

a contemporary México. What I encountered instead was the daily, and often painful, reminder of my own cultural outsiderhood as a U.S.-born Mexican of mixed parentage. But the templos of México—Monte Albán, Palenque, Tulum, Teotihuacán—told me something different. As I ascended those temple steps, I unwittingly descended into the visceral experience of a collective racial memory that everything about my personal biography had rejected, but one that my writer's soul irrefutably embraced. It was as much the natural landscape in which those templos were placed, as the buried history contained within the structures, that brought a shudder of recognition to the surface of my skin: the green moss carpet on the steps of el Templo de la Cruz en Palenque; the crash of the Caribe against the walls of Tulum; the splice of sun illuminating the jeweled turquoise and jade of a Queztalcóatl relief in Teotihuacán. Those templos to the gods were the edification of a history lost to me. Thus began my (re)education process and my (re)turn to Mito in hunger for a true god and a true story of a people.

*Who are my gods? Who are my people?* The response is the same for both questions, I discovered, when I discovered the mutilated women of our indigenous american history of story: La Llorona, Coyolxauhqui, Coatlicue. I worship them in my attempt to portray them in all their locura, because I admire the living expression of their hungers. They, like my dreams, insist on truth and as such become my allies in a war against forgetfulness.

I write to remember—*is there no other way to say it?*—because I fear (and hope, in my cowardice) that I will die before any revolution is born blood-red on the horizon. I write to imagine, which is a way of remembering, as are dreams, that “we (women) were not always fallen from the mountain.”

*Imagine freedom*, I tell myself. *Write freedom*. And I try to do so by painting pictures of prisoners on the page. They are the surviving codices of our loss. When you turn the page, those little five-toed footprints appear again in the spirit of the story. They are leading backwards, pointing toward a future of freedom.

Oakland, Califas  
26 febrero 2001



# the hungry woman

## A Mexican Medea

Cherrie L. Moraga

*Where can I go? Is it possible to imagine a world,  
a time, where I would have a place?  
There's no one I could ask. That's the answer.*

*Christa Wolfe, Medea: A Modern Retelling*

*For Marsha Gómez,  
sculptor*

*1951–1998*

## The Hungry Woman: Development History

*The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* was originally commissioned by Berkeley Repertory Theatre, where it received a staged reading on April 10, 1995, directed by Tony Kelly.

On December 2, 1995, the PLAY was presented in a staged reading as part of the Mark Taper Forum's New Works Festival in Los Angeles. It was directed by Lisa Wolpe.

As part of Theater Communications Group National Theater Artist Residency Program, funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, *The Hungry Woman* was in development at The Brava Theater Center of San Francisco and received a staged reading on June 10, 1997, directed by the playwright.

On May 21, 1999, the PLAY was presented in a staged reading as part of A Contemporary Theater's/Hedgebrook Writers' Retreat Women's Playwright Festival in Seattle. It was directed by Richard E.T. White; Mame Hunt, Dramaturg.

The Esperanza Center and Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center of San Antonio, Texas presented the PLAY in a staged reading on February 20, 2000. It was directed by Irma Mayorga.

On December 4, 2000, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* was presented as part of the Plays at the Border Festival at The Magic Theater of San Francisco. It was directed by the playwright.

## Playwright's Note and Setting

### The Time:

The early part of the second decade of the twenty-first century. A future I imagine based on a history at the turn of the century that never happened.

### The Historical Place:

An ethnic civil war has "balkanized" about half of the United States into several smaller nations of people. These include: Africa-America located in the southern states of the U.S. (excluding, of course, Florida); the Mechicano Nation of Aztlán which includes parts of the Southwest and the border states of what was once Northern México; the Union of Indian Nations which shares, in an uneasy alliance with its Chicano neighbors, much of the Southwest and also occupies the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain regions; the Hawai'i Nation; and the confederacy of First Nations Peoples in the former state of Alaska.

The revolutionaries that founded these independent nations seceded from the United States in order to put a halt to its relentless political and economic expansion, as well as the Euro-American cultural domination of all societal matters including language, religion, family and tribal structures, ethics, art-making, and more. The revolution established economic and political sovereignty for seceding nations with the ultimate goal of defending aboriginal rights throughout the globe. Rebels scorned the ballot box and made alliance with any man or woman of any race or sexuality that would lift arms in their defense. When the Civil War was over, anyone, regardless of blood quantum, who shared political affinities with these independent nations was permitted to reside within their territories; however, the right to hold title to land was determined differently within each nation.

Several years after the revolution, a counter-revolution followed in most of the newly-independent nations. Hierarchies were established between male and female; and queer folk were unilaterally sent into exile.

The play takes place several years after MEDEA, who had served as a leader in the Chicano revolt, was exiled from Aztlán with her son, CHAC-MOOL, and her lesbian lover, LUNA. They reside in what remains of Phoenix, Arizona, located in a kind of metaphysical border region between Gringolandia (U.S.A.) and Aztlán (Mechicano country). Phoenix is now a city-in-ruin, the dumping site of every kind of poison and person unwanted by its neighbors. Scenes shift to the "present," where MEDEA is an inmate in a prison psychiatric

ward, to events in the past leading up to MEDEA's incarceration. Psychiatric ward scenes are represented by a deadening silence and the glare of hospital lights. Phoenix is represented by the ceaseless racket of a city out of control (constant traffic, low-flying jet planes, hawkers squawking their wares, muy "Blade Runner-esque"). The lighting is urban neon. Most people look lousy in it.

## Characters

MEDEA	A midwife and curandera in her late 40s.
LUNA	MEDEA's lover of seven years; stone mason and clay sculptor, late 30s.
MAMA SAL	MEDEA's aging grandmother, 80s.
CHAC-MOOL	MEDEA's thirteen-year-old son.

### CIHUATATEO (EL CORO):

Chorus of four warrior women who, according to the Aztec myth, have died in childbirth. Here they are identified by the four directions and four primary Pre-Columbian colors: EAST (Red), NORTH (Black), WEST (White), and SOUTH (Blue). The figures wear the faces of the dead in the form of skulls. Their hands are shaped into claws. Their breasts appear bare and their skirts are tied with the cord of snake. They are barefoot, their ankles wrapped in shell rattles. The chorus performs in the traditional style of Aztec danzantes.

CIHUATATEO EAST	Also plays MEDEA's aging Puerto Rican caretaker in the psychiatric hospital; wears red.
CIHUATATEO NORTH	Also plays PRISON GUARD, TATTOO ARTIST and BORDER GUARD; wears black.
CIHUATATEO WEST	Also plays LUNA's girlfriend, African-American with Native ancestry; wears white.
CIHUATATEO SOUTH	Also plays MEDEA's husband and CHAC-MOOL's father; wears blue.

## Act I

### Prelude

*[Pre-Columbian Meso-American music. The lights slowly rise on the altar to Coatlicue, the Aztec Goddess of Creation and Destruction. She is an awesome decapitated stone figure. She wears a serpent skirt and a huge necklace of dismembered hands and hearts, with a human skull at its center. THE CIHUATATEO flank her.]*

### CIHUATATEO EAST:

This is how all stories begin and end  
the innocence of an eagle feather  
stuffed inside a mother's apron.

The birdboy growing there  
taking shape.  
The warrior son waiting in the wings  
taking flight.

So, too begins and ends this story.  
The birth of a male child  
from the dark sea of Medea

at the dawning of an age.

*[CIHUATATEO NORTH crosses to CIHUATATEO EAST and hands her a red Nurse's cap. As she puts it on, NORTH covers her own face in a black ski mask.]*

NURSE: This is how all days begin and end.

## Scene One

*[PRISON GUARD stands upstage in ski mask, hands behind her back. A huge ring of jailer keys (very exaggerated) hangs from her military belt. There is a domino game set up nearby and an unmade hospital bed with a vase of wilting white flowers next to it. MEDEA is downstage, looking directly into the one-way mirror through which all activities in the psychiatric ward can be observed. Her dark hair is disheveled and her eyes are shadowed from lack of sleep. Still, MEDEA possesses a dark and brooding allure, akin to obsidian: a razor-sharp edge with a deep and lustrous sheen. MEDEA senses she is being watched.]*

PRISON GUARD: *(To audience)* A prison psychiatric hospital in the borderlands. The near future of a fictional past, dreamed only in the Chicana imagination.

*[The PRISON GUARD crosses to MEDEA and hands her one of the flowers. She caresses it. NURSE enters with tray of food.]*

MEDEA: I have gone without campanitas on my kitchen table, I have gone without a kitchen table, a kitchen, a hearth for . . . how long has it been, Nurse?

NURSE: Many months.

MEDEA: Enough months to become years?

NURSE: Not yet.

MEDEA: Without a kitchen, my meals are brought to me on plastic trays, everything wrapped in plastic, the forks, the napkin, the salt and pepper, like on airplanes. I want to fly away.

*[She lifts the lid to the food tray.]*

MEDEA: Is this soup?

NURSE: It's breakfast. We don't serve soup for breakfast.

MEDEA: *(Stirring it with her spoon)* It's gray soup.

NURSE: It's mush.

MEDEA: I like avena.

NURSE: Avena.

MEDEA: Oatmeal. It sticks to your ribs, like that commercial. *(Singing a little jingle)* "Sticks to your ribs all day."

NURSE: I remember that. *(Starts to exit.)*

MEDEA: You're leaving me?

NURSE: I got more patients than you. Eat your breakfast.

*[NURSE exits.]*

MEDEA: She's leaving me. Now I will have no one to talk to. I could talk to the man on the Quaker Oats box but she did not leave me the box or the man, just the mush. *(She pushes at it with her spoon.)* Avena. That's my baby's word. One of his first words because oatmeal was one of his first foods.

*[She abandons the breakfast, crosses back to the wall of mirror, examines her face.]*

MEDEA: I live inside the prison of my teeth. My voice can't escape this wall of maize-white tiles sealed shut. "Perfect masonry," Luna'd always say . . . about my teeth. I wish I had a mouth of corn, sweet baby corn. A mouth of baby teeth sucking at virgin purple pezones. How do I live now without her breasts? I can't open my mouth to suck her. Luna . . . ?

*[Split-scene. LUNA's bedroom. Phoenix, early morning. The neon quality of the lighting and sudden rush of city sounds are distinct from the glaring bright lights and soundlessness of the psychiatric prison hospital. LUNA sits up in bed as awakened from a dream. The woman lying next to her under the covers, stirs.]*

LUNA: To have somebody read your face in the light of day.

*[LUNA rises, dresses. Cross-stage NURSE reenters ward, removes the breakfast tray.]*

MEDEA: Cover the mirrors, Nurse. I don't want my son to see me like this, red-eyed, crows feet drooping. I am a motherless sight. Nurse, are you listening? Bring out the purple cloths. We'll pretend it is Lent and we await the resurrection of my son, my holy son. I'll sleep until then, until he returns to me. *(Pressing her face against the mirror)* The mirror is cold, impenetrable. You can never get inside it, unless you are a child or un muerto. I am neither, no longer, not yet. *(She spits at the mirrored wall. NURSE perfunctorily wipes it clean.)* Tiny ghosts live inside me. The ghost of my own pathetic girlhood. When I met Luna I imagined every touch was a gesture toward that girl-child.

NURSE: Tell your girlfriend, not me. She comes on Saturdays, three o'clock. Today is Friday. That's tomorrow. She's the one in the man's suit jacket who always comes with flowers. She's the face behind the flowers. You can't miss her.

MEDEA: But I do. I do miss my Luna.

NURSE: Why don't you tell her that when you see her? You never talk to her.

MEDEA: No. I only want to be an Indian, a Woman, an Animal in the Divine Ecosystem. The jaguar, the bear, the eagle.

*[The PRISON GUARD and NURSE begin to play dominoes.]*

MEDEA: *(At the mirror)* My chin is dropping, just like all the women in my family. My face is falling into my throat. Next thing I know I won't have a chin at all, just those thick necklaces of flesh strangling me. My eyelids are falling. One morning I'll open my eyes and the shades will be drawn permanently.

LUNA: Medea hid from the light. She always slept in the shadows, the windowless side of the bed, the shades drawn day or night. She slept with ear plugs, blindfolds.

MEDEA: I think it's the alcohol that sucks out all your juices, leaves you dry and black-eyed. The obsidian mirror and pulque. Vanity and

drunkenness. The god's downfall and my own. I'm getting old. Old means the circles stay even after the cucumber peels.

NURSE: *(Mildly interested)* Cucumber peels?

MEDEA: You didn't know?

NURSE: What's to know?

MEDEA: During the day when Jasón was at work, I would lay my head down on the pillow and put the slices over my eyelids. They were so cool, one on each eye. I could hear Chac-Mool outside talking to the stonemason. It was paradise.

NURSE: The stonemason?

MEDEA: Yes. The woman, the migrant worker my husband Jasón hired to put in the garden patio.

*[LUNA and CHAC-MOOL appear in MEDEA's memory.]*

LUNA: You should plant corn.

CHAC-MOOL: My mom didn't say nothing about no corn.

LUNA: What's a garden without corn?

CHAC-MOOL: She's gonna plant medicine.

LUNA: Your mom makes medicine?

CHAC-MOOL: Yeah, she learned from my Bisabuela.

LUNA: Plant corn. A single corn plant can produce enough grain to feed a person for a day.

MEDEA: And the stonemason's voice entered me like medicine. Medicine for my brokenness.

*[LUNA crosses back to bedroom, puts on a man's suit jacket.]*

LUNA: I always liked that tiny fold hanging over Medea's eyes. It was like a delicate little awning, shading her from the world. I liked how that little mistake made her face less perfect. There's something to read in that. Nothing's printed in perfection. Only language I know is worry lines, a brow that looks like the valley floor in planting season. I'd trace my finger like a dumb plow along those furrows, but I could only guess at what Medea was thinking.

[LUNA bends down, kisses the woman beneath the bedcovers.]

LUNA: I'll be back tomorrow night. *(She gathers together a small bouquet of white cut flowers from the bedside.)* I am tired of mourning Medea. I dream of other women to bring moisture to places made dust by her departure.

[LUNA exits.]

## Scene Two

[PRISON GUARD and NURSE push MEDEA's hospital bed to a cramped government-funded urban apartment. The GUARD dumps a load of trash around the floor: old magazines, used tissues, newspapers, junk mail, a few empty pints of booze.]

PRISON GUARD: *(To the audience)* One year earlier. The land of the exiled. Phoenix, Arizona. What never rose up from the ashes of destruction.

[S/he hands a letter to MEDEA and exits. MEDEA paces back and forth with the letter in one hand and a bottle of tequila in the other. LUNA is on her knees with a wastebasket, picking up the trash that has just been dumped on the floor.]

MEDEA: He writes me in fucking lawyerese. I hate that! Fucking lawyer, fucking poet-lawyer! There ought to be a law against fucking with language that way. Mira esta mierda. *(She thrusts the letter at LUNA.)*

LUNA: I've seen the letter, Medea.

[Cross-stage CIHUATATEO SOUTH appears as JASÓN. He wears military blue.]

MEDEA/JASÓN: "She reminds me of you, Medea. Your once-innocence. Your wide-eyed eagerness. She is the Medea you were before the war, before 'politics' changed you . . . changed us."

MEDEA: ¡Pendejo! She's a virgin, sabes? Bueno . . . *was* a virgin.

LUNA: The bride-to-be? I thought they didn't make virgins no more.

MEDEA: She's nineteen years old.

LUNA: Oh. How does he know for sure?

MEDEA: That she's nineteen?

LUNA: That she's a virgin.

MEDEA: She bled for him.

LUNA: He wrote you that?

MEDEA: Uh-huh.

LUNA: Grosero.

JASÓN: "She bled for me, just as you did once."

MEDEA: *(To JASÓN)* Ay, Jasóncito, that was a wound you found too many years ago, a bleeding ulcer between my legs.

[MEDEA crumples up the letter and tosses it on the ground. LUNA picks it up, puts it in the trash. JASÓN exits.]

MEDEA: "Politics." Men think women have no love of country, that the desire for nation is a male prerogative. So like gods, they pick and choose who is to be born and live and die in a land I bled for equal to any man. Aztlán, how you betrayed me! Y acá me encuentro in this wasteland where yerbas grow bitter for lack of water, my face pressed to the glass of my own revolution like some húrfana abandonada.

LUNA: You aren't an orphan, Medea.

MEDEA: I have no *motherland*. Can you stop doing that? *(The cleaning.)*



LUNA: It bothers you?

MEDEA: Yes.

LUNA: It bothers me, too.

*[MEDEA sloshes tequila onto the floor. With intention.]*

MEDEA: I need to talk to you.

*[LUNA stops.]*

LUNA: Are you jealous?

MEDEA: No, not jealous.

LUNA: Medea.

MEDEA: I'm a rabid dog.

LUNA: You've never divorced Jasón . . . why?

MEDEA: You believe in that piece of paper?

LUNA: Yes, when it means you could be taken away from me.

MEDEA: I'm not your custody case. Don't treat me like one.

LUNA: No, Chac-Mool is. Our son is the custody case.

MEDEA: My son.

LUNA: Why don't you get dressed and go to work?

MEDEA: Work! I suck off the seven-pound creations of other women!  
That's all. I catch their babies and throw them back at them.

LUNA: Just get dressed. *(Starts to exit.)*

MEDEA: Jasón doesn't need Chac-Mool now. He'll get his progeny. The teenager waifa will see to that.

LUNA: She's Indian?

MEDEA: Indian enough. And young enough. She'll have a litter of breed-babies for him.

LUNA: He's getting old, Medea. He wants Chac-Mool.

MEDEA: He hasn't asked for him.

LUNA: The boy's turning thirteen, he has the right to decide for himself.

MEDEA: No.

LUNA: Medea.

MEDEA: There's time yet.

LUNA: For what?

MEDEA: I don't know. Something.

LUNA: I always thought that if Jasón had felt even the smallest part of what I've come to feel for Chac-Mool, that he never would've let him go. He would have held him kicking and screaming to his chest. He would've forced you to choose.

MEDEA: Lucky for you he didn't.

LUNA: That's what I thought.

MEDEA: Didn't you hear? Jasón wants a divorce. I'm yours forever. Happy?

*[MAMA SAL enters, laden with a heavy leather satchel.]*

LUNA: *(Taking satchel from her.)* Lemme help you.

MAMA SAL: Gracias, hija. Am I . . . ?

LUNA: *(To MEDEA)* Nah, I'm on my way out.

*[LUNA exits. MEDEA drops back into bed.]*

MEDEA: *(To self)* And our hands are left empty . . . she and I, childless women que chupamos each other's barren breasts?

MAMA SAL: You're gonna push her so far away from you, she won't be able to find her way back.

MEDEA: Good. She's a liability.

MAMA SAL: ¿Por qué hablas así?

MEDEA: I can't bring her into this. It'll make things worse.

MAMA SAL: They can't get worse, Medea. We lost it all already, ¿no recuerdas?

MEDEA: Not my son. I didn't lose my son.

MAMA SAL: Levántate. La clínica's got two women in labor.

MEDEA: No puedo. You go for me instead.

MAMA SAL: Ay, Medea. I've burped every border baby from here to Nogales already today.

MEDEA: No puedo.

MAMA SAL: Medea, you got to get back to work.

MEDEA: I don't trust myself. I feel my hands as liquid as the river.

MAMA SAL: La poet. It's your mind that's liquid from tanta tequila.

*[MAMA SAL rummages through her satchel pulling out small sacks of yerbas. She hands MEDEA a few clear capsules of ground herb.]*

MAMA SAL: Ten.

MEDEA: What are they?

MAMA SAL: Tómalos and not with the tequila.

*[MEDEA pops the capsules into her mouth.]*

MAMA SAL: Now, sleep it off.

*[MAMA SAL closes up her satchel and exits.]*

### Scene Three

*[CHAC-MOOL sits beneath a glaring spotlight. It looks like an interrogation room. Various small rings of silver hang from his eyebrow, ear, lip and nose. The TATTOO ARTIST, who is the PRISON GUARD wearing a worker's apron, blindfolds CHAC-MOOL with a black bandanna. CHAC-MOOL offers his shoulder as TATTOO ARTIST begins to etch out with a needle the first markings of the tattoo.]*

TATTOO ARTIST: What's the matter? Why are you covering your eyes?

CHAC-MOOL: To see.

TATTOO ARTIST: To see what?

CHAC-MOOL: The swirls of purple and forest green. If I cover my eyes, I am asleep in a dream. I can dream anything I want. At night, before I dream, I stay up and watch the moon cross the sky. Each night it's a long journey, unless you forget to watch her. Then she can appear in completely different places as if by magic. Have you seen the moon the last four nights? The evening moon?

TATTOO ARTIST: I think so.

CHAC-MOOL: What did you see?

TATTOO ARTIST: A sliver.

CHAC-MOOL: A sliver in the smoggy haze?

TATTOO ARTIST: . . . Yeah.

CHAC-MOOL: A thin brush stroke in the sky. One delicate turn of a silver-haired paintbrush marking the sky with her hue.

TATTOO ARTIST: You talk beautiful for a boy.

CHAC-MOOL: At sunrise, she melts from the sun's glow. Soft, insistent.

TATTOO ARTIST: You watch her all night?

CHAC-MOOL: La luna? Yes, like a lover. *(To himself)* "The Boy Who Fell in Love with the Moon."

TATTOO ARTIST: What do you know about love? You're too young.

CHAC-MOOL: I am a boy who sleeps alone in his pijamas and wakes up in the middle of the night wishing for something.

TATTOO ARTIST: What? Manhood?

CHAC-MOOL: No. Full-grown innocence. Such lightness of flesh that I could rise above my bed and fly to the moon. I believed that once, pumping my swing harder and harder, I believed I could touch la luna. My mom sang me songs of flying to the moon as she pushed my back.

*[Singing]*

"Up in a balloon, boys, up in a balloon.  
Sailing 'round the little stars and all around the moon."

It seemed possible then.

TATTOO ARTIST: And now?

CHAC-MOOL: Now I know more and my dreams are getting as heavy as my heart.

TATTOO ARTIST: Pity.

CHAC-MOOL: Don't pity me. Pity my mother. She sleeps during the day when la luna has disappeared to the other side of the earth. She can't stand the relentless sun without her, she says. She can't stand the brilliant productiveness of the day.

TATTOO ARTIST: *(Cutting deeper into the skin)* Cover your eyes.

*[CHAC-MOOL, puts a hand over his blindfold, wincing as THE TATTOO ARTIST pierces.]*

CHAC-MOOL: I don't remember if this is the right way to pray. I was never officially taught. It is not allowed. Everything relies on memory. We no longer have any records, nothing is written down. But I heard. I heard about Aztlán and the piercing of the skin as a prayer.

TATTOO ARTIST: You think that's what you're doing, praying? You think this is holy, driving needles into the paper of your flesh? Hanging metal off your eyebrows, your nostrils, your lips?

CHAC-MOOL: I pray as you cut. I pray deep and hard and if it pusses, I pray harder for the pain. In the center of pain, there is always a prayer. A prayer where you get up to leave and a whole army of people is there to carry you away. You aren't alone anymore.

TATTOO ARTIST: Is this what they're teaching kids now in this ghetto?

CHAC-MOOL: They don't know what to teach us no more. We only get what's left over.

TATTOO ARTIST: *(Pulling the blindfold off of CHAC-MOOL)* "What's Left Over."

*[NURSE appears upstage in the corner, spinning a bingo machine.]*

NURSE: B-7!

MAMA SAL *(Entering)*: Bingo!

*[The TATTOO ARTIST rolls CHAC-MOOL over to the "game room," hands him a bingo card and a handful of pinto beans for markers. MAMA SAL and SAVANNAH and CIHUATATEO SOUTH are already busy at the game. The TATTOO ARTIST joins in.]*

NURSE: N-33!

MAMA SAL: By the time I was born, communism had spread all over the world. The Jews and the italianos had already brought it over in boats to América. . . . Are you taking notes, Chaco?

CHAC-MOOL: Yes. (*Indicates "mental ones."*)

MAMA SAL: But it didn't catch on until it went south . . . a Cuba, El Salvador, a Nicaragua. Then the Cold War thawed and all the small commie countries began to dissolve también.

SAVANNAH: Except for Cuba.

MAMA SAL: Of course, except for Cuba. He knows that!

NURSE: G-52.

MAMA SAL: In the melt-down, la política changed completely, and the only thing los gringos cared about was the language you used, the bible you carried, y la lana que tenía en tu pocket.

SAVANNAH: And that you weren't sticking your hand into theirs.

CHAC-MOOL: Is this the official version?

NURSE: N-31.

MAMA SAL: Yes. I was there.

CHAC-MOOL: You're editorializing, 'buela. I just need the facts.

MAMA SAL: There are no facts. It's all just story.

CHAC-MOOL: Fine.

MAMA SAL: Pues, all this born-again-christian-charismatic-apocalyptic-eucalyptus-que-sé-yo gave fresh blood a la práctica de nazism y la plática de—

SAVANNAH: Wetback go home.

NURSE: B-5.

MAMA SAL: Mientras cancer clustered through every Mechicano farm town and low-income urban neighborhood en Gringolandia. Pesticides poured down like rain upon los trabajadores and into the water system.

SAVANNAH: There were no protections. Maquildoras sprang up all along the entire border. Babies were being born without brains. And Mexico became a Puerto Rico overnight.

NURSE: I-24.

MAMA SAL: Los transnational corporate patrones had turned the whole global economy—

SAVANNAH: Unionized jobs, environmental protection, public health and safety standards, a living wage—

MAMA SAL: Into a poisoned alphabet soup.

SAVANNAH: NAFTA, the WTO, GATT, and FTAA.

MAMA SAL: So, as you can already imagine Castro began to despair y tengo que decir que . . . me, too. I figured if Fidel goes, it's all over for the rest of us.

SAVANNAH: It was only a matter of time.

NURSE: G-46.

MAMA SAL: Tu mamá y su cadre were one among many small groups organizing revolts in pueblitos throughout the Southwest. Then Los Independentistas declared Vieques Island free and sovereign—

SAVANNAH: Which inspired an international response, already spear-headed by the Mayas in Chiapas.

CHAC-MOOL: The Zapatistas.

NURSE: O-69.

MAMA-SAL: The Zapatistas took on the PRI and the PAN y hasta el partido de la TORTILLA and the Mexican president got shot and bueno . . . the rest is history. Pan-indigenismo tore América apart and Aztlán was born from the pedacitos.

SAVANNAH: Uniting the dinenfranchised diaspora of Indian-mestizos throughout the Southwest.

MAMA-SAL: We were contentos for awhile—

SAVANNAH: Sort of. Until the revolutionaries told the women, put down your guns and pick up your babies.

MAMA-SAL: ¡Fuera de las calles!

SAVANNAH: And into the kitchens! *(Beat)* Now that's not in the "official" version.

NURSE: I-18.

MAMA SAL: Just like the Gringo and Gachupín before them.

SAVANNAH: And then en masse, all the colored countries—

MAMA SAL: Threw out their jotería.

SAVANNAH: Queers of every color and shade and definition.

MAMA SAL: Y los homos became peregrinos . . . como nomads, just like our Aztec ancestors a thousand years ago.

NURSE: B-11.

SAVANNAH: And we made a kind of gypsy ghetto for ourselves in what was once a thriving desert.

MAMA SAL: They call it "Phoenix," pero entrenos, we name it "Tamoanchán," which means—

CHAC-MOOL: "We seek our home."

MAMA SAL: And the seeking itself became home.

NURSE: 0-75.

CHAC-MOOL: Luna told me they just finished building a strip of casinos along Cuahtemoc Boulevard.

MAMA SAL: Casinos? In Aztlán?

CHAC-MOOL: With neon, glitter and the works.

SAVANNAH: I guess they figure the Indians are making a killing on gambling throughout the Union, why not the Chicanos, too? No one's gonna leave them in the dust of socialism.

MAMA SAL: Wannabes. First it's the sweat lodge, then the sundance. Ni saben su propia tradición indígena.

NURSE: G-47.

MAMA SAL: Still, maybe it's not such a bad thing. Our people is already crazy for the *(Slapping down the last bean)* Bingo!

SAVANNAH: No way! Again!

CHAC-MOOL: Ah, man! And I was almost there!

SAVANNAH: Damn!

*[Black out].*

#### Scene Four

*[CHAC-MOOL, shirtless in overalls, and LUNA can be seen working in a small urban garden (a barely redeemable abandoned lot bordering their building). City noises persist. LUNA digs at the ground with a long-handled hoe.]*

LUNA: After the first rains the planting begins. You burn incense at the four corners of the field. Smoke the seed to be planted with copal and candles. You fast.

CHAC-MOOL: For how long?

LUNA: Seven days is good. I would do seven days.

CHAC-MOOL: Seven days.

LUNA: The first three are the hardest, after that you're high. *(He smiles.)*  
You don't miss eating, really. Then you place candles at the four  
points, the four corners.

CHAC-MOOL: I feel like everybody's gonna know stuff I don't know.

LUNA: You know enough. When you harvest the maíz, the ears are broken  
from the plants in the field. You should bring them back to the house  
in a basket. The ears are then tied together or braided into clusters.  
Then they are hung up to dry, separated by color.

CHAC-MOOL: Blue, black, red, white—

LUNA: When you find twin ears, one is kept for seed, the other offered to  
Tonantzín.

*[MEDEA enters. CHAC-MOOL spies her.]*

CHAC-MOOL: Luna . . .

LUNA: The shelled grain is mixed together again for planting.

MEDEA: Once you're initiated, you have to leave for good. You know that.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom.

MEDEA: Thank you, Luna, for respecting my wishes.

LUNA: I—

CHAC-MOOL: She didn't do nothing, Mom. I asked her to teach me.

MEDEA: And I asked her to wait.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom, I turn thirteen in the Spring.

MEDEA: Everybody seems to think that I have forgotten when your  
birthday is. I know when your birthday is. I was there for the first  
one, remember?

CHAC-MOOL: Why you getting so pissed off?

MEDEA: This is not a game, Chac. A get-back-to-your-raíces-harvest-  
moon-ritual.

LUNA: That's not fair, Medea.

MEDEA: Fair? Who's the real warrior here, Luna? You or me? Show me  
your scars.

*[MEDEA thrusts both arms out at LUNA to reveal a trail of scars  
from shoulder to wrist bone.]*

LUNA: Mine don't show. You win. *(Handing CHAC-MOOL the hoe)*  
Here, Chac. We'll finish later.

CHAC-MOOL: Luna . . .

LUNA: It's okay.

*[She exits.]*

CHAC-MOOL: Mom.

MEDEA: What?

CHAC-MOOL: I'm gonna go back to Aztlán, and make 'em change, Mom.  
You'll see. Like those Cuban kids who went back to Cuba in the 70s  
and became Castro sympathizers.

MEDEA: Who told you about that?

CHAC-MOOL: Bisabuela. Except the revolutionaries, I mean the people  
who call themselves revolutionaries, like my Dad. . . . They're the  
traitors to the real revolution. And I'm gonna—

MEDEA: What?

CHAC-MOOL: . . . Make them see that.

MEDEA: You are?

CHAC-MOOL: You'll see.

MEDEA: Did Luna tell you it was four years? Four years of Sundance until you can even visit us again.

CHAC-MOOL: No.

MEDEA: That's a long time, Chac-Mool.

CHAC-MOOL: I guess I really didn't think about that part.

MEDEA: Your father hasn't asked for you to come back, you know.

CHAC-MOOL: But I thought he wrote you.

MEDEA: He's getting married.

CHAC-MOOL: Oh.

MEDEA: To an Apache. He's thinking of other things right now. He's thinking of her.

CHAC-MOOL: Is she gonna have a baby?

MEDEA: Not yet.

CHAC-MOOL: He's an old man, Mom. I mean, to get married again.

MEDEA: Men are never old, Chac-Mool.

*[MEDEA looks up to the evening sky. CHAC-MOOL watches her.]*

MEDEA: If your father comes to get you and he could come at any time, you have to know for sure what you want. You can't change your mind. He has the right to take you, but only if you agree to go.

CHAC-MOOL: And if I don't go?

MEDEA: You don't get another chance.

CHAC-MOOL: But Mom, I don't know.

MEDEA: I know.

*[Pause. CHAC-MOOL goes to MEDEA. She wraps her arms around him.]*

MEDEA: It's okay, hijo. You don't have to know. Not today. What's this?

CHAC-MOOL: A tattoo. It's Chac-Mool.

MEDEA: Ya lo veo. Why'd you do it?

CHAC-MOOL: I dunno, I thought it'd be cool.

MEDEA: Cool.

CHAC-MOOL: I was preparing myself. A tattoo couldn't hurt no more than getting pierced.

MEDEA: Tattoos last forever.

CHAC-MOOL: So do scars.

MEDEA: Déjame ver. *(She traces the tattoo with her finger.)* You know what that bowl is for . . . there on his belly?

CHAC-MOOL: For sacrificed hearts. Chac-Mool carries them to the gods.

MEDEA: He's the messenger. Entre este mundo y el otro lado.

CHAC-MOOL: And he's a warrior, right? Isn't that what you always told me?

MEDEA: Sí . . .

CHAC-MOOL: What, Mom?

MEDEA: He's a fallen warrior, hijo.

CHAC-MOOL: Well, why would you name me like that, for someone who didn't win?

MEDEA: Winning's not the point. Anyway, it was better than your other name.

CHAC-MOOL: Yeah, but—

MEDEA: But what?

CHAC-MOOL: You never told me that part before is all.

*[MAMA SAL enters.]*

MAMA SAL: Por fin. Somebody's putting a damn hoe in the dirt out here.  
*(She bends down to finger the earth.)* It's more sand than anything else.

CHAC-MOOL: The corn's gonna be blue, Bisabuela.

MAMA SAL: Blue maíz.

CHAC-MOOL: It's an experiment. Everybody says it grows best in Aztlán, but Luna says —

MAMA SAL: Blue corn. Bueno, just don't start putting huevos on top of your enchiladas like they do en Nuevo México.

CHAC-MOOL: Ugh.

MEDEA: That's how they eat 'em in Aztlán.

MAMA SAL: Ni modo. If you can grow corn and you know how to light a fire, you'll never be hungry, Chac-Mool. Never.

*[The sudden blast of salsa music from a small radio. Lots of static. THE PRISON GUARD enters, announces:]*

PRISON GUARD: The Hungry Woman.

*[She grabs MEDEA's hand to escort her over to the hospital. MEDEA hesitates, looks to her son. CHAC-MOOL and MAMA SAL exit.]*

#### Scene Five

*[After depositing MEDEA in her hospital room, GUARD joins NURSE in their on-going dominoes game. MEDEA sits and begins pumping her*

*breasts, one at a time. She puts her index finger below the breast and places her thumb above, her fingers rolling down to meet at the nipple. MEDEA looks for milk at the tip of her nipple, touches it lightly, brings the faint yellow liquid from her fingertips to her lips.]*

MEDEA: It was true what Jasón claimed, that I was unfaithful to him. True, I was in the midst of an insatiable love affair. No, it *did* satiate. Did it begin when my son first put his spoon-sized mouth to my breast? Yes, there our union was consummated, there in the circle of his ruby mouth. A ring of pure animal need taking hold of me. It was a secret Jasón named, stripped to expose us—mother and child—naked and clinging primordial to each other.

*[JASÓN appears, in memory, isolated in his own light. He paces nervously.]*

JASÓN: I want a wife, Medea. It's not natural!

MEDEA: Each night I could hear Jasón circling outside our bedroom window, over and over again, pissing out the boundaries of what he knew he could never enter. Only protect. Defend. Mark as his domain. *(Suddenly)* Nurse! Nurse! They're spilling again. ¡Ay diosa! ¡Apúrate, vieja!

*[NURSE tosses a box of nursing pads onto the bed. Lights fade on JASÓN.]*

NURSE: If you'd leave your pezones alone, you wouldn't be needing these.

*[MEDEA opens up the box, stuffs a pad in each cup of her bra.]*

MEDEA: I never really weaned my son. One day, he just stopped wanting it. It was peer pressure. He was three years old. I call him over to me. "Mijito," I say, "¿quieres chichi?" He is on his way out to play. I remember his playmate, that little Rudy boy at the doorway. And I show Chac-Mool my breast. His eyes pass over me. Lizard eyes. Cold. "Not now, Mom," he says. Like a man. I knew then that he already wanted to be away from me, to grow up to suck on some other woman's milk-less tit.

NURSE: Took it personally, did you?



MEDEA: There's nothing more personal than the love between a mother and child. You wouldn't know. You are childless, a dull mule who can't reproduce. I will always be more woman than you.

NURSE: I was sterilized. Puerto Rico. 1965.

MEDEA: *(Suddenly)* Boriquén is not free! Puerto Rico does not remember your name. Boriquén forgets her faithful daughter.

NURSE: No me insultes con tus palabras.

MEDEA: No te insulto. Te honro. *(Slumping back onto the bed)* Ay! I'm getting as old and as stupid as you.

NURSE: I'm stupid!? You're talking about me?

MEDEA: ¿Qué crees? You see somebody else in this room right now besides us loony tunes y ese maricón p'alla? *(The Guard glares back at her.)*

NURSE: I'm not the lunatic. I can leave here. 3 pm every day. It's a job.

MEDEA: Then get to work and change the goddamn station. I'm sick of that salsa shit!

*[GUARD turns up volume. It's pure static now.]*

MEDEA: *(To GUARD)* Cabrona!

NURSE: ¡Ya basta! ¡Apágala! *(GUARD turns off the radio.)* Y no le haces caso. You seen her girlfriend? ¡B-u-u-u-cha!

*[Sound of phone ringing, ringing, ringing. MEDEA rushes to the mirror excitedly, finger-combs her hair, composes herself, then speaks into the mirror as if on a telephone. JASÓN again appears in memory.]*

MEDEA: There's no need for name-calling, Jasón.

JASÓN: I did return your call.

MEDEA: Yes, thank you.

JASÓN: Well, what is it?

MEDEA: I was wondering about my status.

JASÓN: Your status? I thought this was about the boy.

MEDEA: You will abandon his mother again?

JASÓN: I didn't—

MEDEA: Technically I still hold the right to return. My land—

JASÓN: Is in my custody.

MEDEA: Yes.

JASÓN: You want to come back then.

MEDEA: I want to know my status.

JASÓN: That's simple. Give up the dyke. Nothing's changed.

MEDEA: Her name is Luna, Jasón.

JASÓN: Yes, Luna. How could I forget?

MEDEA: And your marriage?

JASÓN: My marriage is another matter.

MEDEA: It matters to me.

JASÓN: It does . . . ?

MEDEA: . . . Yes.

*[Lights fade on JASÓN as the phone begins to ring again. MEDEA holds her ears against the sound.]*

## Scene Six

*[The ringing is drowned out by the sounds of a tenement basement: clanking old water pipes, the exhausted rotation of aging industrial-*

*sized washing machines, the dripping fan of an air conditioner circa 1970.]*

PRISON GUARD: *(Announcing from her dominoes table)* A weekday evening in Phoenix. One year ago, again.

*[S/he turns back to the game. Lights crossfade to LUNA in the basement laundry room of the apartment building. She and SAVANNAH fold clothes.]*

LUNA: I come down here just to get away from Medea sometimes. I sit up on top of the dryer and my thighs stay warm in winter. In the summer, it's cooler here in the darkness.

SAVANNAH: Yeah, a regular paradise down here.

LUNA: I feel like I can breathe better. I got all my sculpting stuff down here, locked up in that cupboard. I'm just waiting to save up for enough clay to put my hands onto something. The rest of the stuff in there is mostly household tools. Sometimes I open it just to see all the glass jars of nails and screws all lined up on the shelves and my hand drill and wrenches all hanging real neat. She never comes in to mess things up. She never knows where a hammer is or a Phillips. She doesn't need to. She lives on beauty alone.

SAVANNAH: Rent still gotta get paid by somebody.

LUNA: Upstairs it's pure chaos. It's like I can't stop moving, working, cleaning. I hear my voice and it's my mother's voice, nagging. I'm nagging like a frustrated housewife. I bitch. I bitch about the laundry that I never stop doing, the dishes that never stop piling up, the newspapers . . . news from the rest of the world, always a dozen days old, recycled magazines, 4th-class mailers never opened. All she does is read and discard, read and discard right where she finished the last line of print. The couch, the toilet, the kitchen table, the bed. Her shoes and stockings and bra come off right there, too. She says she doesn't give a damn if I feel exploited. She says who asked you to be a housewife? "¿Quién te manda? I want a lover, not a vieja." I think what she really wants is a man. I hear her on the phone negotiating with that self-conscious lilt in her voice. I didn't even like it when she used to "lilt" me.

SAVANNAH: Who she talking to?

LUNA: I don't know. Friends. Enemies. She says it's for Chac. That's all she says.

SAVANNAH: Luna, stop waiting on her.

LUNA: I can't. I feel like I can't breathe like all the shit in the house, the plates with the stuck-on egg, the chorizo grease in the skillet, the spilled powder milk and crumbs on the floor, the unmade bed, the towels on the floor of every room in the house . . . that all of it is conspiring against me, suckin' up all the air in that apartment.

SAVANNAH: You trippin' bad.

LUNA: Maybe I am. *(Putting a clean tee shirt to her face, breathing in)*  
No smell sweeter.

SAVANNAH: What's that?

LUNA: Liquid Tide.

SAVANNAH: Imported?

LUNA: Terrible for the environment, but who gives a shit about the environment here.

SAVANNAH: Nobody I know.

LUNA: It's such a clean smell. The cotton. I put my nose inside here and everything is organized. Everything is sweet and well-placed.

*[MEDEA enters. SAVANNAH spies her first.]*

SAVANNAH: Don't look now, here comes Beauty's Beast.

MEDEA: Sniffing clothes again?

LUNA: Do you want something, Medea?

MEDEA: Oh, am I interrupting?

SAVANNAH: No, I was just leaving.

MEDEA: Not on my account, I hope.

SAVANNAH: See you tonight, Luna.

LUNA: See ya. *(SAVANNAH exits.)*

MEDEA: What was that all about?

LUNA: What do you want, Medea?

MEDEA: Why are you hiding from me?

LUNA: I'm not hiding from you.

MEDEA: No? Then what's this?

*[MEDEA stretches out a long strand of hair in front of LUNA's face.]*

LUNA: What? It's hair.

MEDEA: It's not my hair.

LUNA: Okay . . . so?

MEDEA: It's not yours . . . too coarse. Whose is it? I found it in our bed.

LUNA: I don't know whose hair it is.

MEDEA: Are you having an affair?

LUNA: That's too easy, Medea! You can't get rid of me that easy.

MEDEA: Answer me.

LUNA: Look, there are forty-five apartments in this project, Medea, housing every kind of queen and queer and party animal in Phoenix. I don't know who puts their clothes in the dryer ahead of me and got their pelito stuck onto our sábanas.

MEDEA: Take the whine out of your voice.

LUNA: I'm not whining.

MEDEA: You're weak. You don't love me. You just follow rules. You're afraid of me. Do you think that makes me feel safe?

LUNA: No, I imagine it doesn't.

*[She gathers up the clothes basket.]*

MEDEA: *(Grabbing LUNA)* Don't you give up on me. ¿M'oyes?

LUNA: *(Breaking her hold)* I'm getting out of here.

MEDEA: Where to? To see one of your "girlfriends?"

LUNA: Yes, to tell you the truth I miss them a lot right now. Just thought I'd drink a coupla beers with some plain ole unequivocal tortilleras.

MEDEA: Fight for me, cabrona. You're worse than a man.

LUNA: You oughta know.

*[LUNA drops the clothes basket and exits into the garden where MAMA SAL and CHAC-MOOL sit surrounded by the noises of the city and a heavy evening smog. A mournful animal cry is heard. They all stop for a moment at the sound. CHAC-MOOL and MAMA SAL wait for LUNA to say something. She looks at them, then exits without a word. The cry is heard again.]*

MAMA SAL: Gives you chicken skin, doesn't it?

CHAC-MOOL: Sounds like a baby crying.

MAMA SAL: They moan like that when they're lonely for their machos. *(Pause)* I had a cat like that once. She was wanting it so bad, she clawed a hole through the screen door to get out. In no time, I had a small mountain of gatitos in my closet. Están locas when they're in heat. *[The cry sounds again.]*

MAMA SAL: She got such a lonesome llanto. Es el llanto de La Llorona.

CHAC-MOOL: La Llorona never scared me.

MAMA SAL: No? Not even when you was a little esquincle?

CHAC-MOOL: No, I felt sorry for her, not scared.

MAMA SAL: Pues a mí, me asustaba mucho ella.

CHAC-MOOL: I remember hearing her out there in the cañon when I was real little, right before we left Aztlán. The wind would kick up 'bout the same time every night. Her voice was inside the wind. I'd hear my Mom get up, go check the windows and doors, then go back to sleep. It sounded like the whole canyon was cryin'. *(Pause)* I felt like she was telling me her side of the story, like I was the only one that heard it like that.

MAMA SAL: Maybe you were.

*[CHAC-MOOL watches the sky. The sounds of the city in the distance: sirens, screeching cars, low-flying police helicopters.]*

CHAC-MOOL: They're fighting all the time now, you know, my mom and Luna.

MAMA SAL: Yo sé. A veces puede ser muy sangrona tu mamá.

CHAC-MOOL: What?

MAMA SAL: Don't make a mother choose between blood and love.

#### Scene Seven

*[The local bar. "Crazy" plays on the juke box. SAVANNAH and TATTOO ARTIST are dancing a slow number. LUNA watches the dance floor, nursing a beer.]*

LUNA: Turn off that white-girl shit!

*[SAVANNAH crosses to LUNA.]*

SAVANNAH: Let's go now, Luna. It's almost closing.

LUNA: Shit, in Aztlán the night would barely be starting right now. In Tamoachán everything closes up tight as a virgin's thighs.

SAVANNAH: You're drunk.

LUNA: I'm not drunk. I'm bitter.

SAVANNAH: You're talking like a drunk.

LUNA: And you're just an old lesbian prude like the rest of our generation. All that twelve-stepping and disease in the 90s turned us into a buncha deadbeats. Let's go to la taquería, I need to soak up the tequila.

SAVANNAH: Nothing's open now.

LUNA: The taquería is.

SAVANNAH: Which taquería?

LUNA: The one that leaves all the jalapeños out on the table. St. Josie's or whatever its name is. You know how they have those sweet little plastic bowls in pink and yellow and turquoise on the table filled with jalapeños floating around with slices of carrots. Shit, the carrots are as hot as the chiles after floating around so long in the same juices.

SAVANNAH: You see you got to be careful who you float around with. You ready?

LUNA: Wait. I have to go to the head. *(She crosses to a bathroom stall.)* Hold the door will you, baby? The lock's busted. *(SAVANNAH does.)* This place is such a dive. You ever known a nice lesbian bar? What did gay liberation ever do for colored dykes? We might as well be back all closeted-up like Mama Sal's stories of "the life" half-century ago, sharing the dance floor with drag queens and ho's, waiting for the cops to come in and bust our butts. This place is a dump.

SAVANNAH: You wanna talk about it, Luna?

LUNA: What? About what a dump this place is? Shit. No toilet paper. Pass me a paper towel, baby.

SAVANNAH: *(Checking the dispenser)* There isn't any.

LUNA: I hate drip drying. You got anything?

SAVANNAH: *(Takes a Kleenex from her bag, passes it to her.)* Girl, here.

LUNA Thanks. I *am* talking about it, talking about all the things Medea says every time I try to bring her to a joint like this.

*[LUNA comes out of the stall. SAVANNAH half-blocks the door with her body.]*

LUNA: What? What is it, Savannah?

SAVANNAH: Luna, I'm tired.

LUNA: Well, let's go —

SAVANNAH: I'm tired of seeing someone I love being played. Medea wants out, Luna. The writing's on the fuckin' bathroom wall.

LUNA: ¿Y . . . qué?

SAVANNAH: And I want . . . in.

LUNA: Ah, Savannah. Don't tell me that.

SAVANNAH: How long have you known me?

LUNA: I don't know. A long time.

SAVANNAH: Five years.

LUNA: Okay.

SAVANNAH: I'm here when you want it.

LUNA: "It." Like that?

SAVANNAH: Like that.

LUNA: But you're my buddy.

SAVANNAH: Fuck your "buddy."

LUNA: I don't wanna!

*[They both bust up. SAVANNAH pins LUNA up against the wall.]*

LUNA: Savannah, I —

*[SAVANNAH kisses her deeply.]*

LUNA: She's always been jealous of you.

SAVANNAH: I know. She ain't all crazy.

LUNA: C'mon. I gotta get home.

*[They wrap their arms around each other's shoulders and sing "Crazy" as they exit.]*

# Scene Eight

*[MEDEA lies on top of her bed still dressed after a night drinking alone.]*

MEDEA: You once thought me beautiful, Lunita. My hair the silky darkness of a raven's, the cruelty of Edgar Allen Poe's own, I know. I know you think me cruel. But you must like it, in a way, the cry of the dead seeping through floorboards, all my angry ancestors incensed by something you haven't figured out yet: your seamless face, the natural blush on your peach-down cheeks, a mamá who loved you, if only too much.

*[LUNA enters, quietly removes her shoes, then realizes Medea is still awake.]*

LUNA: Medea.

MEDEA : Oh, good. It's you.

LUNA: Medea, why are you still up?

MEDEA Take my body, baby.

LUNA: Were you waiting up for me?

MEDEA: I don't want to watch it descend into the earth.

LUNA: C'mon, let me get you into the bed.

*[LUNA stumbles across an empty fifth of tequila.]*

LUNA: Shit.

MEDEA: Gravity, fucking gravity.

LUNA: How much did you drink?

MEDEA: The earth has become my enemy.

LUNA: I'm gonna get you some aspirins. *(MEDEA stops her.)*

MEDEA: I don't even remember being nineteen. Where you been, amor?  
You shouldn't leave me alone so much.

LUNA: You never want to come with me.

MEDEA: I don't like being alone. It's not . . . safe. I don't trust myself.

LUNA: Let's get your clothes off.

*[LUNA starts to undress MEDEA.]*

MEDEA: I used to have spectacular thighs. Remember, Lunita?

LUNA: You still do.

MEDEA: Remember how I'd wrap my thighs around your boy's face.  
*(Holding her face)* How come I called it a boy's face when you're so female?

LUNA: *(Pulling away)* Just macha, Medea.

MEDEA: A boy's hunger, that's what I saw there in those dark eyes resting between my legs. Luna, why would you look at me that way?

LUNA: What way, amor?

MEDEA: Like you didn't have what I had, like you didn't have nalgas, senos mas firmes que yo, a pussy . . . that perfect triangle of black hair . . .

LUNA: I'm just a jota, baby.

MEDEA: That's a stupid response.

LUNA: Don't be cruel.

MEDEA: I'm not cruel, I'm dying. Dying to make sense of it. How does it start? How does it vanish? How is it you used to drink from me as if you yourself didn't taste the same coppered richness when you brought your own bloody fingers to your mouth. As if when you drew a woman's shape with your sculptor's hands, you didn't find the same diosa curves and valleys when you bathed yourself each day. Eres mujer. But for you, falling in love is to think nothing of yourself, your own body. In the beginning all was me.

LUNA: Yes, in the beginning.

MEDEA: And now?

LUNA: It's different now. You get used to each other. It's . . . normal.

MEDEA: I loathe normal. At night, I would lay awake and wonder, how is it she could worship me so and not be banished? But then you were already banished. And now, that's the road I walk, too.

LUNA: Medea, that was seven years ago.

MEDEA: I had always imagined we'd return to Aztlán one day with my son grown. I thought they'd change their mind, say it was all a mistake.

LUNA: Medea, did you talk to Jasón tonight?

MEDEA: Yes.

LUNA: What does he want?

MEDEA: Chac-Mool.

LUNA: When?

MEDEA: Now. Tomorrow. No sé. Soon. He's sending custody papers.  
She's barren.

LUNA: What?

MEDEA: The virgin bride. Está vacía.

LUNA: He's still going to marry her? (MEDEA nods.) Damn, he must  
love her.

MEDEA: She can still fuck, Luna.

LUNA: I'm . . . sorry.

[MEDEA starts to get up.]

LUNA: Don't. C'mere . . . Medea.

MEDEA: He wants my boy.

LUNA: I know.

MEDEA: I know Jasón, he won't stop 'til he has him.

LUNA: Medea, come back to bed. Please.

[MEDEA goes to her. LUNA brings MEDEA into the bed, holds her.  
Lighting transition. LUNA makes love to MEDEA with her mouth.]

LUNA: Creation Myth. In the place where the spirits live, there was once  
a woman who cried constantly for food. She had mouths everywhere.  
In her wrists, elbows, ankles, knees. . . . And every mouth was hungry  
y bien gritona. To comfort la pobre, the spirits flew down and began  
to make grass and flowers from the dirt-brown of her skin. From her

greñas, they made forests. From those ojos negros, pools and springs.  
And from the slopes of her shoulders and senos, they made mountains y  
valles. At last she will be satisfied, they thought. Pero, just like before,  
her mouths were everywhere, biting and moaning . . . opening and  
snapping shut. They would never be filled. (Pause) Sometimes por la  
noche, when the wind blows, you can hear her crying for food. \*

[After sex]

LUNA: Tell me who you were with him.

MEDEA: It still interests you?

LUNA: Yes.

MEDEA: Why?

LUNA: It gives me something . . . somehow.

MEDEA: What?

LUNA: I don't know. That I have you that way, like he did. But different.  
Knowing he wasn't—

MEDEA: . . . Enough?

LUNA: Yes.

MEDEA: You haven't changed.

[They kiss again.]

LUNA: Some days I think I have been with you forever. Seven years . . .  
forever. Chac-Mool is our measuring stick, like the pencil scratches  
on the kitchen wall, marking out our time together. When that last  
mark passed the height of my own head, I thought . . . "where do we  
go from here?" No growing left to do. I can hardly remember being  
with other women.

MEDEA: I remember. You being with other women.

\*From *The Hungry Woman: Myths and Legends of the Aztecs*. John Bierhorst, ed. New York:  
William Morrow & Co, 1984.

LUNA: So, do we just go back to where we started? Do we return to zero?

MEDEA: Zero. A good place to be. I wish I had the guts.

LUNA: *(Tries to bring MEDEA into her arms again, MEDEA resists.)*  
Medea.

MEDEA: It doesn't matter now. I am the last one to make this journey. My tragedy will be an example to all women like me. Vain women who only know to be the beloved. Such an example I shall be that no woman will dare to transgress those boundaries again. You, you and your kind, have no choice. You were born to be a lover of women, to grow hands that could transform a woman like those blocks of faceless stone you turn into diosas. I, my kind, am a dying breed of female. I am the last one to make this crossing, the border has closed behind me. There will be no more room for transgressions.

#### Scene Nine

*[MEDEA rises from the bed, slips on a black dress. LUNA observes.]*

MEDEA: Help me. *(Indicating her zipper)*

*[LUNA doesn't. The PRISON GUARD enters, zips up MEDEA's dress and hands LUNA a small stack of letters.]*

PRISON GUARD: A few months later. It is stifling hot in exile. *(S/he exits.)*

LUNA: Where are you going? . . . To him?

MEDEA: Yes.

*[MEDEA arranges her face in the mirror.]*

LUNA: Why are you courting his illusions, Medea?

MEDEA: What illusions?

LUNA: That you're not a lesbian.

MEDEA: I'm not?

LUNA: You know lesbianism is a lot like virginity, you can't recycle it. You don't get to say oops, sorry, I changed my mind, I didn't mean those seven years in her bed.

MEDEA: What do you want me to do, shove it in his face?

LUNA: Yeah. I want you to shove it in his face. I want you to tell him, "¿Recuerdas, Jasón? The mother of your son is a dyke. She licks panocha and loves it."

MEDEA: So, he can take my son away for good.

LUNA: Oh, he doesn't just want the "Warrior-son," he wants it all: "Virgin-bride," "Aztec-goddess. . . ." Or can't you read between the lines?

*[She throws the letters to her. They fall on the floor between them.]*

MEDEA: Where did you find them?

LUNA: Where you left them.

MEDEA: You rummaged.

LUNA: Not much.

MEDEA: I'll keep my son any way I have to.

LUNA: That's what I'm afraid of.

MEDEA: ¿No ves? You've seen the letters. I still have allies there. People don't forget so easy. I'm building a bridge back. For both of us. I'll send for you.

LUNA: I don't think so, Medea. I'm not the revolutionary they have in mind.

MEDEA: Luna.

LUNA: I don't know what's going on with you. It's like the thought of losing Chac . . . no kid between us . . . and we got nothing to disguise what we are to each other. Maybe for you, Chac-Mool somehow makes us less lesbian.



MEDEA: Maybe.

LUNA: Well, it's too late, Medea. You can't go back there. I know your secrets. Your secrets have been safe with me. All of them, like sacred relics, carefully guarded. I watch them spill out of you in our love-making and I tell no one. I don't even tell you what I can testify to in every sheet you drench with your desire. Let me remind you of the first time. The magic. The disappearing act. My hands vanishing inside you. Your grito. "Where are your hands?" you cry. They move inside of you and you thank me with your eyes. For this, I forgive you everything. And we start another day. You've changed, Medea. You don't know it yet, but you won't ever be able to go back to Aztlán or to any man. You've been ruined by me. My hands have ruined you.

*[There is a pause. MEDEA picks up the letters.]*

MEDEA: I'm not you, Luna. I wasn't born that way, the way you like to brag. I'm just a woman worried about keeping her son. You act so damn free. You're not free.

LUNA: No, I live in the fuckin' colony of my so-called liberators.

MEDEA: You don't even know your own prison. I'm right in your face everyday. We sleep together, eat together, raise my child together, and some half-man writes me a few lies and you give it all your attention. I'm not even in the equation, except as the premio at the end of your contest with him. You can't beat Jasón, Luna. Isn't this queer ghetto proof of that?

LUNA: Tell yourself that. I don't want to beat him.

MEDEA: No?

LUNA: No.

MEDEA: You're lying. First to yourself, then to me. When you stopped wanting to beat him, you stopped wanting me.

LUNA: That's not true.

MEDEA: Now he's back in our lives and you're on top of me again like a teenage boy.

LUNA: Are you complaining?

MEDEA: Yes. I want to be left alone.

LUNA: . . . With your thoughts?

MEDEA: Yes.

LUNA: They betray me.

MEDEA: They betray my unhappiness.

LUNA: With me.

MEDEA: With all of this . . . failure.

LUNA: You hate it here that much.

MEDEA: That much. But I promise you, I hate my countrymen even more.

LUNA: He can hurt us, Medea.

MEDEA: Yo sé.

LUNA: He's already hurting us. You don't flirt with power. You fight it.

*[LUNA exits and crosses out the front of the building where MAMA SAL sits smoking her pipe. Upstage MEDEA continues dressing: nylons, make-up, heels, etc.]*

MAMA SAL: In a hurry?

LUNA: I . . . no. You got a cigarette?

MAMA SAL: *(Feigned innocence)* Moi?

LUNA: Give me a cigarette, Mama Sal.

*[She does. LUNA lights up.]*

MAMA SAL: ¿Pa' dónde ibas?

LUNA: I dunno. Out. Away.

*[LUNA paces. Smokes.]*

MAMA SAL: When you're a girl, hija, and a Mexican, you learn purty quick that you got only one shot at being a woman and that's being a mother.

LUNA: Tell Medea. She's the mother, not me.

MAMA SAL: You go from a daughter to mother, and there's nothing in-between. That's the law of our people written como los diez commandments on the metate stone from the beginning of all time.

LUNA: Well, that ain't my story.

MAMA SAL: Exacto. You go and change the law. You leave your mother and go out and live on your own.

LUNA: That's right.

MAMA SAL: You learn how to tear down walls and put them up again. Hasta tu propia casa, you build with your own hands. Still, you can't forget your mother, even when you try to.

LUNA: Sal, I—

MAMA SAL: You search for a woman. You find many womans. But still you feel your daughter-hands are sleeping. You meet Medea—

LUNA: Medea.

MAMA SAL: And your whole body wakes up to the empty places inside her. You twist and deform yourself to fill her. You turn out crooked. *(Pause)* Leave her, Luna. She's not the woman for you.

LUNA: She's your granddaughter.

MAMA SAL: Leave her, te digo. I say that out of love for you both.

*[LUNA tosses the cigarette to the ground and exits.]*

## Scene Ten

*[MEDEA, in black silk dress, stands before the altar of Coatlicue. She burns copal.]*

MEDEA:

Madre, Coatlicue.  
I want to know your sweet fury.  
Teach me your seductive magic,  
your beauty and rage.  
Make Jasón small and weak.  
Make him shiver  
within the folds of my serpent skin.

He feared me before.  
Help me make him remember why.

*[Lighting transition. JASÓN appears. He stares out a window. Moonlight bathes his face.]*

JASÓN: There was a time when I remembered being no one or as close to no one as possible. As no one as any Mexican man on that midnight train passing through Puebla. A full moon. A lonesomeness so full, so complete.

*[MEDEA crosses to him.]*

MEDEA: Te da tanta nostalgia being with me?

JASÓN: A little, I guess. I'm glad to see you face-to-face. The letters . . . your words are very persuasive.

MEDEA: I was a writer once, too, remember?

JASÓN: Of course.

*[Jasón crosses to a table, unwraps the plastic off a glass.]*

JASÓN: Drink?

MEDEA: Yes, thank you.

JASÓN: Sorry, the glassware's not too fancy.

MEDEA: Border motels.

JASÓN: Yeah, I'm sorry. I didn't know where else to meet. Somewhere out of the public eye.

MEDEA: I'm a big girl, Jasón. I can take care of myself.

JASÓN: Obviously. Still, you certainly dressed for the occasion.

MEDEA: It bothers you?

JASÓN: No, I wouldn't say "bother." "Torment" is the word I'd use.

*[She laughs.]*

JASÓN: *(Enjoying it)* Are you trying to torment me, Medea?

MEDEA: Don't flatter yourself, Jasón. I wore this dress for myself. That's something few of my lovers have ever understood. The clothes are for me. The feel of silk against my thigh, the caress of a satin slip over my breasts, the scent of musk when I bury my own face into the pillow of my arm.

JASÓN: You should live on an island.

MEDEA: No, occasionally I need someone to accuse me of tormenting them with my beauty. Do you find me beautiful, Jasón?

JASÓN: You know I do.

MEDEA: Still?

JASÓN: Yes. Very.

*[She looks hard at him for a moment.]*

MEDEA: You're kind. Nos 'tamos poniendo viejos ¿no, Jasón?

JASÓN: No tanto. You look fine . . . good for your age.

MEDEA: Yes. My age. My eyelids—

JASÓN: You've got beautiful eyes. I always told you that.

MEDEA: Obsidian jewels you called them.

JASÓN: I did.

MEDEA: It's different for a man. They're young at fifty. Sixty, even. Look at you, marrying a woman a third of your age.

JASÓN: I guess I—

MEDEA: I'm jealous of her, Jasón. Your new young love.

JASÓN: You're jealous?

MEDEA: My vanity is no secret. In an odd way, I grew to kind of rely on your devotion, safely distanced as it was. I derived comfort out of knowing that, even in my exile, you thought of me. You did think of me, didn't you?

JASÓN: At one time . . . daily.

MEDEA: No longer?

JASÓN: One doesn't stop thinking of you, Medea. The thoughts merely grow less . . . insistent.

*[MEDEA smiles. JASÓN takes hold of her hand.]*

JASÓN: Medea, why the sudden change of heart?

MEDEA: I want what's best for my son. He'll be forgotten here in this ghetto.

JASÓN: I'm . . . sorry.

MEDEA: Are you?

JASÓN: You don't have to stay here either, you know.

Act I

MEDEA: I don't know that.

JASÓN: You're not a lesbian, Medea, for chrissake. This is a masquerade.

MEDEA: A seven-year-old one?

JASÓN: I'm not saying that you have no feelings for the relationship,  
but . . . you're not a Luna.

MEDEA: (*Sadly*) No, I'm not.

JASÓN: I want you to reconsider.

*[There is a pause.]*

MEDEA: After the War . . . before Chac-Mool, I felt completely naked in  
the world. No child to clothe me in his thoughtless need, to clothe the  
invading lack of purpose in my life. I can't go back to that.

JASÓN: You don't have to.

MEDEA: Then I wasn't mistaken?

JASÓN: No.

*[He takes her into his arms. They kiss and begin to make love.]*

## ACT II

### Prelude

*[Pre-Columbian Meso-American music. In the semi-darkness, the  
stone image of Coatlicue becomes illuminated. The CIHUATATEO  
stand sentinel beside it.]*

CIHUATATEO EAST: This is how all nights begin and end.

*[MEDEA emerges from the icon as the "living COATLICUE."  
She is uncombed and wears only a black slip. CIHUATATEO  
EAST wraps an apron around MEDEA's waist and CIHUATATEO  
NORTH hands her a broom. MEDEA begins sweeping.]*

CIHUATATEO EAST: A long time ago, before the Aztec war of the flowers,  
before war, Coatlicue, la mera madre diosa, was sweeping on top of  
the mountain, Coatepec, when she encounters two delicate plumitas.  
She stuffs the feathers into her apron, thinking later she might weave  
them into a cloth for her altar. But suddenly, secretly, the feathers  
begin to gestate there by her womb, y de repente, Coatlicue, goddess  
of Creation and Destruction, becomes pregnant.

Now, Coatlicue es una anciana, bien beyond the age of fertility, so  
when her daughter, Coyolxauhqui, learns of the boy-to-be-born,  
traición is what she smells entre los cuatros vientos.

*[LUNA appears as COYOLXAUHQUI.]*

COYOLXAUHQUI: You betrayed me, Madre.

CIHUATATEO EAST: So, along with her 'manitos, "The Four Hundred Stars," Coyolxauhqui conspires to kill the Mother-god.

CIHUATATEO CORO:  
The light of the son  
will eclipse your daughter's glow  
hold you under fire  
in the heat of his embrace

*[The birth of the Aztec sun-god, Huitzilopotchli, is enacted. CHAC-MOOL as the sun-god emerges, in full Aztec regalia, from the icon/ woman, COATLICUE.]*

CIHUATATEO EAST: Pero, Huitzilopotchli, that's him, el diosito inside Coatlicue, he ain't gonna punk out on his mami. A hummingbird buzzes by and gives the little sun-god the 4-1-1 about the planned matricide, and the vatito is quick to respond.

HUITZILOPOTCHI: Cuenta conmigo, jefa. I got it all under control.

*[Brother and sister, HUITZILOPOTCHLI and COYOLXAUQUI, as the gods of day and night, battle for dominion over the heavens.]*

CIHUATATEO EAST: With filero flying, Huitzilopotchli chops off his sister's head.

HUITZILOPOTCHLI: Sas!

CIHUATATEO CORO:  
Y sus senos  
las manos  
las piernas  
los dedos

*[COYOLXAUHQUI is dismembered.]*

HUITZILOPOTCHLI: Is this my sister's moonface I hold bleeding between my hands? I exile you foreign and female into that vast hole of darkness that is your home.

*[He tosses "the head" into the heavens. They all watch the moon rise into the night sky.]*

COATLICUE: La Luna!

CIHUATATEO EAST: This is how all nights begin and end.

### Scene One

*[The psychiatric ward. The PRISON GUARD stacks dominoes in the corner. MEDEA stands at the barred window. The shadow of the bars from the moon's reflection crosses her face. NURSE observes her.]*

NURSE: The moon was beautiful out tonight, did you see it?

MEDEA: No Luna. Ya no Luna.

NURSE: Whadya say, honey?

*[MEDEA does not respond. She cranes her neck to feel more of the moon on her face.]*

NURSE: *(To Guard)* Bendita. She's been walking around in a funk all day. The girlfriend didn't come.

MEDEA: No Luna.

It was a moonless night. Black sky. There had to be stars, but I don't remember any. All four hundred vanished into thin mountain air. And the brother-god was born back into our family, returned a warrior decorated. I remember the decoration, the medal leaving an imprint in my cheek when he brought me to his chest and squeezed. He taught me how to squeeze, not too hard, just the right amount of pressure, the right curve in my little girl's palm.

At first, when he opened his zipper, it was like "Let's make a deal!" "What's behind the curtain?" And what was behind the curtain was grown-up and a mystery machine, the way it could inflate and deflate just by thinking he told me, he could think it hard and tried to teach me hard thoughts, too. And Mami said . . .

*[Lighting transition. NURSE becomes MEDEA's mother in memory. Their lines overlap one another at each slash.]*

NURSE: Wait on your brother. Give your brother whatever he wants.

MEDEA: Shoes shined, shirts ironed, money from your torito piggy bank/  
for putas and pisto.

NURSE: Give him whatever he/ needs.

MEDEA: Cuz he's the only man in the/ family.

NURSE: Your father isn't worth two cents,/ not mean enough.

MEDEA: Just a llorón who don't know how to cheat a little/ to make a  
little extra.

NURSE: Be good to your brother, give him/ whatever he wants.

MEDEA: Cuz God has been good to us bringing him home in one piece/  
and not crazy.

NURSE: When the rest of the barrio boys are coming home in burlap bags.

MEDEA: And stiff canvas flags folded into triangles.

*[MEDEA lets out a deep wail. NURSE goes to her.]*

MEDEA: Saturday is almost over and she didn't come, Nurse.

NURSE: She musta been otherwise occupied.

*[PRISON GUARD announces.]*

PRISON GUARD: "Otherwise occupied." Luna is arrested at the border.

*[NURSE escorts MEDEA offstage. GUARD crosses to LUNA, who appears in a kind of sack dress, bare legs and feet. S/he ties LUNA's hands behind her back with the black bandanna, sits LUNA down in the "interrogation room." A huge spotlight glares into LUNA's face.]*

BORDER GUARD: Why did you cross the border?

LUNA: I was on my way to her.

BORDER GUARD: To whom?

LUNA: I got distracted.

BORDER GUARD: Whom were you to meet?

LUNA: No one. I was visiting the sick. It was a Saturday.

BORDER GUARD: Today is Monday.

LUNA: There was a song on the bus. It was her song. *(Half-singing)*

*"Soy como el viento que corre  
alrededor d'este mundo . . ."*

BORDER GUARD: But you hadn't a work permit.

LUNA: I was denied one.

BORDER GUARD: You knew it was illegal.

LUNA: Yes.

BORDER GUARD: Then—

LUNA: I longed for Aztlán.

BORDER GUARD: Why did you break into the museum?

LUNA: I wanted to free them.

BORDER GUARD: Who?

LUNA: Those little female figures. Those tiny breasts and thick thighs,  
those ombligos y panzas de barro.

BORDER GUARD: Who were they to you, these figurines?

LUNA: Ancient little diosas, the size of children's toys. They were trapped,  
sir, behind the museum glass. They belonged to us. I remember them  
from my youth, going to visit them in my Catholic school uniform.  
I wanted to free my little sisters, trapped by history. I broke the glass.

BORDER GUARD: You stole them?

LUNA: No, m'am, I wanted only to hold them in my hands and feel what they had to teach me about their maker.

BORDER GUARD: And . . . ?

LUNA: We were not as we are now. We were not always fallen from the mountain.

BORDER GUARD: (*Announcing*) "Before the Fall. Mexican Pussy."

[*BORDER GUARD unties the "handcuffs" and hands LUNA a mirror.*]

BORDER GUARD: Ten, take a look.

[*Música. Amalia Mendoza. LUNA brings the mirror up between her legs, studies herself. MEDEA enters, then hides as if in a game.*]

MEDEA: (*Singing*)  
"Háblanme montes y valles  
Grítanme piedras del campo . . ."

LUNA: (*Spying her*) Hey!

MEDEA: Don't stop.

LUNA: You busted me.

MEDEA: (*Very playful*) Nah, go on with what you were doing.

LUNA: I can't. Not with you watching me.

MEDEA: What were you doing?

LUNA: Seeing.

MEDEA: That's my mirror you're holding.

LUNA: I wanted to see through your reflection.

MEDEA: See what?

LUNA: What I got.

MEDEA: You don't know.

LUNA: No.

MEDEA: (*Going to her*) I can tell you what you got.

LUNA: I want to know for myself.

MEDEA: Well . . .

LUNA: Well, what?

MEDEA: What do you got?

LUNA: Hair. God, lots of hair all over the place. Unruly hair. Undisciplined hair. Pelo de rebeldía. (*MEDEA smiles, kneels at LUNA's feet.*) I have a Mexican pussy, did you know that? Definitely a Mexican pussy.

MEDEA: How's that?

LUNA: Mexican women always hide our private parts.

MEDEA: I'm Mexican.

LUNA: Yeah, but you're . . . different. Less hair.

MEDEA: Mas india.

LUNA: Prouder, more . . . available.

MEDEA: I don't know about that.

LUNA: I love your pussy.

MEDEA: I love your mouth.

[*MEDEA kisses her.*]

LUNA: My private parts are a battleground. I see struggle there before I see beauty.

MEDEA: I see beauty.

LUNA: You have to dig for it. You have to be committed.

MEDEA: I'm committed.

LUNA: You weren't supposed to see me doing this.

*[MEDEA takes the mirror out of LUNA's hands, kisses her again, first on the mouth, then grabs LUNA by the hips, and goes down on her. LUNA holds MEDEA's hair like a rope between her fingers, she pulls her closer. THE BORDER GUARD enters.]*

BORDER GUARD: So, you confess to being a lesbian.

*[LUNA and MEDEA separate in a panic. The BORDER GUARD stands between them. MEDEA and LUNA hold each other's eyes from a distance.]*

LUNA: Can I be tried twice for the same crime?

THE BORDER GUARD: Answer the question. Do you desire—

LUNA: There was no passion there. By the end, it was a mindless reflex. The desire was gone from us months before or was it years? We fought about it. We slept as sisters. When she began to dream and the dream was bad, I just drew the curve of her back closer to me, placed her hands one on top of the other, and folded them into her belly with the unconsciousness of a sonámbula.

MEDEA: I am sleepwalking still. Even the smell of the sea has abandoned us.

*[Sudden police sirens and the spinning of blue and red police lights. MEDEA stands amid the circling colored lights. Trance-like, she cradles her arms as if holding an infant. LUNA approaches her.]*

MEDEA: Do you smell my baby's death?

LUNA: I can't.

MEDEA: Open the holes in your face and breathe. The breeze smells of sulfur. Do you smell it?

LUNA: I . . . don't know.

MEDEA: Where were you, Luna, when I needed you?

LUNA: In my cell, always in my nun's cell.

MEDEA: I hardly recognize you, wearing the skirt of a woman.

LUNA: I dressed to visit you. I visit you weekly. But you won't speak to me. Is it . . . *(the infant)* heavy?

MEDEA: A dead child weighs nothing in your arms. He is light as balsam wood, hollow inside. The spirit gives weight to the flesh. His spirit ya se fue.

LUNA: The child I carry is heavy.

MEDEA: Tienes que dar a luz.

*[LUNA turns and exits, the CIHUATATEO enter.]*

CIHUATATEO: *(Chanting)*

Allí viene La Llorona.

Rivers rising.

Cold-blooded babies at her breast.

*[Wind rises, blends with the wailing of children. Then the cry of La Llorona, an ominous and chilling wail, fills the air.]*

CIHUATATEO: A-y-y-y-y-y-y! MIS HIJOS! MIS HI-I-I-I-JOS!

*[The CIHUATATEO dance as warrior women. They draw out maguey thorns, the size of hands, from their serpent's sashes. They pierce and slash themselves, wailing. They encircle MEDEA with the ghostly white veil of La Llorona. It is a river in the silver light. MEDEA and the sound of the children's cries drown beneath it. Black out.]*

*[LUNA is back in the "Interrogation Room." Many hours have transpired, she is clearly exhausted. She speaks almost deliriously. JASÓN appears in shadow behind THE BORDER GUARD.]*



BORDER GUARD: Do you confess?

LUNA:

I am  
 awake  
 to the sound  
 of screaming  
 her voice, too, she is  
 screaming I  
 can't remember when they merge  
 Medea's voice  
 with my own  
 only opening my mouth  
 swallowing  
 air  
 the cry coming out  
 the man  
 in the doorway, a shadow  
 a stranger  
 a lover  
 a rapist  
 I  
 can't know  
 for sure  
 I  
 inside time stop time  
 what to do  
 when he  
 enters  
 the room  
 his size immense  
 filling the doorway  
 what to do  
 when he  
 steps  
 one  
 foot  
 inside  
 the room  
 I . . .

BORDER GUARD: Stop it. Speak sensibly. You are talking in circles!

LUNA: *(She composes herself)* When Jasón . . . found us—

BORDER GUARD: Yes. Go on.

JASÓN: When I found them in bed together, I remember I just stood there,  
 staring at them.

BORDER GUARD: And then?

LUNA: Then . . . nothing.

JASÓN: *(Simultaneously)* Nothing.

BORDER GUARD: Nothing?

LUNA: He had a very . . . sad look on his face . . . disappointed, kind of.

JASÓN: I just turned away and walked into my study. I was waiting for her,  
 waiting for an explanation.

LUNA: She got up and left me in the bed. I could hear them down  
 the hall.

JASÓN: We fought.

LUNA: In hushed voices. I slipped out without their noticing. What  
 else was there to do? The next morning, she shows up with the  
 kid on my doorstep. He was five years old. She didn't know  
 where else to go, she told me. I was the reason for it. I was  
 the lesbian.

JASÓN (LUNA): I (He) never even came looking for them (us).

BORDER GUARD: That's it?

LUNA: No. She was exiled.

JASÓN: Medea was never to return to Aztlán.

*[Black out.]*

## Scene Two

*[CHAC-MOOL enters angrily with a armful of blue corn and a cooking pot. He goes to the kitchen table and begins stripping the corn furiously, tossing it into the pot. MEDEA enters.]*

MEDEA: Why are you doing that? I'm going to make dinner.

CHAC-MOOL: I'm not hungry.

MEDEA: Then what are you cooking for?

CHAC-MOOL: It's Luna's corn.

*[She goes to the pot, lifts the lid.]*

MEDEA: It's blue.

CHAC-MOOL: Where is she? She doesn't even get to see it. She planted it.  
Why can't she see it? Why did you send her away?

MEDEA: I didn't send her away. She left.

CHAC-MOOL: You did. You made her unhappy. You make me unhappy.  
Stupid corn.

MEDEA: Chac-Mool.

CHAC-MOOL: The corn's ready to harvest. Bring her back.

MEDEA: I'm trying to save you, ingrato!

CHAC-MOOL: From what?

MEDEA: From . . . him.

CHAC-MOOL: You made Luna go away. He didn't.

MEDEA: To keep you.

CHAC-MOOL: To keep me for what?

MEDEA: For—

CHAC-MOOL: For yourself.

MEDEA: Yes. Is that such a crime? We can go back together, start all over again.

CHAC-MOOL: But I thought he didn't . . . You'd just leave her like that, Mom? After all this time? You don't even love him. Do you love him?

MEDEA: No.

CHAC-MOOL: Then?

MEDEA: Luna's found someone else, hijo.

CHAC-MOOL: I don't believe it.

MEDEA: Believe it.

CHAC-MOOL: But she loves you.

MEDEA: It's . . . hard. I . . .

*[CHAC-MOOL crosses to the pot and dumps out its contents.]*

CHAC-MOOL: You were a warrior woman, Mom. You were a fucking hero!

MEDEA: Chac . . .

CHAC-MOOL: What?

MEDEA: I'm almost fifty. I'm tired of fighting. I wanna go home.

*[Black out.]*

## Scene Three

*[MEDEA stands in the kitchen. JASÓN enters, brushes aside the corn husks remaining on the kitchen table and places his briefcase down in their place.]*

MEDEA: I sent the papers back because they were unacceptable. You ignored my conditions.

JASÓN: You aren't in the position to negotiate, Medea.

MEDEA: I'm not?

JASÓN: Frankly, I think I'm being quite generous.

MEDEA: To live as your ward. I could stay here for that.

JASÓN: Semantics.

MEDEA: I know what "ward" means, Jasón.

JASÓN: It means I will take care of you. Your grandmother, too.

MEDEA: I'm not your Juárez whore, Señor. A woman is nothing in Aztlán without a husband.

JASÓN: Then stay here if you want. It's your decision.

MEDEA: Then we both stay. Chac-Mool's not going anywhere without me.

JASÓN: Medea, I don't want you.

MEDEA: And I don't want you, but I'm not going back to my land on my knees. I thought we gave up Catholicism with the revolution.

JASÓN: I'm in love with somebody else.

MEDEA: Love! You love a tight pussy around your dick, that's what you love. Why do you have to marry it? It will not make you younger.

JASÓN: Ah, Jeezus.

MEDEA: You raped me. Now pay up.

JASÓN: Oh, Medea. You orchestrated the whole damn thing.

MEDEA: When the prostitute is not paid as agreed, she is raped.

JASÓN: You said it. I never agreed to stay married to you.

MEDEA: She's a child in bed, you tell me. I want a woman. (*Mimicking him*) "I miss you. I miss your breasts, tu piel, that smell, how could I have gone so long without that smell."

JASÓN: It was the passion of the moment.

MEDEA: And the moment has passed.

JASÓN: . . . Yes.

MEDEA: Get out!

JASÓN: Not without my son!

MEDEA: ¿Qué crees? That you'll be free of me? I'll decide, not you. You'll never be free of me!

JASÓN: Free! You're the slave, Medea, not me. You will always be my woman because of our son. Whether you rot in this wasteland of counter-revolutionary degenerates or take up residence in my second bed. You decide. I'm not afraid of you, Medea. I used to be afraid of that anger, but not anymore. I have what I want now. Land and a future in the body of that boy. You can't stop me.

MEDEA: Watch me.

JASÓN: If you really loved your son, you'd remove him from your tit.

MEDEA: So his mouth can suck your dick?

JASÓN: That how your dyke friends talk, Medea? Look at you. You hate men. And boys become men. What good are you for Chac now? He needs a father.

MEDEA: My son needs no taste of that weakness you call manhood. He is still a boy, not a man and you will not make him one in your likeness! The man I wish my son to be does not exist, must be invented. He will invent himself if he must, but he will not grow up to learn betrayal from your example.

JASÓN: You left me.

MEDEA: And you sent away your son and his mother to live in exile.

JASÓN: You would not be separated.

MEDEA: That's one version of the story, Jasón. Would you like to hear the other? Or do you believe your own mythology? The "Minister of Culture" marrying una niñita. ¡Qué conveniente!

JASÓN: It's hardly convenient, Medea. I've had to defend this relationship—

MEDEA: She'll never call you by your true name, Jasón, so you may fortunately begin to forget it. Forget the U.S. Air Force father, the quarter-breed mestizo-de-mestizo cousins, your mother's coveted Spanish coat-of-arms. That girl can't know you because your lies were sown long before she made root on this earth. Send me your wife. I will teach her of her own embattled and embittered history. I will teach her, as I have learned, to defend women and children against enemies from within. Against fathers and brothers and sons who grow up to be as conquistador as any Cortez—

JASÓN: Oh, please.

MEDA: Traidores de una cultura mas anciana que your pitiful ego'd life can remember.

JASÓN: That bitterness in you . . . you'll never change.

MEDEA: Oh yes, I've changed. I married you when I was still a girl, not a woman, but a girl with a girl's naiveté who still looked for a father's protection. But that was a long time ago. I am a woman. A Mexican woman and there is no protection and no place for me, not even in the arms of another woman because she too is an exile in her own land. Marry your child-bride. A mi no me importa. No, in that lies no traición. Betrayal occurs when a boy grows into a man and sees his mother as a woman for the first time. A woman. A thing. A creature to be controlled.

JASÓN: If it is so inevitable, give me the boy. Spare yourself the humiliation.

MEDEA: No, my son is still an innocent. He will love you in spite of me, for his body requires that that animal memory be fulfilled. To that I do not object, nor to the fact that he must one day grow away from me, but he will leave me as a daughter does, with all the necessary wrenching, and his eye will never see me "as woman." I promise you that.

*[JASÓN opens his briefcase, takes out a document, puts it on the table.]*

JASÓN: The courts have already made their decision, Medea.

MEDEA: Which courts? Those patriarchs who stole my country? I returned to my motherland in the embrace of a woman and the mother is taken from me.

JASÓN: You agreed. Age thirteen. You signed the—

MEDEA: My hand was forced.

JASÓN: Bueno, the sundance starts in a matter of weeks. I'll be back for the . . . *(Spying CHAC-MOOL entering)* Adolfo . . .

CHAC-MOOL: My name's Chac-Mool. It's written on my arm, so I won't forget.

MEDEA: Hijo . . .

JASÓN: Chac-Mool, yes. You're . . . big.

*[CHAC-MOOL's eyes study JASÓN.]*

MEDEA: Tell him the truth, Jasón. Since my son is standing here in front of you, tell him to his face.

JASÓN: What are you talking about?

MEDEA: That my son makes you legit, just like I did. That's why you've suddenly appeared on our doorstep con tus papeles in hand.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom . . .

MEDEA: He is your native claim. You can't hold onto a handful of dirt in Aztlán without him. You don't have the blood quantum.

JASÓN: I'm a practical man, Medea.

MEDEA: I believe the word is opportunist.

JASÓN: Yes, there is that requirement, but that says nothing about my love for my son.

MEDEA: That's right. It says nothing.

JASÓN: There are the custody papers, Medea. The divorce is already a done deal. There's really nothing more to discuss. Chac-Mool, regardless of what your mother has said to you, I want to be with you. I admit, it's taken me a long time to . . . to grow up. I never should've let you go, but I'm coming back for you now. Once these papers are . . . taken care of, I hope you'll—

CHAC-MOOL: What?

JASÓN: Come home.

CHAC-MOOL: I . . . (CHAC-MOOL looks over to MEDEA. Their eyes meet.)

JASÓN: Bueno . . . (JASÓN closes up his briefcase, leaving the documents on the table.)

MEDEA: Get out.

JASÓN: Don't make this harder—

MEDEA: Get. Out.

JASÓN: Fine. Good-bye, Chac-Mool.

CHAC-MOOL: Bye.

[JASÓN exits. MEDEA goes to CHAC-MOOL.]

MEDEA: Chac-Mool.

CHAC-MOOL: I barely remember him.

MEDEA: I'm sorry you had to see this.

CHAC-MOOL: Him?

MEDEA: Yes.

CHAC-MOOL: He's old. Small.

MEDEA: Yes.

CHAC-MOOL: Why didn't you tell me he was coming?

MEDEA: He brought papers. It was business.

CHAC-MOOL: About me.

MEDEA: I never would've let you go. Así. Without time to prepare.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom, I've been preparing.

MEDEA: I mean in your heart.

CHAC-MOOL: How do you do that?

MEDEA: I'm not sure.

CHAC-MOOL: I didn't know he even wanted me.

MEDEA: Didn't you hear him?

CHAC-MOOL: He wants me.

MEDEA: He wants you for a piece of dirt! He didn't deny it!

CHAC-MOOL: You didn't tell me.

MEDEA: He's using you! Just like he used me and when he's done with you, he'll toss you back here like so much basura.

CHAC-MOOL: Why you talking like this? Let's just go, take Bisabuela. There's nothing left for us here. You said so yourself.

MEDEA: I can't go.

CHAC-MOOL: Why not?

MEDEA: Nothing's changed, Chac-Mool. They want a public disavowal.

CHAC-MOOL: A what?

MEDEA: I can't deny what I am, hijo. I thought I could, but I can't.

CHAC-MOOL: He doesn't want you, does he? That's why.

MEDEA: Did you just hear what I said?

CHAC-MOOL: I want to be initiated, Mamá.

MEDEA: You want to cut open your chest?

CHAC-MOOL: No, I—

MEDEA: Is that what this is all about! Toma! (*Grabbing a letter opener from the table.*) Then start your initiation right here. Cut open your mother's chest first! Dig out her heart with your hands because that's what they'll teach you, to despise a mother's love, a woman's touch—

CHAC-MOOL: I won't do that.

MEDEA: You say that because you're still young. Your manhood, the size of acorns. When you feel yourself grown and hard as oak, you'll forget.

CHAC-MOOL: I won't forget. I'll come visit you. I promise.

MEDEA: (*Bitterly*) You'll visit.

CHAC-MOOL: I gotta get outta here. I can't do this no more, Mom. I'm just a kid, it's not normal!

MEDEA: You want normal? Then go with your father. He's perfectly normal. It's normal to send your five-year-old child and his mother into exile and then seven years later come back to collect the kid like a piece of property. It's normal for a nearly sixty-year-old Mexican man to marry a teenager. It's normal to lie about your race, your class, your origins, create a completely unoriginal fiction about yourself and then name yourself la patria's poet. But that's normal for a country that robs land from its daughters to give to its sons unless of course they turn out to be jotos.

CHAC-MOOL: Stop it, Mom. I don't wanna hear no more.

MEDEA: Well, I've got more to say!

CHAC-MOOL: No, not to me, you don't.

*[He exits the kitchen.]*

#### Scene Four

*[Crossfade to the "Interrogation Room." CHAC-MOOL sits beneath a glaring spotlight. THE PRISON GUARD circles around him, holding a clipboard.]*

BORDER GUARD: What is your name?

CHAC-MOOL: Adolfo.

BORDER GUARD: (*Checking the notes on the clipboard*) What about Chac-Mool?

CHAC-MOOL: If you knew already, why did you ask me?

BORDER GUARD: For the record.

CHAC-MOOL: For the record, my real name is Adolfo.

BORDER GUARD: And Chac-Mool?

CHAC-MOOL: It's my mom's name for me. It's written in my skin. You wanna see?

BORDER GUARD: No, they don't approve of graffiti en Aztlán. They do murals.

CHAC-MOOL: It's not—

BORDER GUARD: Let's get back to Adolfo, shall we? For the record.

CHAC-MOOL: For the record, I hate that name. It's a Nazi name. Every kid named Chuy has to live up to the legacy of being named Jesus. Well, me, I got Adolfo to follow me into the grave.

BORDER GUARD: Who named you?

CHAC-MOOL: My father, after some revolutionary, long-dead gun-runner uncle of his. But it's still a Nazi name. Sure there are other Adolphs in history . . . plenty of them, including my revolutionary uncle, but nobody with an impact even close to that of Hitler or Christ. I was born to be a Nazi, to have a Nazi life, to be denied a free life. Is nobody listening to me?

BORDER GUARD: We all are. It's your play.

CHAC-MOOL: Who says?

BORDER GUARD: You're the source of conflict. You're also the youngest one here, which means you're the future, it's gotta be about you. *And*, you're the only real male in the cast.

CHAC-MOOL: And who are you?

BORDER GUARD: Think of me as your revolutionary conscience, the mirror to that elegant Yaqui body of yours, inside and out.

CHAC-MOOL: Is this about a confession?

BORDER GUARD: What do you mean?

CHAC-MOOL: Like are you trying to get some kind of confession outta me.

BORDER GUARD: I'm trying to ascertain your readiness to make the return.

CHAC-MOOL: I don't want to be here no more.

BORDER GUARD: Where?

CHAC-MOOL: Tamoachán.

BORDER GUARD: Phoenix?

CHAC-MOOL: Yes.

BORDER GUARD: Where do you want to be?

CHAC-MOOL: Aztlán.

BORDER GUARD: Right answer. Tu patria.

CHAC-MOOL: Sí, mi patria. I am my father's son. I've got a right to be there. He tried to deny me. I was born from the sweat between my mother's thighs. He wanted to forget those campesina thighs.

BORDER GUARD: Who told you that?

CHAC-MOOL: My mother.

BORDER GUARD: And now?

CHAC-MOOL: And now . . . what?

BORDER GUARD: What does he want now?

CHAC-MOOL: Well, now he wants me back. To make a man outta me, to keep the Indian in him.

BORDER GUARD: He's not an Indian?

CHAC-MOOL: Not enough, according to my mother.

BORDER GUARD: And that's a problem?

CHAC-MOOL: In Aztlán it is. God, I thought you knew the place.

BORDER GUARD: Not really. I hardly remember. I only work the border.  
And what do you want outta the deal?

CHAC-MOOL: The return?

BORDER GUARD: Yes.

CHAC-MOOL: I just don't wanna have to hurt nobody.

BORDER GUARD: Nazi, let me introduce myself.

CHAC-MOOL: You said it was my play.

BORDER GUARD: You want this play?

CHAC-MOOL: I don't know yet. I don't know if I want you in it. I know I  
don't want you to be a man. Men scare me.

BORDER GUARD: Your father's a man.

CHAC-MOOL: I got nowhere else to go.

BORDER GUARD: I'll be a woman.

CHAC-MOOL: Be my mother. I miss my mother. I'm leaving her.

BORDER GUARD: No, not your mother. I am your revolutionary con-  
science. Today using modern methods I could convince you of  
anything. That you are no more than your father's son. The son del  
nuevo patrón revolucionario, a landowner from whom you will  
inherit property and a legacy of blood under the fingernails. Today  
using modern methods, I am landless. A woman without a country. I  
am she whom you already know to hate. I wipe your infant ass in  
another life, sensitive Nazi-boy.

CHAC-MOOL: *(Rising)* I've had enough of this.

BORDER GUARD: *(Pushing him down again, hand on his shoulder)* It's  
cold out. Where could you possibly go in such weather? It's too hot  
to move.

CHAC-MOOL: I have a country. I am not despised as you are. There is a  
piece of dirt a few hundred miles away from here that still holds the  
impression of my footsteps. I belong somewhere. I am going.

BORDER GUARD: Footsteps, the size of boys' feet?

CHAC-MOOL: I am not ready to be a man.

BORDER GUARD: No?

CHAC-MOOL: I was always blessed to be a boy. My great-grandmother  
literally traced my forehead with the cross of her thumb and index  
finger and my brow was tranquil then. I didn't then have these violent  
thoughts of a man. At four, my father drilled his fingers into my  
chest, held me at the gun point of his glare. You are blessed, he told  
me. Open your nostrils and flare like a bull. I want you to smell this  
land. I remember the wings of my nostrils rising up to suck up his  
breath. It was a birthing of sorts. He penetrated and I was born of  
him. His land was his mother and mine and I was beholden only to it.

BORDER GUARD: Aztlán.

CHAC-MOOL: Yes, Aztlán. And then my mother stole me away with the  
stonemason. A sculptor.

BORDER GUARD: Get up now.

CHAC-MOOL: *(Standing)* Did I pass? Am I ready?

BORDER GUARD: We caught you just in time. *(CHAC-MOOL exits, the  
GUARD announces:)* Too late. La Despedida.

#### Scene Five

*[Crossfade to LUNA who is on her knees, putting various hand tools  
into a burlap tool bag. MEDEA stands a distance from her.]*

MEDEA: Stop it.

LUNA: What?



MEDEA: Stop packing.

LUNA: I need my tools.

MEDEA: That's why you came?

LUNA: You told me to come get them.

MEDEA: No seas terca.

LUNA: *(Stands, approaches MEDEA)* Then?

MEDEA: Then what?

LUNA: Then say it. Say what is hardest to say.

MEDEA: I would've respected you more, had you just left. You don't have the courage to be alone. You'll flop from woman to woman for the rest of your life.

LUNA: That's not it. That wasn't hard. Try again.

MEDEA: *(Softening)* I had a dream.

LUNA: Good.

MEDEA: I dreamed our land returned to us.

LUNA: Go on.

MEDEA: You were there. It was the most natural evolution in the world to move from love of country to love of you.

LUNA: And—

MEDEA: There was a road of yellow dust, sagüaro and maguey. You were laying down the cactus stones one by one to my door.

LUNA: Why did you shut the door, Medea?

MEDEA: My son.

LUNA: No. The truth.

MEDEA: My son.

LUNA: Look. *(She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a handful of blue corn kernels. She holds them out to MEDEA.)* The corn is going to seed.

MEDEA: Ya lo sé.

LUNA: I tried to warn you, Medea.

MEDEA: Fucking means nothing!

LUNA: It means something to me.

MEDEA: And your negra?

LUNA: She's a friend.

MEDEA: A friend!

LUNA: You're right. I don't want to be alone. Not now. I couldn't bear it.

MEDEA: I sacrificed Aztlán for you!

LUNA: Aztlán was uninhabitable.

*[LUNA finishes packing the bag, stands.]*

MEDEA: And the boy. . . ?

LUNA: We could never keep him here. I wouldn't want to.

*[LUNA exits. MEDEA pours herself a shot of tequila, downs it. BORDER GUARD enters with Mama Sal's satchel and dumps dozens of small plastic bags of herbs from it onto the kitchen table. She exits. MEDEA becomes frenzied, nervously searching through the bags. She sniffs the contents of one, then discards it, tries another and another. She finally finds the one she is looking for, tastes it gingerly with a wet fingertip, attempts to pour it into a measuring*

*cup, but spills it, her hands shaking uncontrollably. She downs another shot of tequila.]*

## Scene Six

*[MAMA SAL sits outside smoking a pipe. CHAC-MOOL enters, carrying a small backpack.]*

MAMA SAL: You should've called me. I would've met you at the bus station.

CHAC-MOOL: That's all right.

MAMA SAL: I love the bus station. Everybody goin' someplace. Are you going, hijo?

CHAC-MOOL: Yeah. Just came to get my stuff. Say good-bye.

MAMA SAL: Who knows? Maybe I'll even follow you there in a few years.

CHAC-MOOL: I'd like that.

MAMA SAL: It don't matter no more. Lesbiana ni lesbiana. I have outlived all the lovely womans in my life. *(Pause)* You do me un favor, Chaco?

CHAC-MOOL: Dígame.

MAMA SAL: If I don't get back there, you don't let them bury me here, eh?

CHAC-MOOL: I won't, Bisabuela.

MAMA SAL: Just fire me up como un cigaro and put me en tu bolsillo—

CHAC-MOOL: I'm not gonna do that!

MAMA SAL: I mean it. And take me out there by those ruinas . . . out there en las montañas de Jemez.

CHAC-MOOL: I don't know where that is.

MAMA SAL: You'll find out. Just spread me around out there with all that red rock. I'm tired of this pinche city.

CHAC-MOOL: I promise.

MAMA SAL: Bueno. *(She gets up, putting her pipe in her pocket.)* Oh, mira. Luna came by. She wanted me to give you these.

*[She takes out a small bag of corn kernels from her pocket, hands them to CHAC-MOOL.]*

CHAC-MOOL: They're from the garden?

MAMA SAL: Uh-huh. She thought maybe you could throw a few kernels over there in Nuevo México, see if they take root.

CHAC-MOOL: Did she see my Mom?

MAMA SAL: Yep.

CHAC-MOOL: She gone?

MAMA SAL: Sí. Tools y todo.

*[With some difficulty, MAMA SAL starts to get up from the chair. CHAC-MOOL goes to help her.]*

MAMA SAL: Go on in there now, talk to your Mamá. *(She kisses him on the cheek.)*

CHAC-MOOL: You're not coming?

MAMA SAL: Hell no. Talking about my own damn burial, I'm gointu go find me some beer.

*[She exits. CHAC-MOOL crosses to the cornfield and throws the kernels back into it. Lights fade out.]*

## Scene Seven

*[CHAC-MOOL enters the kitchen where MEDEA is sitting with the tequila and herbs laid out in front of her.]*

MEDEA: I tried getting her back. But I wouldn't beg. If you expected me to beg, I didn't.

CHAC-MOOL: I didn't expect nothing.

MEDEA: You been to the border?

CHAC-MOOL: Yes.

MEDEA: Then go pack your bags.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom.

MEDEA: You've decided, haven't you? You've been approved.

CHAC-MOOL: Yes.

MEDEA: Then go pack your bags.

CHAC-MOOL: I don't wanna leave you like this.

MEDEA: Now, that's a line I've heard before. But they leave you anyway, don't they, the line-givers?

CHAC-MOOL: It's not a line.

MEDEA: They're all lines, mijito. Rehearsed generations in advance and transmitted into your little male DNA.

CHAC-MOOL: Why you turning on me, Mom?

MEDEA: I think that's the question I have to ask you.

CHAC-MOOL: What am I supposed to do? Who am I supposed to be, Mom? There's nobody to be. No man to be.

MEDEA: So all the tíos I've surrounded you with aren't men.

CHAC-MOOL: That's not what I mean.

MEDEA: Jotos aren't men.

CHAC-MOOL: They're not my father.

MEDEA: You are not the first boy in the world to grow up without a father.

CHAC-MOOL: And without a country? You made me want it, Mom, more than anything. It was "our blood got spilled. Yaqui blood." That's what you said to me every day, every day like a prayer. I can't help it that they took Aztlán away from you.

MEDEA: But you'll take it away again, won't you?

CHAC-MOOL: How?

MEDEA: *(Grabbing him by the shoulders.)* You're my land, hijo. Don't you see that? You're my land!

CHAC-MOOL: How is that any different from my father?

MEDEA: Chinga'o! Because I am the Indian, not him! And I am your mother!

CHAC-MOOL: That's not my fault!

*(She freezes.)*

MEDEA: I've held my breath for thirteen years in fear of hearing those words come out of your mouth, to hear you finally absolve yourself of me!

CHAC-MOOL: But what did I do? You chose to leave Aztlán! You chose for yourself, not for me!

MEDEA: That's right. I chose Luna. Remember Luna?

CHAC-MOOL: I remember. Where is she now?

*(MEDEA crosses back to the table. Takes a shot, she keeps her back to him.)*

CHAC-MOOL: That's it? You're not gonna talk to me no more?

MEDEA: You win. Vete.

*[He doesn't move.]*

MEDEA: Go, Chac-Mool.

*[He doesn't.]*

MEDEA: *(Turning to him)* What? You want my blessing, too? ¡Qué dios te bendiga! Lo siento mucho, hijo, pero no soy tu madre dadivosa. *(Grabbing her breast)* The chichi has run dry.

CHAC-MOOL: You're crazy. He's right. He told me you were crazy. He met me at the border. He told me to come with him right then.

MEDEA: You should have.

CHAC-MOOL: I didn't. I didn't because you taught me loyalty. Because I wasn't going to sneak away from you like a punk. When I leave here tomorrow, I'm walking out that door like a man.

MEDEA: A man.

CHAC-MOOL: Yeah, a man. Just the way you taught me. You fucked him, I didn't. You fucked yourself.

*[MEDEA slaps CHAC-MOOL. He stares at her, half in disdain, half in pity. He exits. MEDEA slumps onto the chair at the kitchen table. She reaches again for the herbs, fingers them. MAMA SAL appears at the doorway, a sack of beer in her hands.]*

MAMA SAL: ¿Qué pasó? ¿Qué 'stás haciendo?

*[MEDEA lets the herbs run through her fingers.]*

MEDEA: All the babies, they're slipping through my fingers now. I can't stop them. They've turned into the liquid of the river and they are drowning in my hands.

MAMA SAL: Medea . . .

MEDEA: I lost my baby. We were splintered, severed in two. I wanted a female to love, that's all, Abuelita. Is that so much to want?

MAMA SAL: No.

MEDEA: *(Holding up a bag full of herbs)* How much?

MAMA SAL: No, Medea. You don't have to do this.

MEDEA: A stranger has inhabited me, taken possession of my body, disguised himself innocently in the sexless skin of my placenta. *(Extending the bag to her)* How much?

MAMA SAL: Half of that. Es suficiente.

*[MEDEA dumps the herbs into a pot as the lights crossfade to CIHUATATEO entering as women warriors. They perform a stylized enactment of a traditional midwife birthing. There is chanting in Nahuatl and deep moaning. NURSE stands between MEDEA's legs awaiting the birth. As the infant emerges, we see that it is LUNA, in the lifeless form of a woman. She is shapeless liquid. The others cannot revive her. They all scatter, leave her abandoned on stage, except for CIHUATATEO WEST, who as the lights change, takes on the shape of SAVANNAH. She draws a huge white sheet over LUNA and herself. When the couple re-emerge, they are joined together in the sack of sheet. It is a kind of tableau of the Aztec codex, symbolizing marriage. THE PRISON GUARD enters.]*

PRISON GUARD: "Blood Wedding."

LUNA: Medea was pregnant. Within weeks she knew and the matter of names came up again, what to call that he/she clinging fish-gilled and hermaphrodite inside her liquid belly. She loved her belly more than any man but was grateful to Jasón for that first effortless conception. He had once taken her, virginal and spineless. Except there was no blood, no stain upon the sheet. The blood was only under her tongue, I found. A small pool behind the bottom row of her teeth, a dam holding back the ruby kiss, the original name of which she once spilled into my mouth. I, who would never give her children. I, who would always make her sweat and bleed every month. Our shared moons, a marriage of the most bitter, sweet-lipped kind.

SAVANNAH: Just keep talkin' that talk, girl, and I'll never leave you.

*[SAVANNAH pulls LUNA back down under the sheet. Black out.]*

### Scene Eight

*[As in the beginning of the play, the figure of Coatlicue is illuminated. MEDEA, wearing a long white nightgown, stands before the statue in prayer, holding a cup in her hand. She raises it in offering to the Diosa.]*

MEDEA:

Coatlicue,  
this is my holy sacrifice.

I would have preferred to die a warrior woman,  
like the Cihuatateo  
women who die in childbirth  
offering their own lives  
to the birthing of others.

How much simpler things would have been.  
But what life do I have to offer to my son now?

He refuses my gifts and turns to my enemies  
to make a man of him.  
I cannot relinquish my son to them,  
to walk ese camino triste  
where they will call him  
by his manly name  
and he goes deaf  
to hear it.

But the road I must walk is sadder still.

*[CHAC-MOOL enters. MEDEA turns to him, a bit off guard.]*

CHAC-MOOL: I know it's stupid, but . . . I just came in to say good night.

MEDEA: You going to bed already?

CHAC-MOOL: Yeah, it's a long trip tomorrow.

MEDEA: *(After a beat)* Forgive me, hijo.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom, I—

MEDEA: Ya. Tal vez no vale mucho after so many words, harsh words,  
pero . . . could I bless you now, before you go?

CHAC-MOOL: Now?

MEDEA: I got the copal burning.

CHAC-MOOL: Okay.

*[He goes to her, opens his hands in front of him. She brings the smoking resin to him, wafts his body with it.]*

MEDEA: Our ancestors are watching, hijo. They pity us. They know what  
is in our hearts.

CHAC-MOOL: I'm . . . sorry.

*[She prays over him softly, then returns the burning copal to her altar.]*

MEDEA: Can you stay up with your mami for a little while?

CHAC-MOOL: I'm tired, Mom.

MEDEA: I made you some atole. It may not be as good as Luna's, pero no  
quieres probarlo? I made it with the blue corn.

CHAC-MOOL: Sure.

MEDEA: Vete. Go put on your pijamas first. Yo te espero.

CHAC-MOOL: Okay.

*[CHAC-MOOL starts to exit, then suddenly turns and runs over to her. He throws his arms around MEDEA. MEDEA starts to pull him away and he clings all the tighter.]*

CHAC-MOOL: I love you, Mom.

MEDEA: Sí, hijo. Ya lo sé. Now, go get changed, then come outside. You can drink your atole out there. The moon is so bright.

CHAC-MOOL: Okay.

*[CHAC-MOOL exits. MEDEA takes out a bag of herbs from her gown, sprinkles them into the atole. She addresses COATLICUE.]*

MEDEA: Can you smell it, Madre? Mi hijo's manhood. He wears it in his sleep now. In the morning I find it in a heap on the floor, crumpled in his pijamas. Like Luna, I bring the soft flannel to my nose. I inhale. No baby smell. No boy. A man moving inside his body. I felt a small rise against my thigh just now, a small beating heart hardening against that place that was once his home. Where is my baby's sweet softness now?

*[CHAC-MOOL re-enters, naked from the waist up and wearing pajama pants. MEDEA holds the cup of atole.]*

CHAC-MOOL: Mom?

MEDEA: Vente, hijo. It's too hot in here. Let's go watch the corn grow.

*[She grabs his hand and escorts him outside into the backyard, next to the field of corn. They sit down together, She puts her arms around him.]*

MEDEA: El maíz 'stá muy alto.

CHAC-MOOL: Yeah, too tall. I feel kind of bad I didn't harvest it.

MEDEA: No te apures. In Aztlán, there's plenty corn to harvest.

*[MEDEA offers CHAC-MOOL the atole.]*

MEDEA: Toma, hijo. This will help you sleep. *(He drinks.)*

CHAC-MOOL: Mom—

MEDEA: Don't say anything more, hijo. No mas palabras.

*[MEDEA takes CHAC-MOOL into her arms. She rocks him, singing.]*

MEDEA:

*Duérmete mi niño  
Duérmete mi sol  
Duérmete pedazo  
de mi corazón.*

*My sleeping hombrecito. (He is instantly drowsy. She strokes his hair.) Sleep, mi diosito. Sleep the innocent sleep of the childless.*

*[He passes out. It is a pieta image, MEDEA holding him limp within her arms. Then, with much effort, she tries to drag CHAC-MOOL's body into the small field of corn. She is unable to. The CIHUATATEO enter, dressed in the traditional Aztec. They lift CHAC-MOOL and take him into the center of the field. Meanwhile, MEDEA starts pulling up all the overgrown corn stalks in the field, piling them into a mound higher and higher. She becomes frenzied, a frightening image, her white nightgown flowing in the sudden wind. The pile of blue corn stalks have formed a kind of altar. The CIHUATATEO heave CHAC-MOOL's body on top of it.]*

MEDEA:

*Hijo! Mensajero!  
How much simpler had you been born a daughter  
that first female seed inside of me.  
You would have comforted me in old age  
held vigil at the hour of my death  
washed my body with sweet soap  
anointing it with oil.*

*You would have wrapped me in colored cloths  
worthy of the meeting of mothers.  
My finest feathers and skins would adorn me  
as you returned me to the earth.*

*[Calling out against the wind and to the illuminated figure of Coatlicue.]*

*What crime do I commit now, Mamá?  
To choose the daughter over the son?*

You betrayed us, Madre Coatlicue.  
You, anciana, you who birthed the God of War.

Huitzilopotchli.  
His Aztec name sours upon my lips,  
as the name of the son  
of the woman who gave me birth.

My mother did not stop my brother's hand  
from reaching into my virgin bed.  
Nor did you hold back the sword  
that severed your daughter's head.

Coyolxauhqui, diosa de la luna.  
*[Her arms stretch out to the full moon.]*  
Ahora, she is my god.  
La Luna, la hija rebelde.

Te rechazo, Madre.

MEDEA: ¡AY-Y-Y-Y! ¡MI HI-I-I-I-JO!

*[THE CIHUATATEO echo her.]*

CIHUATATEO: ¡MIS HI-I-I-I-JOS!

*[Their lament is accompanied by the soft cry of the wind in the background that swells into a deep moaning. It is the cry of La Llorona. The moon moves behind the mountains. The lights fade to black.]*

### Epilogue

*[Flauta and tambor. The CIHUATATEO NORTH and SOUTH appear upstage. They are positioned together in the statuesque pose of the original icons: kneeling, sitting on their heels, their hands pushed forward in a kind of martial arts stance. They begin to dance in slow ritualized movement. Lights rise on LUNA who sits before a potter's wheel. She leans into a mass of clay. Mama Sal's satchel sits at her feet.]*

LUNA:

In her absence she is all the disguises she wore. She is  
the flood of fever that fills my veins  
with a woman's passing perfume. She is  
la música flamenca, the gypsy allure,  
the lie.

She is the painting of a woman fractured and defiant.  
Cueva of clay opening como flor.  
Coyolxauhqui's unnamed star sister. She is

renegade rebozo, el tambor's insistence,  
a warrior's lament.  
Slender hips of silk.  
She is silk.

*[Moving more deeply into the clay with her hands]*

I could sing of her breasts with my hands.

With my hands, I could sing  
she was a woman who never stopped being naked to me.

*[LUNA rises. The PRISON GUARD enters, helps LUNA put on a suit jacket, hands her a bouquet of fresh white flowers and Mama Sal's satchel. She escorts LUNA to the psychiatric ward. The PRISON GUARD joins the CIHUATATEO upstage. MEDEA waits on the edge of her bed.]*

LUNA: Medea?

MEDEA: *(She does not look at LUNA)* You've come back. I thought you'd  
never come back.

LUNA: I was stopped at the border.

MEDEA: *(Turning to her)* It must be Saturday. Again.

LUNA: Yes, it's Saturday.

MEDEA: Thank you for the flowers. *(She doesn't take them.)* How is my  
grandmother?

LUNA: She's old, Medea. Old and tired.

MEDEA: She should be less tired now. I was a burden to her.

LUNA: Yes. How are you?

MEDEA: I'm old and tired, I think, too. *(She crosses to the window)*

LUNA: I dreamed of you last night.

MEDEA: I thought so.

LUNA: In the image of a maguey exploding from a vagina.

MEDEA: More flowers?

LUNA: No, desert cactus. There was nothing sweet about it.

MEDEA: *(Turning to her)* You know what I always loved about you, Luna?

LUNA: No, what?

MEDEA: Your innocence.

LUNA: I'm . . . innocent?

*[MEDEA goes to her, wraps her hands around LUNA's.]*

MEDEA: Your hands. Your hands have handled dozens of women and somehow they remain virgin hands. You left her, didn't you?

LUNA: Who?

MEDEA: The other woman.

LUNA: . . . Yes.

MEDEA: Not me, I'm not innocent. I am spoiled. What I touch is spoiled and I am spoiled by the touches of others.

LUNA: Did I spoil you, Medea?

MEDEA: You said it yourself, you ruined me.

LUNA: I didn't mean—

MEDEA: *(Letting go of her)* You were right. You made me good for no one. Man, woman or child.

LUNA: I'm sorry.

*[There is a pause.]*

MEDEA: Luna?

LUNA: Yes?

MEDEA: Was the vagina yours? In the dream?

LUNA: Maybe.

MEDEA: And I was the maguey?

LUNA: Maybe. Maybe it was all you. You giving birth to yourself.

*[MEDEA smiles.]*

LUNA: I brought you something.

MEDEA: No more flowers, Luna. They remind me of death.

LUNA: No.

*[She opens Mama Sal's bag and pulls out a small bundle.]*

MEDEA: You have Mama's bag.

LUNA: Toma.

*[LUNA gives MEDEA the bundle. MEDEA unwraps it, stares at it, awed.]*

LUNA: It's a Cihuatateo.



MEDEA: *(Suddenly urgent)* Is that how I died, Luna? Giving birth to myself?

LUNA: I—

MEDEA: Is that what you came to tell me?

LUNA: I . . . don't know.

*[NURSE enters. MEDEA and LUNA eyes are locked onto each other.]*

NURSE: You want me to put those flowers in some water, negra?

LUNA: What? No. She doesn't want them.

NURSE: But they're so gorgeous.

LUNA: Yes, you take them then. Put them in some water. They've been hours out of water.

NURSE: Chevere.

*[NURSE takes the flowers and exits. She joins the CORO of CIHUATATEO.]*

MEDEA: Thank you.

LUNA: Sure.

MEDEA: Luna, go away now.

LUNA: You—

MEDEA: Please.

LUNA: Good bye, Medea.

*[LUNA leaves. MEDEA holds the Cihuatateo figure in her hands. She looks upstage to the CORO.]*

CIHUATATEO:

And though banished from Aztlán  
Medea and Luna kept the faith,  
fasted by the phases of the moon  
but did not pierce their flesh  
for they bled regularly between their legs  
and did not die.

*[CHAC-MOOL suddenly appears in MEDEA's room.]*

MEDEA: Are you a ghost?

CHAC-MOOL: No.

MEDEA: You're mistaken. You are a ghost. You're the son I mourn, the one I pray to, that his heart may soften when I join him on the other side.

CHAC-MOOL: It's me.

MEDEA: Daily, I try to join him and my hands are always emptied of the instruments of death. They steal my fingernail file and pantyhose and yerbas. They give me no yerbas here, just pathetic pastel pills that numb me, but won't kill me. They're useless.

CHAC-MOOL: Mother.

MEDEA: Mother. I had a mother once, for a moment. Do you have a mother?

CHAC-MOOL: Yes.

MEDEA: Is she beautiful? I imagine she's beautiful. You are beautiful or maybe you are the image of your father.

CHAC-MOOL: She's beautiful.

MEDEA: That's nice how you talk about her. I'd like to meet her. I love beautiful women, but it's best not to touch them too much. Touch yourself better, if you're beautiful. Another beautiful woman is hard to take sometimes for too long. It's confusing. I mean, for a woman. It's not confusing for a man. But you're not quite a man yet, not fully.

But it's coming. I can see it in your eyes. If you had been my son, the dark of your eyes would mirror me. And we would blend together sexless.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom, I'm Chac-Mool.

MEDEA: Chac-Mool. No.

CHAC-MOOL: It's true. I—

MEDEA: No, stop. Don't speak any more. Go away.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom, don't make me go.

MEDEA: If you live, then why am I here? I've committed no crime. If you live, why then am I strapped into the bed at night? Why am I plagued with nightmares of babies melting between my hands? Why do I mourn you and no longer walk the horizon at the hour of sunset as I used to? Why are there locks and I haven't the key? Why?

CHAC-MOOL: You're in a hospital. A prison.

MEDEA: An insane asylum?

CHAC-MOOL: Yes.

MEDEA: Then I am insane.

CHAC-MOOL: I don't know.

MEDEA: Oh. *(Pause)* Why have you come here?

CHAC-MOOL: To take you away.

MEDEA: Away . . . where?

CHAC-MOOL: Home.

MEDEA: Home. *(She stares ahead blankly.)*

CHAC-MOOL: Come look out the window, Mom. See the moon.

MEDEA: Yes. Nurse told me it's a nice afternoon. A beautiful woman brought me flowers today. Is today still Saturday?

CHAC-MOOL: Come here, Mom. ¿Ves la luna?

*[CHAC-MOOL grabs his mother's hand, takes her to the small window.]*

MEDEA: La Luna. That was her name.

CHAC-MOOL: Mom.

MEDEA: Mom. The sun is too bright.

CHAC-MOOL: No, mira. Do you see the moon? There to the left, just above those hills. *(She cranes her neck to see.)*

MEDEA: Oh yes. She's droopy-eyed.

CHAC-MOOL: No, she's waxing. Watch the moon. By the full moon, you'll be looking at saguaros. You're going home.

MEDEA: How will I get there?

CHAC-MOOL: I'm taking you.

*[He leads her by the hand back to the bed. He holds a handful of powdered herbs and puts them into a small paper cup of water.]*

MEDEA: Mijo?

CHAC-MOOL: Here, drink this. It'll help you sleep.

*[CHAC-MOOL holds MEDEA's head while she drinks. She is instantly drowsy. CHAC-MOOL gathers her into his arms as she falls into a deep sleep. It is a pieta image.]*

*The lights gradually fade. Only the shimmering moon remains, and the figure of the four CIHUATATEO dancing silently in its light.]*

End of Play