind them is Ix Chel Can holding Ix Mu Cuy in her arms. Gonzalo takes the youngest and offers her to Jeronimo.

Jeronimo takes Ix Mu Cuy in his arms. He notices her small mole, next to her lips, in the shape of a moon.

GONZALO (cont'd)

Her name means the rising moon. We call her
that because of her mole.

Jeronimo touches Ix Mi Cuy's mole and then gives the child back to Gonzalo.

JERONIMO

Your children, Gonzalo, they are neither
Spaniards nor Cheles, they are a new race.

Gonzalo smiles with pride.

EXT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - TERRACE - DAY

It has stopped raining. The ground is wet, full of small puddles. Jeronimo and
Gonzalo face each other.

JERONIMO

I must go, my son. I remind you that you are a
Christian and that you must follow God's
commandments.

GONZALO

Father, if anything ever happens to me, please
protect my family.

JERONIMO

I will, my son.

They hug firmly.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

God bless, you, Gonzalo... the Warrior.

Gonzalo separates and grabs both of Jeronimo's shoulders.

GONZALO

God bless, you, Jeronimo... my father.

The two friends give each other a fraternal look.

Jeronimo pulls away and goes down the steps. He goes through the plaza and
disappears.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

JERONIMO

That was the last time that I saw him.

He is stands behind her, hiding his emotions.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

...I then joined Captain Cortes on the island of Cozumel. Years later, I heard that your father . . .

Jeronimo turns to look at Ix Mu Cuy. She notices the tears in his eyes.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Tell me, daughter, what exactly happened to him and your family?

IX MU CUY

We were at peace with men, not with nature.

EXT. STREETS - OXTANKAH - NIGHT

The doors to the homes are closed. In front of them, strewn throughout the plaza, are the dead, covered in lime.

Slaves carry the corpses to fires, where they are burnt. The taste of death hangs in the air.

The CRIES of the families mix with the noise of insects that buzz around the cadavers.

A door opens. A YOUNG FATHER removes the body of his son and lays it in front of his house. He closes his door.

INT. YOUNG FATHER'S HOME - NIGHT

The young father enters his home. He looks at his wife and two children, the youngest being very sick. His flesh rots, ulcers have overtaken his small body. His father looks at him in tears. His own nose and lips are filled with blood, which flows from bones and thorns that he has stuck into himself as punishment.

The mother concocts potions and herbs and rubs them on her son.

The father kneels in front of a god of stone. He reaches for a sharp bone and sticks it into his nipple.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - NIGHT

The Voices of MOURNING WOMEN are heard from the outside:

MOURNERS

Oh, what misery!.... Have mercy on us, oh gods!!!!

Incense burns in the large room. Na Chan Can sits in the middle of the Council of Elders.

NA CHAN CAN

The gods want a sacrifice celebrated by one who is pure. Is there such a man among the Cheles of Oxtankah?

They look at Gonzalo and Ah Balam, both dressed in the attire of Nacom warriors. An ELDER stands and steps away from the group.

ELDER

Ah Balam is a pure man. He has not been stained by any woman. No one takes care of the gods better than he does. He is the most fit to carry out the sacrifices.

Ah Balam, stunned by the elder's declaration, proudly smiles and bows his head in acceptance. Na Chan Can stands and takes a step forward.

NA CHAN CAN

The Nacom Gonzalo will assist Ah Balam in the sacrifices. The words have been spoken.

Without giving them time to react, the Elders retire, leaving Ah Balam and Gonzalo.

AH BALAM

It is a great honor for me, Gonzalo. Even with one eye, I have been named High "Chace." It is a great honor!

Ah Balam notices Gonzalo's ambivalence.

AH BALAM (cont'd)

(disconcerted)

And you? Aren't you happy, like me?

GONZALO

No, Ah Balam. I am not capable of sacrificing human beings.

AH BALAM

Yes, you are, Gonzalo. The gods are pleased with you. One day you will be the priest of Acanum,

god of the hunt and then you will see your hands
filled with blood.

Ah Balm pats Gonzalo's shoulder and leaves.

Gonzalo looks out a window and sees the horror of corpses being cremated. The streets are empty. Dozens of bodies wait to be thrown into the fire by slaves.

The mournful cries of mothers are heard:

MOURNERS

Oh, what misery!! Have mercy on us, oh gods!!!

EXT. OXTANKAH TEMPLE OF SACRIFICES - DAY

The rhythmic pounding of a DRUM is heard.

Ix Chel Can and a YOUNG CHELES WOMAN approach the temple steps. The young woman carries a small, silver can and a red flower. They stop and look at the top of the temple.

Gonzalo, whose face and body are painted in cobalt blue, stands on the highest platform of the temple.

Ah Balam emerges from a door. Also painted in blue, except his eyes have red and white circles around them. His countenance is horrific. He stands to one side of Gonzalo.

The POUNDING OF THE DRUM intensifies. A CONCH-SHELL shakes.

At the base of the pyramid, Ix Chel Can retreats slowly, while the young woman walks up the steps.

Two Chaces receive the young woman and hand her over to Ah Balam.

Gonzalo removes the woman's tunic and lays her on the sacrificial rock that is surrounded on two sides by horrible stone idols.

As Gonzalo pins the girl down, Ah Balam raises his arm toward the heavens....

AH BALAM

Ah Puch, Lord of Death and Hunhau, Lord of Hell,
accept the pure and innocent lives of our victims
for the forgiveness of our wrongdoings. We beg
you to clean our fields and cities of Mayacimil.
That the black plague vanishes like a bad dream,
never to return again.

SUUAASSSHH...with one blow, Ah Balam thrusts the dagger into the girl's chest. Gonzalo winces in horror.

Mournful cries echo through the temple. Gonzalo looks mercifully at the base of the pyramid; a group of victims await sacrifice.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A. Ah Balam's arm rises and falls with the bloody knife.

B. Gonzalo smears a heart over a stone idol. He returns to Ah Balam and receives another heart. He goes back to the idol and repeats the ritual.

C. Blood spatters onto Ah Balam's face as he pulls the knife from a victim's chest.

D. Covered in more blood, Gonzalo smears another heart on the idol that is now smothered in a mountain of hearts.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

JERONIMO

That was a grave mistake. Your father should never have participated in human sacrifice.

Ix Mu Cuy, with absolute control of voice and tone...

IX MU CUY

And you, Father? How can you take part in the "human" sacrifices just outside that are carried out in the name of your God? Why did you come with soldiers and dogs to capture us? What gives you the right to judge my father?

JERONIMO

What is happening outside is not sacrifice. We do not offer hearts to anyone; just Baptism. With that, your people would be saved. You can save yourself. That is why I sought you out, that is why I fight, that is why I can judge your father because I know that he would do the same if he were in my place.

(beat)

I beg you, accept Baptism.

IX MU CUY

Why? So that I can be enslaved and whipped to death building your churches.

(beat)

Father Jeronimo, you do not offer hearts to your god, but you offer him pure souls, without sin, that they rip from us through torture and humiliation. I do not want your Baptism, Father.

JERONIMO

You won't accept baptism, but you will agree to cruel, worthless sacrifices.

IX MU CUY

Has the slaughter of my people been worth something? Does the suffering of those outside accomplish anything?

JERONIMO

You are a great deal like your father, just as stubborn.

Ix Mu Cuy stands and reaches for the coned hat.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Wait. You are right. I have no right to judge your father.

He looks at the gallows -- only five Mayans remain.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Please, tell me about the rest of your father's life.

INT./EXT. OXTANKAH TEMPLE OF SACRIFICES - NIGHT

A cloud partially covers the full moon, giving it a reddish hue.

Gonzalo hears SHOUTING outside. He nears the edge of the temple terrace and looks down. An angry crowd surrounds Na Chan Can, yelling and shouting.

CHELE MAN

The sacrifices do not work. The moon, face of Ah Puch, is red. He is angry with the Cheles.

CHELE WOMAN

You, Lord Na Chan Can, wrongly chose the priest Ah Balam for the sacrifices. The gods do not like food from a one-eyed man.

The rest of the crowd unite in their shouts of anger:

CROWD

The Cheles are cursed!! The plague will kill us
all!!

With a gesture, Na Chan Can orders silence.

NA CHAN CAN

I must have made a mistake if the gods are
dissatisfied. But I will make up for it by
sacrificing the one-eyed priest. Ah Balam will be
honored.

Gonzalo quickly disappears into the temple.

INT. TEMPLE OF SACRIFICES - NIGHT

Ah Balam washes the blood from his face and body. Gonzalo enters hastily.

GONZALO

Go, Ah Balam, run, do not delay. Death has
chosen you.

Ah Balam looks at Gonzalo surprised...

AH BALAM

What are you doing, Gonzalo? You are forbidden
to be in here. It could cost you your life.

GONZALO

My life is not in danger, it is your life that they
ask for. It is your heart they want down there.
The moon is red, the gods are angry, and the
people want you to be sacrificed. Run, I will
cover you.

AH BALAM

I appreciate your good intentions, Gonzalo, but a
jaguar warrior never runs. They want to give my
heart to Ah Puch and Hunhau and that is fine. It
is the custom when the priest fails. I give it
happily to end the Mayacimil, this damned
sickness.

GONZALO

Ah Balam, please, there must be another way.

The sound of CONCH-SHELLS from the ankles of warriors, nears.

AH BALAM

Hide, Gonzalo, quickly. They will cut your head off if they see you.

(pointing to an altar)

There, under Hunhau. No one will look for you there.

Gonzalo tries to hug him, but Ah Balam stops him.

AH BALAM (cont'd)

Never say my name. Ah Balam will mean death to those who say it.

(smiling)

Here, so you will remember me.

Ah Balam hands him a bracelet.

The sound of Conch-shells gets closer. Gonzalo runs and hides.

EXT. TEMPLE OF SACRIFICES - DAY

Ah Balam is tied onto two tree trunks that form an X. In front of him, TWO ARCHERS prepare their arrows.

Gonzalo, Na Chan Can, Ix Chel Can, and the rest of the community watch from a distance.

A CAPTAIN gives the order.

FUSSHHHHHHHH.....the arrows speed through the air and burst into Ah Balam's chest.

With great sadness, Gonzalo watches his friend die. His wife takes his hand.

EXT. GONZALO'S HUT - DAY

Gonzalo, sitting on the floor with Ix Mo, draws a giraffe on a piece of paper. Next to it, he traces a tree.

GONZALO

It is called a giraffe. It is so tall that it can eat the leaves of the highest trees.

IX MO

Father, will the plague kill you and mother?

GONZALO

No, no, the plague will leave us soon.

IX MO

My friends say that the plague is my fault, because I have blue eyes, and they are not crossed.

GONZALO

That is not true, daughter. Your eyes have nothing to do with the plague.

IX MO

I don't want my brother and sister to die.

Ix Mo cries. Gonzalo carries her, kisses and caresses her.

GONZALO

There, there my little butterfly. Nothing will happen. Your father will take care of you.

Na Chan Can approaches them. Gonzalo puts his daughter down.

GONZALO (cont'd)

Go play with Ah Tok and Ix Mu Cuy. Go on, I will be there in a moment.

The child goes back to the drawing of the giraffe.

NA CHAN CAN

(mournful)

Gonzalo, the plague has no mercy. Ah Balam's death was in vain. Each day there are more dead. The fields have been abandoned. The food is scarce.

GONZALO

My Lord, send the people to the sea, the lagoons, the rivers. Have them fish what they can. We can survive eating fish.

NA CHAN CAN

(dismayed)

We cannot do that. We may offend the gods Chac and he would punish us with a violent hurricane.

The wind and rain would destroy everything. It has already happened to us.

(unsure)

I am afraid that we have to offer a special sacrifice.

A painful look crosses Na Chan Can's face. He looks at Ix Mo and strokes her hair. Gonzalo stares at him paralyzed.

INT. GONZALO'S HUT - NIGHT

IX CHEL CAN

NOOO, Gonzalo, not my daughter! Why my little one? Our butterfly? NOOO, PLEASE, NO!!!

Ix Chel Can convulses crying. Tears of pain and anger flow down her cheeks and neck.

GONZALO

(voice breaking)

It is necessary, Ix Chel Can. Tradition demands that it be blood from the family of Halach Uinic, the true Lord of Oxtankah.

Ix Chel Can looks at him in dismay, with deep anger.

IX CHEL CAN

Do not speak like that about your own flesh and blood. She is our daughter.

Ix Chel Can grabs her chest.

IX CHEL CAN (cont'd)

(bitter)

There is a crack in my heart that aches, that cuts through every breath. I warned you if we didn't flatten her forehead and cross her eyes, the priest would point the finger at her. She is so innocent...why her?

GONZALO

I cannot do anything if the priests chose her because of me. I am destroyed and

Ix Chel Can puts a finger to his lips.

IX CHEL CAN

I do not blame you, Gonzalo. Forgive me, but I am breaking of sadness. I have wished for the death of my own father instead of my little daughter, Ix Mo. Please, let it be me.

GONZALO

Come here, woman. Don't cry anymore.

Gonzalo hugs her hard. He kisses her head, pulling her tightly against his chest.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - DAY

Na Chan Can meets with the Council of Elders.

A DRUM and STRIDENT FLUTES are heard in the distance. MOURNFUL CRIES float inside the large room.

An ELDER painted in cobalt blue, his head dressed with yellow plumes, moves to the center,

ELDER

Everything is ready, Lord Na Chan Can, to celebrate the sacrifice. Our goddess Ixchel waits for us with her mouth opened. It is the moment to start the invocations.

Na Chan Can signals to Gonzalo who is holding his Ix Mo's hand. He takes her into his arms and leaves.

The Elders look at Na Chan Can with sadness as they start humming a mantra.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Following a "sacbe," Gonzalo carries Ix Mo in his arms followed by two PRIESTS and four WARRIORS. They are dressed with splendid outfits.

EXT. CHICHEN ITZA PYRAMID - EVENING

A majestic pyramid gleams in the middle of a huge clearing. Its steps are both beautiful and impressive.

In the top platform three ITZAES PRIESTS stand with their body painted in blue and their heads in red. Each carry in their right hand a silver spectre with a golden ring at the top. In their left hand an ear of corn.

Gonzalo and his group arrive at the base of the pyramid. The Cheles priests signal Gonzalo. He and his daughter separate from the group and start climbing the pyramid.

CONCH-SHELLS are heard from all directions.

The Cheles priests follow Gonzalo and his daughter from a prudent distance. The four warriors remain behind.

EXT. CHICHEN ITZA PYRAMID - DUSK

IX MO (O.S.)

Father.. father.

Gonzalo turns to her.

IX MO (cont'd)

Look how fast I climb.

Ix Mo nimbly climbs the steps. Gonzalo rushes to follow her.

EXT. TOP PLATFORM OF PYRAMID, CHICHEN ITZA - DAY

Gonzalo and Ix Mo reach the highest platform.

The three Itzaes priests receive them.

The Itzae Priest #1 takes Ix Mo by the hand, and murmurs something to the other two Itzae priests. He escorts Ix Mo into the small temple at the top of the pyramid.

The Cheles priests that came with Gonzalo reach the platform and bow. They all enter.

INT. PYRAMID TEMPLE - DAY

Inside the small temple, there are idols representing the god Itzamna and the goddess Ixchel.

Two Itzae priests stand at both sides of each idol.

The third Itzae priest leads Ix Mo in front of the idol representing Itzamna.

Ix Mo, impressed, looks at the idol curiously. The priest next to her prays.

A MANTRA is heard coming from the lips of the ITZAES PRIESTS.

ITZAE PRIEST #3 removes Ix Mo's tunic, up to her waist. He takes a vessel that contains a blue cobalt liquid and, with his hands, paints Ix Mo's body.

Ix Mo thinks the painting is a game. Gonzalo watches with a seriousness never seen from him before.

ITZAE PRIEST #3

Your gift has arrived, Itzamna, God of heaven and sun, Lord of the gods. Accept it tomorrow with your jade teeth, with the flowers of the sun in your eyes.

He bows, takes Ix Mo by the shoulders, and turns to the idol representing the goddess Ixchel.

ITZAE PRIEST #3 (cont'd)

Your nourishment is here, oh great Ixchel, goddess of the moon and fertility.

Ix Mo is afraid. She starts to cry.

The three Itzae priests hum a mantra. Ix Mo cries harder. Gonzalo remains stoic.

EXT. CENOTE - EVENING

Gonzalo accompanied by Chele Priest # 1 and Itzae priest # 2 approach the edge of an obscure and threatening cenote.

This is the mouth of mother nature. A colossal hole that runs over 200 feet deep into the center of the earth. At its bottom, crystalline water.

Itzae priest # 2 extends his arm and moves it in a semi-circle.

ITZAE PRIEST #2

Nacom Gonzalo. This is the mouth of our dearest Goddess Ixchel. She will receive in her womb your daughter so that her anger ceases and her forgiveness springs forth.

CHELE PRIEST #1

Tomorrow you will need all your strength to endure the sacrifice of your daughter. You can not hesitate nor let your emotions interrupt the harmony we owe to the goddess Ixchel. Otherwise the sacrifice will be in vain.

INT. CHICHEN ITZA HUT - NIGHT

In the corner of a humble hut, Gonzalo rests on top of a small mat. He holds his daughter tightly. Ix Mo's face rests in Gonzalo's chest, her hands caressing her father's beard.

IX MO

(yawning)

Father, is the goddess Ixchel going to eat me?

GONZALO

(voice breaking)

How can you think that, daughter? Tomorrow will be a happy day for the children of our town and you will be the reason. Your mother, Ah Tok, Ix Mu Cuy, myself, we all will be with you. Come my little one, let me hug you tight.

Gonzalo hugs her tightly and kisses her.

GONZALO (cont'd)

I love you so, so, so much. What if we say that prayer that you like?

IX MO

(happily)

I almost know it all, father.

GONZALO

Our Father, who art in Heaven.....

IX MO

Our Father, who art in heaven...

GONZALO/IX MO

...hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Ix Mo has falls asleep. Gonzalo rocks her, singing...

GONZALO

Ix Mo my little one, my sweet little butterfly. Ix Mo has one eye that's closed, and the other she can't open....Ix Mo has one eye that's closed, and the other she can't open....

EXT. CENOTE - SUNRISE

On the edge of the cenote, the Chele and Itzae priests meet Gonzalo who carries Ix Mo in his arms.

A Chele priest holds a basket filled with offerings. He hands them, one by one, to another priest who hurls them into the cenote....

ITZAE PRIEST #2

Accept Ixchel these offerings from the Cheles.

Itzae priest #3 prays:

ITZAE PRIEST #3

We are here goddess Ixchel to give you a gift.
Receive her in your mouth and reward these
Cheles who love you and ask for your forgiveness
to rid the plague that annihilates them.

The sounds of FLUTES and DRUMS intensify. Itzae Priest # 3 turns to Gonzalo extending his arms to him.

Gonzalo is pale. He walks slowly toward the priest, almost in slow motion, trying to extend every second of his daughter's life.

Gonzalo reaches the priest and gives him Ix Mo. The priest raises the child above his head and makes a 360 degree turn.

Ix Mo starts crying. Gonzalo sees her daughter turning, the entire world spinning around him.

The priest stops turning and nears the edge of the cenote still holding Ix Mo above his head.

Gonzalo sees his daughter one more second. Ix Mo sees his father upside down.

The priest THROWS Ix Mo to the cenote.

SLOW MOTION of Ix Mo falling, disappearing into the darkness.

SLOW MOTION of Gonzalo closing his eyes, his body trembling.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

A grey fog hangs over the "sacbe" as Gonzalo, the two Cheles priests, and the four warriors return, filled with grief and sorrow.

EXT. OXTANKAH PLAZA - DAY

Gonzalo enters the plaza. He advances slowly, followed by the priests and warriors.

The townspeople gather in SILENCE in the middle of the square.

At the steps of the pyramid, Na Chan Can, Ix Chel Can, Ah Tok and Ix Mu Cuy wait.

Ix Chel Can goes down the steps. Gonzalo watches her come, tears on her cheeks. She takes him by the shoulders.

IX CHEL CAN

(voice breaking)

The plague is gone, Gonzalo. No one else has become sick, the people are healing.

(controlling the tears)

The sacrifice was well received.

Gonzalo falls to his knees at Ix Chel Can's feet.

He hugs her legs tight and cries, like a child, for a long time.

Na Chan Can, Gonzalo's children, and the entire town watch in a profound and respectful silence.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

Ix Mu Cuy, a tear on her cheek, smiles proudly.

IX MU CUY

My sister's sacrifice moved all the Mayan nations. The Cheles honored my father. He was named chief of all the warriors of Cheles and his voice was heard with respect in the Council of Elders.

Jerónimo is visibly moved....He stands and goes to the window....

.... the last condemned man is led to the gallows to be hanged.

IX MU CUY (cont'd)

Soon, we heard of the fall of the Aztec Empire. Not much later, Governor Montezuma came to conquer our lands. My father fought many more battles together with my people, as a true Mayan.

EXT. OXTANKAH PLAZA - DAY

Several battalions of Cheles form in the plaza.

Gonzalo, now with white hair and a grey beard, inspects the troops, giving instructions.

Next to him is a young warrior, his son, Ah Tok.

GONZALO

Finish the inspection while I say goodbye to Na Chan Can and your mother.

AH TOK

Yes, Father.

Ah Tok gives orders to the warriors as Gonzalo walks away.

INT. NA CHAN CAN PALACE - DAY

In a corner of the grand hall, Na Chan Can, now very old, consults with two Elders as they look over an old manuscript.

At the other side, Ix Chel Can, who has also aged considerably, is accompanied by Ix Mu Cuy, now a young woman of 17.

IX CHEL CAN

Take care of yourself. Take care of Ah Tok.

GONZALO

Our son is a great warrior. You will be very proud of him, I assure you. It is not his life you should worry about, but who is going to be his wife when he returns.

IX CHEL CAN

Promise me, Gonzalo, that you will look after him more than ever.

GONZALO

I promise.

Gonzalo hugs and kisses his wife.

Gonzalo removes a bracelet that he wears on his arm. It is the one Ah Balam gave him. He gives it to Ix Mu Cuy. She puts the bracelet on and smiles widely.

IX CHEL CAN

Gonzalo, that is your amulet for the battles.

GONZALO

And for the battles that my children will fight in
the future.

Gonzalo holds Ix Mu Cuy and addresses her.

GONZALO (cont'd)

Take care of this amulet, daughter. You know
how much it means for me.

Ix Mu Cuy hugs her father.

GONZALO (cont'd)

I should go.

He turns to Na Chan Can and nods to him, who returns the gesture. Gonzalo leaves.

EXT. OXTANKAH PLAZA - DAY

We hear the MUSTER of soldiers. The sound of CONCH-SHELLS and DRUMS as they
depart for war.

Ix Chel Can, Ix Mu Cuy, and Na Chan Can watch from a terrace as the soldiers march
away, following their leaders, Gonzalo and Ah Tok.

A priest delivers a prophecy to the departing battalions.

PRIEST

God Ix Jaguar, it is the time of the furious battle,
when fire will burn in the heart of our land, and
the earth and the sky will be consumed, and
terror will be our only sustenance.

Gonzalo and his warriors exit the city.

PRIEST (cont'd)

It will be the dark time that was prophesied, the
funeral of the Cheles of Oxtankah.

EXT. BATTLEGROUND - DAY

Hundreds of Spanish cavalrymen advance through a wooded trail.

Their armor and helmets blaze in the sun. Their spears are enormous. Streamers
hang from their tips.

Behind them are columns of heavily armed troops, carrying arquebuses and pistols in their belts.

Suddenly, a shower of arrows rains on them. Some find their targets, others fall to the floor.

A horse is hit with three arrows in the buttocks. Another is hit twice in the neck.

Gonzalo's men rush out of everywhere and attack. The battle is hand to hand.

Gonzalo and Ah Tok fight, protecting each other.

Bodies are strewn everywhere, both Spanish and Cheles.

PUUUUMMMM.....a gunshot rips through Ah Tok's shoulder, sending him face first onto the ground.

Gonzalo runs to him....

AAAAGHHHHH... a Spaniard with a black beard thrusts his spear into Ah Tok's chest.

GONZALO
NOOOOOO.....!

With his spear up high, Gonzalo charges on the black bearded Spaniard.

PUUUUMMMMMMM.....

A shot from an arquebus enters and shatters Gonzalo's back.

He falls forward. His spear sticks into the ground, preventing his bloody body from falling.

Gonzalo leans on the spear. He breathes with difficulty, looking around ...

The BLASTS of gunfire...

The NEIGHING of horses...

The SCREAMS of Cheles being massacred....

Gonzalo loses strength...his hands slip from the spear...his body as well, slowly, refusing to die. PLASSHH, his face falls into the mud, into the land of the Mayab.

A profound and long SILENCE.

The Spaniards canvass the battleground. A Spanish soldier looks at a Chele soldier, leans over, and tears off a gold necklace.

He shows it to the other Spaniards. The plundering has begun.

A SPANISH CAPTAIN approaches Gonzalo's body. He moves it with his foot and turns him over.

SPANISH CAPTAIN

Holy Christ, this one is no savage.
It is the traitor. Look, men, he is dead. We killed
the traitor.

A number of soldiers come over and observe the body curiously.

The Spanish Captain spits on Gonzalo's face.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

IX MU CUY

Traitor..., that's what you call my father.

Her face is flushed, her body trembles.

Someone calls from outside the door.

Jeronimo opens it and a soldier enters the chapel.

SOLDIER

Pardon, Father, the executioner is ready for the
heretic.

The soldier goes for Ix Mu Cuy, but Jeronimo blocks him.

JERONIMO

(with authority)

Tell the executioner that we are coming.

The soldier looks at him coldly and exits.

JERONIMO (cont'd)

Your father was a great man. Loyal to his
convictions, to his family, and the people who
adopted him and gave meaning to his life.

(beat, swallowing)

If he could accept other customs and other gods,
couldn't you accept the baptism that I offer you
to save your soul, and at the same time, your life?

Ix Chel Can walks up to him and looks at him firmly. She takes out the bracelet her father gave her and, gently, puts it in his trembling hands.

IX MU CUY

My father gave it to me to win battles. You take it, I have no more battles to win.

Ix Mu Cuy walks to the Sambenito and puts it on her head.

IX MU CUY (cont'd)

(firm)

I should go.

Her integrity intact, she goes to the door.

Jeronimo watches her, broken.

JERONIMO

Your name means "rising moon." How do you say it in Mayan?

IX MU CUY

Ix Mu Cuy.

JERONIMO

God bless you...Ix Mu Cuy.

Ix Mu Cuy walks out. A soldier takes her by the arm and leads her away.

Jeronimo holds the bracelet tightly in his old hands. Although he lost, his face shows a tear of happiness. He stares at the bracelet then slowly walks to the window.

POV JERONIMO

Ix Mu Cuy walks up the steps of the gallows. She turns and waits for the executioner to slip the rope around her neck.

ON IX MU CUY

As she looks up and finds Jeronimo watching her.

In her eyes, strength, knowledge, and pride.

The image of Ix Mu Cuy FREEZES.

**GONZALO GUERRERO WAS DECLARED
A TRAITOR BY THE SPANISH COURTS**

HE WAS BANNED FROM HISTORY BOOKS

**500 YEARS LATER THE MAYAN PEOPLE
STILL FIGHT FOR THEIR MOST BASIC RIGHTS**

FADE OUT.