Act One/Scene One: “All the beautiful hoteles”

At rise, NANA, wearing 18th century California Native servant attire, with contemporary bandana as headscarf, crosses to a corner of the stage floor and begins to scrub. (Sound of grinding acorn) POPPA sits before the hotel guest computer. He types out numbers very slowly and methodically with his two index fingers. The computer remains a kind of alien creature to him, yet he is forthright in his attempt to manage it. PEACHES sits upright at the edge of the couch. She is the high energy her husband is not. She watches people in the lobby pass in front of her, trying to be well placed, clutching the purse in her lap. She wears heavy make up, too much foundation, white against Indian skin.

PEACHES: What time is it? When are the kids coming?

POPPA: Real soon.

PEACHES: Where’s your watch?

POPPA: It’s busted.

PEACHES: We been waiting too long.

POPPA: It hasn’t been that long.

PEACHES: Not for you, you got something to pass the time. Numbers. That’s all you know.

POPPA: I’m paying the bills (*like a foreign word*) e-lec-tronically.

PEACHES: How? Do you stamp out the money with your little soft fingertips?

POPPA: (Beat) They don’t go to school no more. They have jobs.
PEACHES is suddenly disoriented.

POPPA: They’re all grown-up now, honey. We’re at a hotel.

PEACHES: What hotel? *(Nervous, she pulls out her compact; applies face powder.)*

What are you talking about?

POPPA: The kids. God said to meet him here. We’re been waiting for him.

PEACHES: My son?

POPPA: Yes.

PEACHES: Don’t try to make me crazy. My nerves can’t take it.

POPPA: It’s true. He reserved a room for us. The “honey moon suite” at the Biltmore!

PEACHES: He paid for it?

POPPA: You betcha.

PEACHES: The Biltmore?

POPPA: Just like you always wanted. Happy anniversary!

PEACHES: *(Looks around, for the first time noticing her surroundings.)* The place looks so different.

POPPA: Oughta. They fixed it up pretty nice though, after all those years of letting it go all to pot. *(Beat)* Hard to believe, fifty years together. Isn’t, it honey, hard to believe?

PEACHES: *(Sighs)* That’s a long time.

POPPA watches her for a moment, then returns to his work.

POPPA: First of the month comes like clock work. Bills gotta be paid.

PEACHES: God is meeting me at the Biltmore. *(She rises)*

POPPA: *(Not lifting his eyes from the keyboard)* That’s right, honey. He should be here any minute now.

PEACHES: Will there be a party?
Act 1, Scene 1a: POPPA, PEACHES + DAUGHTER

POPPA: Yep, tomorrow night. The whole family’s gonna come. God’s footing the bill.

PEACHES: I hope Cuca’s kids aren’t coming. They’ll bring the grandchildren and the whole place will be like a zoo. I told Cuca that’s what happens when you have kids too damn young, then the daughter goes and does the same thing, then her daughter, then the next thing you know you gotta big bola of brats on your hands and the grandma’s the one that’s gottu take care of them. Cuca’s too damn old for that. She made fun of me cuz I waited, for only having two, but my kids turn out good.

POPPA: God told Daughter to invite “only the closest relatives.”

PEACHES: Bueno.

POPPA: Yep, he took care of everything. Put it on his credit card. He said he got one room for himself and one for us.

PEACHES: Is she coming?

POPPA: The wife? Tomorrow, I think. Tonight we have God all to ourselves.

PEACHES: It doesn’t matter. My son is footing the bill.

POPPA: That’s really something, isn’t it, honey?

PEACHES: You better believe it. It’s a miracle she let him open up the wallet for someone else besides her. (Suddenly nervous) What I am going to wear? (She rummages through her purse; takes out the compact again; more powder) Is this okay, what I got on?

POPPA: Daughter’ll bring you a dress.

PEACHES: Where is she?

POPPA: She’s coming.

PEACHES: I hope she doesn’t bring the girlfriend.

POPPA: (Beat) Emma’s dead, honey.

PEACHES: . . . Oh.

POPPA: Two months ago. Poor thing.
Act 1, Scene 1a: POPPA, PEACHES + DAUGHTER

PEACHES: Mejor. She’s was holding her down. *(She crosses toward the upstage curtain, dreamlike)* The Biltmore.

POPPA: Now, don’t be goin’ nowhere, sweetheart. The registration people told us to wait right here until God arrives.

*PEACHES drapes the red velvet curtain around her like an evening gown. Early 1930s Duke Ellington sounds play in her imagination. PEACHES dances in place for a few moments.*

PEACHES: I remember all the beautiful hoteles, the elegant clubs, like in the Hollywood movies. When I was a girl in Tijuana, I worked only in the best places: The Agua Caliente, The Foreign Club where all the movie stars came . . . Gary Cooper, Jean Harlow, even el mafioso, Al Capone. Puros americanos!

POPPA: Yep, that sure was something, honey.

PEACHES: *(Emerging from the curtain, she is all youth and “in charge.” She mimes carrying a sales tray as a “cigarette girl“) “Cigarettes, Candy, Chewing Gum!” *(Then “hat check” girl) “Check your hats and coats here please!” “Cigarettes, Candy, Chewing Gum!” “Check your hats and coats here, please!” They’d tip we good.*

POPPA: They sure did.
PEACHES: Yo sé que tenía dinero aquí. They stole all my money. It was the girls who clean the house. I tell him but he doesn’t believe me.

_She looks over to BARTENDER._

PEACHES: It’s all lost . . . I could make a list of all the things I lost every day. One two, three four five, but I am not the one with the numbers, he is. *(POPPA now sits at the chair waiting for his sandwich, his handkerchief tucked under his chin).* He is always found, not lost, always forty fifty sixty years, he is still here. I am la perdida, la perdida pendeja. I remember a lot of small things, cositas importantes que nobody gives a damn about no more. Sure, sometimes I forget if I eat breakfast or take my pills, but that’s natural, I’m no spring chicken. I don’t even have to think about the bills no more, he says, I should feel lucky. It’s not lucky to be inútil.

DAUGHTER: You aren’t useless, Mom.

_She stuffs everything back into her purse, begins applying more white powder._

PEACHES: That’s what you tell me, but you’re trying to control me just like him. He took away my money, my credit cards, even the Penny’s card, so I can’t even buy a damn pair of calzones without asking permission from my husband. You think that makes me feel good?

DAUGHTER: No.

POPPA: Is there a sandwich there for me, daughter?

PEACHES: That’s all he knows, when it’s time to eat.

DAUGHTER: It’s coming.

PEACHES: You might as well throw me into the garbage can, if I can’t do nothing for myself no more, if I go around with my purse empty. But I got eyes. Puedo ver lo que ‘stá pasando.


POPPA: You got it! You sure are somethin’, daughter.
Peaches: Cuz she pays attention. (Beat) He doesn’t believe me, but the mexicanos who clean the yard, they don’t do a good job. And why should they? Is there a man around to tell them to pull up the weeds from the roots so they don’t grow back in two days? No, there’s no man around, just me, la vieja regañona who’s always complaining pa’nada.

Poppa: Okay, okay, that’s enough. Let’s just enjoy our meal together.

Peaches: Don’t you try to shut me up.

Poppa: I’m not, honey, I just want us to enjoy this time with our daughter.

Daughter serves Peaches a sandwich.

Daughter: Here, Mom. (She opens a small jar of jalapeños.) I brought you some chiles.

Peaches: Gracias, mija. (Taking the chiles) Do you think they respect him, those workers? They don’t respect him because he’s not a man.

Daughter: Mom...

Peaches: I only say it cuz it’s true. They just steal his money. I try to treat them good. I know what it’s like to come to this country new. I invite them para un cafecito, un pan dulce . . . algo. Then when my back is turn, they sneak inside the house. They steal my identification, my house keys...

Daughter: Dad?

Peaches: Why ask him? I could be hanging with my neck in a knot and he’d still be there with his face inside the computer.

Poppa: I love her daughter. She won’t believe it.

Peaches: I believe actions, not words. You think I wanted to marry you?

Daughter: Por favor, ‘ama.

Peaches: No, I don’t give a damn no more que piense la gente.

Poppa: Fine, you didn’t. Leave it at that.

Peaches: It wasn’t romantic. It was just need. I didn’t love him.
Act 1, Scene 1b: POPPA, PEACHES + DAUGHTER

POPPA: You barely knew me.

PEACHES: I know you now. Do you think I love you now?

DAUGHTER: Mom.

PEACHES: You bought a wife.

POPPA: Buy you! I barely had nothin’ after the war. Barely a family. Nothin’. I was free to --

PEACHES: Así son los gringos… free! What holds them to the dirt? They can buy it, but no feelings hold them to it. You didn’t have me, just cause of that piece of paper. You didn’t buy me.

POPPA: Damnit! I didn’t try to buy you!

DAUGHTER: C’mon, let’s just forget it.

PEACHES: I don’t forget nothing. I don’t forget how I feel.

POPPA: I lost my appetite. I’m going back now. (He doesn’t move.)

DAUGHTER: Where?

PEACHES: To the numbers. That’s all he knows.

DAUGHTER: He’s paying the bills, Mom.

PEACHES: Go ‘head, take his side. (Beat) Was he a father to you?

DAUGHTER: Mom.

PEACHES: Answer me the truth! What did he know about being a father? Nada!

POPPA: I admit it, I could’ve done better, but I had to work . . .

PEACHES: I taught your son how to be a man, not you!

DAUGHTER: You married him, Mom.

PEACHES: There’s was nothing left for me in Tijuana.

DAUGHTER: Ya lo sé.
PEACHES: The casinos were closed already for a long time. My father was dead. We came back to the states with our pockets empty. Entiendes? Con nada!

_NANA’s cleaning has now crossed into the scene. NANA’s nose is running and she stops to search for a Kleenex in her apron pocket. PEACHES notices and hands her a tissue._

PEACHES: _To NANA_ When you’re the only one left to support la familia, how could I think about myself? Next thing you know you’re already a thirty-something year old woman without your own baby to hold.

POPPA _(A plea)_: I just thought she was beautiful, Daughter. Is that a crime? You know your mother, a real lady.

DAUGHTER: I know.

PEACHES: ¿Ya ves?

_NANA ‘eyes’ PEACHES to say ‘give the viejo a chance._

DAUGHTER: He said you were beautiful.

POPPA: She won’t listen.

PEACHES: _Softening_ Not to lies!

POPPA: Yessiree, Beautiful. I asked her to marry me right there on the dance floor of the Trianon.

PEACHES: He did. _POPPA smiles_ I didn’t let him touch me for a whole week. It was in the Imperial Valley. We were staying with my tía Espie. Que honeymoon! They had put us in my primo’s room. He was out picking walnuts near Sacramento. I had drunk two three beers. Poppa looked good to me.

POPPA: She was drunk. _They start laughing._

PEACHES: Afterwards, I was too tired to get up and clean myself. Pretty soon after, your brother was born.

POPPA: It was 1948. The war was long over. Truman was president. And I had a Mexican wife.
Act 1, Scene 1b: POPPA, PEACHES + DAUGHTER
Scene Two: “This Far North”

“Cuatro Milpas” (Four Cornfields) from the Kronos Quartet’s album “Nuevo” rises. PEACHES’ mind time travels back to a previous life as a Yaqui twelve-year-old and to when the hotel was a colonial outpost, a short jaunt off the De Anza Trail -- what is now downtown Los Angeles. MALINXE enters (Music motif). She pauses and replaces one pair of black sunglasses with another pair of large red-frame sunglasses and touches up her lipstick. Other than that, she is dressed in the 16th century multi-layered native Mexican huipil of her royal class standing. NANA still scrubs.

MALINXE: Girl. Girl.

PEACHES realizes she is being addressed, rises, goes to MALINXE, who points to offstage. PEACHES exits, then moments later returns as GIRL wearing a servant’s sack dress and pulling a cart with a small pyramid of Louis Vuitton luggage. MALINXE and GIRL stand at the front desk, waiting to be served. MALINXE speaks to GIRL who doesn’t pay her much mind.

Music – “Consciously European”

MALINXE: I, Malinxe, have never been this far north. Don Cortés took me as far south as Honduras and what an adventure that expedition was. I met all manner of people and spoke at the subjugation of many. Strange, to ride through a battlefield translating Spanish and Náhuatl into Maya telling bloodied limbs and half faces they were now part of the Spanish Crown. I didn’t mind except for all the dust. But upon my return, little girl, why poets wrote of me, calling me Mother, quite an honorific especially when I had yet to give birth. (Pause) And to think, Cortés in his early letters to the King and Queen addressed me as simply the Indian woman.

MALINXE laughs. GIRL rolls her eyes and NANA stands, removes bandana from her head, folds it neatly into her apron, replacing it with a red cap. When she crosses behind lobby desk, NANA’s entire demeanor changes.

NANA: How may I serve you?
They exchange looks in silence.

MALINXE: I have a reservation.

NANA looks down.

NANA: Let’s see, Malinche Cortés.

MALINXE: That is a prior name and previous relat... husband. I am Doña Malinche Jaramillo. Or just Malinxe.

NANA: Yes, of course, here you are, please sign here.

MALINXE signs parchment, a giant “X” with a flare.

NANA: Equis?

MALINXE: I’m traveling incognita.

NANA: And a few centuries into the future.

MALINXE: Excusez-moi.

NANA: This is the 18th century, Señora

GIRL: Ooops.

MALINXE looks around, taking in her surroundings.

MALINXE: (Beat) I need some... rest.

NANA: Well here at Mission Spa & Towers we provide the finest in New Spain’s care and services. As one of the uppermost outposts in the viceroy’s magistrate we think of ourselves as her crown jewel. But like any jewel, we could all use a good buffing now and then. We offer purgatives and a special Indian package, including a sweat and purification with thistle.

MALINXE: Thistle?

NANA: A thorned plant, specially imported from the Mission down in San Diego. The Indians there use it to beat the impurities out of you.

MALINXE: Me?
MALINXE: I’ll just need a large room con vista and a day bed. See to it that my slave, I picked her up en route, and one of yours here at the hotel carry my luggage upstairs with great care and unpack my things. Then send mine down to accompany me on my walk before we retire for siesta.

An awkward silence and then NANA whispers in confidence to MALINXE

MALINXE: Who?

NANA: Ni modo. (In a more hushed but clearly audible tone) Their (referencing GIRL with her eyes) feet stain everything and we can never get the smell out of the sheets. You understand? (Back to full volume.) We allow them to sleep out in the back here for two to four hours nightly depending on your schedule of needs. And for servants of the house, we provide this mat. (She pulls from behind her desk a rolled straw mat.) Here.

MALINXE: (To NANA) Yes, well thank you. I’d like to sign the girl up for catechism. She has been baptized but I’d like to have her do her holy communion while I rest. (To GIRL) We’ll get the Indian out of you yet and who knows, my little slave girl may grow up to become my Christian lady in waiting.

MALINXE: (To NANA) Can you have my luggage delivered to my room?

MALINXE exits. NANA, looking at GIRL, scowls.
Scene Three: “Too Old to Be Called New”

The blue-black dark of night floods the back alley area where the servants sleep. NANA enters in sleeping gown, weary from a day, like all of her days, of cooking, chopping, scrubbing, sweating, answering to, wiping some asses and kissing others. (Tongva sounds. Acorn grinding, hands fingering seashells in a basket, the clatter of whale bone, the call of bone whistles, the brush of soapwood, the pounding of a wicker beater, a woman’s voice singing in the distant.)

GIRL enters wearing sleepwear. She is surprised to see NANA rolling out a mat.

NANA: What girl? (GIRL says nothing.) Whose feet do you think they made the rule for? (NANA laughs. GIRL remains silent, rolls out her mat and lies down. After a beat, GIRL stirs.)

GIRL: Tell me a story.

NANA: Better yet. I’ll tell you a secret.

GIRL: Is it about mi Doña Malinxe? I know all those. All she did was “weedi weedi weedi” (She mimes a blabbing mouth.) all the way up the De Anza trail.

NANA: Is she a big shot?

GIRL: According to her. I don’t know for sure, it was before my time.

NANA: Cuéntame.

GIRL: Bueno. (Rote) She was stolen by traveling merchants or was sold to them by either her stepdad or her mother and brother, know one knows for sure – and she’s not telling. Then she was given to El Capitán –

NANA: ¿A quién?

GIRL: Hernán Cortés.
Act 1, Scene 3:

NANA: ¿El mero Chingón?

GIRL: (Nods) Her, and about eighteen other girls, when she was just a little older than me. Then she learned Spanish real quick and translated for . . . el chingón from Maya to Náhuatl and became a Christian named Marina and traveled all over Mexico. And then she had Cortés’ son, el Bastardo.

NANA: That’s unkind.

GIRL: Yes, but not untrue . . . who got sent off to Spain. I hear her weeping at night over it. Then she married el Don and had his daughter but still weeps over the boy and lives in wealth and luxury in the great capital of New Spain.

NANA: Teotihuacán is far too old to be called new, no matter what the visitors say.

GIRL: Enough history. What about the secret? I have to wake up soon – before the sun does. I have to bring her food and sponge her in the morning. Help her dress and then clean the room. Then go to catechism.

NANA: I can time travel.

GIRL: Then after that I have to return and see to her needs, which are many. You can what?

NANA: Travel in and through time – mostly backward but some forward. You could do it too, one day, if you concentrate. Why I can even make time disappear.

GIRL: Can you disappear too?

NANA: If I could, I wouldn’t be here.

GIRL: I don’t believe you. I mean soon it will be time to get up and time to feed her and time to fix her bed and clean up her mess in the room and time to help her dress and time to steal some of her copal perfume and leftover blackberries while she naps. How can you time travel when you can’t even tell a good story?

NANA: You are a very rude.

GIRL: I know, una niña mala.
Act 1, Scene 3: GIRL + NANA

NANA: Good night bad girl.

GIRL: Good night worse woman.

They both go to sleep smiling. Night sounds.
Scene Seven: “Pour Me.”

POPPA sits a the bar.

POPPA: Well, yeah . . . I guess Peaches was right . . . left to my own devices, well those guys kina took advantage of me. I should’ve acted different. Just plain better. But, when you look back, you know, as you get older, you think about how young you were at the time and you kina gotta forgive yourself some things. Hell, I was just a teenager when left for the war. And barely a few years after my discharge, I’m married and the kids start coming.

BARTENDER: Wow.

POPPA: These fellas were kind of the same way, y’know, like in the service. Peaches was right about that. They’ll take you for every cent you got in your pocket. (Pause) I’d think of Peaches in that hospital bed, hooked up to every kind of tube and contraption and I just didn’t know what I was supposed to do. They thought it was cancer; opened her all up to find out it wasn’t. Ulcers as big as my fist though.

BARTENDER: Damn.

POPPA: Still there were complications. The cure can kill you, that’s for sure.

BARTENDER: Yeah, I know that.

POPPA: Shoot, the kids were still in grade school. Whad I know ‘bout being a father without Peaches? Her whole family was lookin’ at me like this kinda stupid gringo. They weren’t prejudiced or nuthin’, but I could feel it. My mother was dead just a few years before . . . never had a father, really. Just quite a few “uncles,” if you know what I mean?

BARTENDER: I think I do.

POPPA: My mother was a kind of free spirit, when I was a boy, god bless her. (Pause) I thought I was losing my wife, so I turned to the liquor. Okay, I admit it, I drowned my troubles. Pretty much abandoned my kids for that time. But I never had another woman. Sure, the guys would tease me
about it, but no one could compare. Not to my Peaches. (*Pause*) Thing is . . . nobody bothers you at a bar. You can say whatever you want or nothing at all and nobody holds it against you, especially, like I said, if you have a few dollars in your pocket.

BARTENDER: Poor me, poor me, pour me another one.

POPPA: Hey, that’s a good one. Funny. (*Beat*)

BARTENDER: (*Pouring him a shot*) On the house.

POPPA: Why thank you. (*Beat*) I never even cooked myself a meal before, ‘sides peeling potatoes on KP duty. With Peaches, all I had to do was bring home the bacon, little as it was.

BARTENDER: You’ve been a lucky man.

POPPA: Fifty years together. Never another woman.

BARTENDER: ---

BARTENDER: Really.

POPPA: Yep.

*Long pause. Crossfade.*
Scene Nine: “Queen of Slaves”

NANA enters the hotel pool area, out of breath. She carries a stack of books. MALINXE sits in a lounge chair, the green hue of the pool water washes over her.


MALINXE: Been there, done that.

NANA: “The History of the Indies of New Spain” por Fray Diego Durán

MALINXE: I’ve had enough of these celibates . . .

NANA: (Aside) Hardly.


NANA: Sí. It’s a sad story . . . I wouldn’t recommend it.

MALINXE thumbs through it.

MALINXE: What’s a pachuco?

NANA: My nephew, that’s who. Marijuano. (Beat) I’d skip the chapter on the conjugation of “chingar” --

MALINXE: Nasty word. I am aware that there has been talk.

NANA: No, señora. No sé nada.

MALINXE: It was on the road to Tenochtitlán.

NANA: Bueno, yes, I did hear que –

MALINXE: Los Cholulans were prepared to ambush Cortés and --
NANA: You went and spilled the beans. *(She covers her mouth.)*

MALINXE: That *is* common knowledge. But, what you may *not* know is . . . well . . .

NANA: Well . . .

MALINXE: In barter for my loyalty, I was offered a Cholulan prince.

NANA: Shaddup!

MALINXE: His mother came to me in the middle of the night, proffered her young warrior son to me on a silver platter, promising marriage. *Fíjate!*

NANA: Just like that?

MALINXE: With the caveat, of course, that I bring with me my dowry of plated gold. So, I respond ‘yes’ out of one side of my mouth and I spill the beans, as you so eloquently put it, to El Capitán out the other.

NANA: You *are* a vendida!

MALINCHE: Excuse me!

NANA: Vencida.

MALINCHE: Peor. Do the math, mujer. I would not get pregnant for the first full two years of my relationship con Don Hernán. The Cholulan would’ve had me with child in *two weeks.* My tongue saved me. *(She smiles.)* El Don needed me more to translate than to birth the mestizo nation. Literally, the man stopped touching me the moment he tasted the multilingual syrup that flowed out of these lips. *(Touches her mouth)* Not the other ones. *(Gestures to ‘down there.’)*

Maya, Spanish, every nuance of Nahuatl spoken from pauper to prince. *Fíjate!* When we arrived en la capital, it was I who had to tell el gran chingón Motecuhzoma himself, that the wheat-haired man con barba standing before him was to take him prisoner.

NANA: Qué vergüenza.

MALINXE: It *was* embarrassing. And el bruto Cortés goes to hug el Tlatoani like he’s petting a pinche esquinic. This, to an Aztec Lord whose station was such that his feet never touched the earth. He was carried everywhere --
NANA: Y ¿qué pasó?

MALINXE: Bueno, I grabbed el Don by the hem of his little skirt-shirt and pull him back. I tried to preserve at least an ounce of dignity for the soon-to-be-fallen Emperor.

NANA: Well, that was thoughtful.

MALINXE: Tlazocamatli.

_They are interrupted._ GIRL enters wearing a jacket of ropes, a headdress of heron feathers and a tumpline (or headstrap) holding a bundle. She has been crying.

MALINXE: What have you done?

GIRL: When I went to return the costume after the show, I got some passion fruit juice on it. It stained.

MALINXE: You thieving witch.

GIRL: And the friar made me wear this, so I would remember what it would be like to be a slave who didn’t know God.

NANA: _(Examining the costume)_ My heron feathers disintegrated over time. And this is a good tumpline, I would like one just like it. Take the jacket off girl.

MALINXE: She’s mine to command, you insolent hag. But yes, do remove the headdress and tumpline and ropes. And you, _To NANA_ you, take her outside and find a very wooden branch or some of that thistle you have imported and open up her back with it.

_GIRL is stunned and methodically removes headdress, tumpline and ropes and gingerly folds them._ NANA leads her out by the hand. MALINXE goes to the headdress, fingers it, then awkwardly puts it on.

MALINXE: Let me see if I remember, I must, I was sold at least three times. _Beat_ The slave. She who is an axe, a tumpline, the earth, the mud, the the the – oh what is it – the stones, yes and then something something, she who has heron feathers and a jacket of ropes, and then I forget but yes the ending I remember, she whose dwelling place is the cesspool, the dung heap. _Happy at first at the prowess of her memory and then dejected by the meaning of it, MALINXE paces._ Here I am, with wealth and recognition
in the Church, Spain and all her possessions. Wearing my rightful crown
(She adjusts the headdress)... the Queen of the Slaves.
GIRL: I’m healing now. She didn’t use a branch or the thistle, said it cost too much to waste on a slave. Instead she used bougainvillea, said the thorns would make it look worse than it felt. She told me to stand very still and concentrate. . . . And I did it! I time traveled. As the red petals flew around me and my back bled tears, I traveled through time. Mostly forward . . . or was it backward? I will return to the far south under a different guise.

Mi Doña will be dead in a year but spoken about throughout time. The legal husband will marry again, Spanish, this time and disinherit the mestizo daughter. Her only son will die beneath a Spanish flag in the war against Islam.

Malinxe will turn in her grave.

And I . . .? I will outlive them all, long enough to forget my original name and answer to ‘cabrona.’
AMADO: It was a 1932 Packard De Luxe. A classic. It had those wide white walls and those trumpet horns mounted under the headlights. It’d be the last time I’d drive for Bowman. Peaches had just turned eighteen. I remember because the day before, me and a buncha the boys at the casino, decide . . .

DAUGHTER (One of the “boys”): “Vamos a dar una serenata a la Peaches.”

“Las Mañanitas rises in the background.”

Everyone loved Peaches at el Salon – todos los trabajadores. She treated everyone real nice, no matter what your job was. Y bueno, también era muy bella. So, a half dozen traguitos later, just as the sun is coming up, we all pile into el troque and head into town to to her mother’s house to serenade a la Peaches. (Singing): “En el día que tu naciste, nacieron todos las flores.”

AMADO: But “El Señor” Bowman was no song and dance man. The next day when me and him pull up in front of the house, I see la mamá peeking out from behind las cortinas. Not to keep us chavalos tijuanenses in line like the orifying before, but to make sure her hija didn’t crack, as Peaches drags her heart to her own funeral. La mama must’ve known.

Still I get it. Bowman was the bossman, la tortilla and el frijol para la familia. And it was a big family... the father gone.

I couldn’t look Peaches in the eyes though when I open the car door for her. I knew que tenía vergüenza. Me, too, for both of us. And I hear El Patrón slap the leather seat for her to come and slide on over next to him. So she does and I slam the door closed. Too hard, I guess, because el viejo throws a look at me --

Offstage: “Con calma, hombre,”

AMADO: I hated it when he spoke to me in Spanish. My English was fine. And then,

Offstage: “Llena el tanque.”

AMADO: So, I go to the gas station and step out to shoot the breeze con el gasolinero. We talk about the car a little, a little bit de la política sobre
Cárdenas y todo. I can see that Bowman’s not even looking at me. He’s still got his fedora on and it’s covering his face and hers, too. I hated how he would always lean into her like that, like he already had a piece of her. I know he’s telling her some kina pedo – flattering her with air. Y me enojé. So, I tell the attendant. “Déjalo vacío.” And pass him a few dollars and we drive off with less than a gallon of gas left in the tank.

*PEACHES* smiles.

**AMADO:** When we hit the road, I keep checking out the scene in back through my side mirrors. Somehow she managed to put a little room between him and her. She has her face turned away to the window, como fuera tan enamorada de la vista. But mostly I watch her lips, they’re moving hundred miles an hour, but nothing’s coming out of her mouth.

She was praying! That’s what got me the most. She was praying half way down to Rosarito, waiting for some milagro to save her from this cabrón’s evening of ‘payback.’

Offstage: “So, you’re eighteen now,“

**AMADO:** I heard him say more than once. El Viejo had to be already in his sixties! She knew what was ahead of her.

*PEACHES:* Rosarito.

**AMADO:** Hotel Rosarito was the kind of place that the only mexicanas that go there were either holding a wash bin or their governor-husband’s elbow. Any one else, . . . bueno, tú sabes . . .

*PEACHES:* Sí.

**AMADO:** So, true to form, that beautiful Packard starts spitting up and sputtering to a dead stop, right there en el desierto and not a gas station for miles.

I can see her looking at me through the side mirror. She’s got such relief in her eyes. So, I give it my best mexicano ‘pobre de mí’ number. “I don’t know what’s wrong, Señor. You saw it yourself, I filled the tank.” *(Beat)* After that, he let me go.

**AMADO:** I was glad. Casinos were closing down anyway. There was plenty of work in L.A. I heard.
Scene Seven: “Put Salt on It”

_Later. Hotel “Ladies Room.” MALINXE and PEACHES stand at the sinks. PEACHES “fixes her face.” She’s doing a bad job of it. MALINXE tries to remove a red wine stain from her huipil._

PEACHES: You shouldn’t rub it. It makes it worse.

MALINXE: Are you speaking to me?

PEACHES: Put salt on it. It soaks up the wine stain good.

MALINXE looks around like ‘what salt?’

PEACHES: Well, it’s too late now. (Observing her) . . . You know, you aren’t so special.

MALINXE: I’m not?

PEACHES: I had my Cortés, too.

MALINXE: It was written in our books, his arrival on the sea.

PEACHES: His eyes were blue blue blue like a pale ocean.

MALINXE: Like a god, a star rising on the Eastern horizon.

PEACHES: You sound like the bible. (Beat) No me oyes?

MALINXE: I hear you. I met your husband in the lobby.

PEACHES: I’m not talking about him.

MALINXE: Who then?

PEACHES: Mr. Bowman. He was a big shot in Tijuana. He owned everything.

MALINXE: Even you?

PEACHES: No fue así.
MALINXE: Era tu patrón.

PEACHES: Not so much. *(Beat)* They got books about him.

MALINXE: I know, “El Pozo del Mundo.”

PEACHES: Mr. Bowman made history.

MALINXE: I made history.

PEACHES: You made trouble.

MALINXE: Then you do remember me. You call me by his name.

PEACHES: ¿Cómo?

MALINXE: Cortés.

PEACHES: I didn’t say nothing about that.

*PEACHES continues to apply her make-up, worsening it.*

PEACHES: I’m not ashamed. I never did nothing to be ashamed of.

*MALINXE starts toward her . . .

MALINXE: Señora, let me . . . *(PEACHES steps away.)*

PEACHES: I hate this place. What I got to celebrate here? Oh, the Biltmore, big deal. Not to me. It’s not a big deal to me. *(Starts to exit.)*

MALINXE: No te vayas.

PEACHES: ¿Qué?

MALINXE: You don’t want to go out like that, Señora.

*PEACHES goes to the mirror. Studies her face.*

PEACHES: He told me to meet him in the hotel bar. This same one here. I thought after I left Tijuana, I was free from him, pero no, he track me down, like a piece a meat. He wanted something more, ya lo supe.
I sat in the booth waiting. A long time. By the time he got there, I got a fever, I was so scared. He orders a drink. For me, too. He could see I was shaking and white as a ghost. Se enojó. I couldn’t help it, to show I was afraid.

Then from the bar, the phone rang y el mesero le trajo el telefóno. Bowman says five words into the phone, then he hangs up.

Offstage: I don’t know what god you’re praying to . . .

PEACHES: Me pega con las palabras con si fuera un insulto. And he got up and left. (Beginning to cry) It was the last time I saw him, god forgive me.

There is a pause. MALINXE studies PEACHES who nervously returns to her face in the mirror.

MALINXE: It wasn’t the last time.

PEACHES: ¿No Entiendes? I knew he would never let it . . . me go. He threw la llave en la mesa. I see him whisper something al mesero and then he leaves. I just sit there like a pendeja. I can’t move. Until I feel someone standing over me. It’s the bell boy, un mexicano. (Pause)

DAUGHTER enters, hearing her mother’s voice. She stops unnoticed, stays by the door.

PEACHES: The boy picks up the key and doesn’t say nuthing. He knows I’m gointu follow him. He takes me to Bowman’s room. We went up up up to the top. But it’s not a room, es un palacio, like nuthing I ever seen before. Puro oro, but for me it was all black. All I remember is darkness.

The hour I wait for Bowman was the longest in my life. I could of left. I didn’t (Pause) When he came back, he’s got a big smile on his face. (Pause) And that was it. One time was all it took. I never saw him again.

MALINXE: (Going to her) Dame la cara, mi indita.

DAUGHTER appears. PEACHES sees her.

MALINXE: You look como la muerte/ con tanta --

DAUGHTER: Mom.

PEACHES snaps. Pushes MALINXE away.
PEACHES: No me toques..

DAUGHTER: I . . . I didn’t know

PEACHES: A la chingada, what dint you know? You dint hear nuthing!

DAUGHTER: Mom.

PEACHES: Esta puta she trick me --

DAUGHTER: She was trying to help you.

PEACHES: Like you trying to help me? You coulda help me better along time ago if you was born a man.

*PEACHES pushes her way past them both and out. Black out.*
Scene Eight: “Got my Bag; Got my Reservation”

*Rise on hotel room. MALINXE changes her clothes. NANA helps pack Malinxe’s things. A long pause.*

NANA: I went over to the park down the street.

MALINXE: Pershing Square. Hardly La Alameda.

NANA: I don’t know La Alameda.

MALINXE: Mexico City.

NANA: Bueno, there was a lady there. Well, she had the voice of a lady.

MALINXE: A bag lady.

NANA: She had a bag, yes, woven of tule. The old way. And a pretty voice, but she looked like a man. *(Beat)* She sang in Tongva.

MALINXE: What?

NANA: My language. I knew it because she said the word “Yangna.”

MALINXE: Yangna.

NANA: It was the first name for L.A. How could she know a word 500 years later?

MALINXE: She remembered, I guess.

*They are done packing. MALINXE throws a backpack over one shoulder. She wears jeans and a short huipil blouse.*

NANA: Y Las maletas?

MALINXE: I wont’ be needing them.

NANA: Ahora, ¿qué? Pa’ donde vas?
MALINXE: I’m going back.

NANA: Pa’ el sur?

MALINXE: In time.

NANA: Me, too. I hope. *(Cathedral Bells sound.)* Mission bells. I still hate them. *(Beat) Lista?

MALINXE: Sí.

NANA: *(Putting on her red cap)* Vámonos, I’l check you out.

*MALINXE smiles as they exit.*
Scene Nine: Las Matemáticas del amor


DAUGHTER: Mom, I paid for the room. Just waiting for it to be ready ---

PEACHES: Mija, tell me one good thing about love.

DAUGHTER sits next to her.

DAUGHTER: (After a moment) You were both young.

PEACHES: Yes.

DAUGHTER: (Taking her hand.) He took your hand into his. And he draws un dedo along the cracked cañón that is your palm.

PEACHES: Amado.

DAUGHTER: He wants you por toda la historia que tienes allí. For the muted llanto of your prayers, your mother’s regañadas, the factory work that will curl your fingers into fists.

Peaches looks at her hands.

DAUGHTER: He wants you because you are used. He doesn’t say this aloud, only fingers the words inside the palm of your hand. You grip back . . . and you are already together in the borrowed room.

AMADO enters. PEACHES holds his eyes.

He is embarassed that you have to sneak. And his shame calms you because you know he knows that you are the kind of girl that deserves to be married and maybe he will marry you against his wife’s wishes. But you are not romantic because you have seen a man’s body and want to see his instead.
He goes to PEACHES, takes her in his arms. Lights dim upstage where they slowly dance in silence. A circle of light gradually closes in around DAUGHTER, as she speaks.

DAUGHTER: And your want spins you around and down onto the bed. The naked skin of his chest, your cuna, he cradles you. Your legs open and you are wet when he touches you. Why is he touching you there . . .? Those hands . . .

Your body like water. He brings his mouth down into the lake of you. And the wool of his pants falls like drapes around your feet. He presses against you and enters you. And it lasts and lasts and lasts . . . until it’s over. (Pause, a breath)

Emma . . .

Lights fade on DAUGHTER. The dance has ended. PEACHES looks at AMADO, her expression impassive. He watches as she walks away. He exits. PEACHES sits alone on stage. She does not see MALINXE enter.

PEACHES: We take the long bus ride home en todo silencio. I don’t let him hold my hand. I know this kind of love is never married. It is meant to ruin you. I want a man’s sex. And I have to pretend I don’t.

MALINXE: Do you blame me, Madre? Do you blame Malinxe?

There is a long pause.

PEACHES:
As women do we think,
I am making history?
Do we think beyond
our shackles, our bracelets de oro
our children’s hungry mouths, our fear
of prison?

Do we look at our pitiful places on this earth and ask,
Is there a plan in this?

You tell me, Malinalli,
what Mexican country is there to return to now?
Es verdad que they called him Malinche.
But you are no Cortés.

They make us slaves and then condemn us when we act like one.

*Within a few moments, PEACHES is already somewhere else in her mind, her hands speaking to figures in the air as she heads back toward the lobby. MALINXE picks up her mochila and exits the hotel (downstage). It is nighttime. LA Traffic central city sounds. The Tongva “bag lady” can be heard still singing in Pershing Square.*

MALINXE: I don’t pretend to rewrite history, the story of my capture and regret. I can only say, madre, that I have counted on you to remember me like this. Relieved of history’s burden.

At this, your most important hour.

*Lights fade, sound of cell phone ringing in the dark.*
Act One, Scene Nine. KEY DAUGHTER + PEACHES + MALINXE