

KAN BALAAM
Colective creation by Teatrotaller¹
Spring 2009

Scene 1
Tourists and Coca-Cola in Chamula

*Characters: Carlos, Ramón, Curandero [folk healer], Rosa
Guide, Jim, Linda y Mary (tourists)*

Setting: San Juan Chamula Church. Guide and tourists enter from the audience. Lights go up making the scene look like a church. Rosa is praying with Curandero inside the church. Outside of the church, Ramón and Carlos sit at a table drinking Coke.

GUIDE (Entering at the back of the room from behind the audience. Speaks English with strong accent.)

This is the Plaza of San Juan Chamula (points at the vendor stands and shops). So now we are entering the Church of San Juan Chamula. Remember that you cannot take pictures inside. No cameras, no cell phones, please.

(They enter the Church of San Juan Chamula and look around in awe. Rosa is presenting her offerings with the Curandero.)

GUIDE

This is a very special church. Catholic priests are not allowed here. Chamulas perform their own rituals in their traditional way. Some people believe that they don't worship Christian saints, but Mayan gods concealed under the Christian images.

(Suddenly, they interrupt the locals, who are in the midst of their rituals, with their camera flashes.)

CURANDERO (Screaming, enraged)

Taking pictures is not permitted here. Can't you read the signs at the entrance?

JIM

Sorry, sorry. Somos tourists. Sorry.

¹ The authors of this play were Teatrotaller students (Cornell University) with the guidance and editing of Professor Elvira Sánchez-Blake. The writers of the scenes were: Verónica Isabel Chavez, Jimmy Suárez, Tania Peñafort, Ximena Vallarino, Alejandra Ruiz, Ivy Torres, and Sani Brosig. Dramatist Carlos Morton gave professional advice for editing the script. The play was put on scene on April 8 and 9, 2009, at Anabel Taylor Auditorium in Cornell University. English translation by Cecilia Chapa.

CURANDERO (*heavy with sarcasm*)

So you are tourists? No kidding? You don't look it! Did you know that flashes drain the souls of all who are here? I bet your tourist guide didn't tell you...

LINDA (*To Jim*)

Let's run, I'm scared he's going to hurt us or take our cameras away!

JIM: (*Secretly to Linda*)

On the count of three. One, Two Three!

(*They go out running, Curandero goes after them screaming and cursing.*)

CURANDERO

Cowards! You don't understand the offense you have inflicted upon the gods!

(*They run out of the church (and scene). Lights change to outside illumination. On getting out, Jim knocks down Carlos' Coke bottle.*)

CARLOS (*rises from the table angrily*)

Fucking tourists! Outsiders! They think it's okay to come here and spill my Coke!

RAMON Calm down, *compadre*, relax. Do you want me to buy you another Coke? Why do you like it so much? You should drink *atole* instead.

CARLOS

But a Coke is less expensive than *atole*. I have no choice! Besides, it mixes well with other drinks, like *posh* and rum. You drink Coke too... Look! They spilled it all. Damn foreigners! They have no respect for anything! (*He cleans himself cursing.*)

RAMÓN

First, you were complaining about your woman, and now, are you complaining about outsiders?

CARLOS

It's because I'm pissed off and messed up. You have no idea what it's like not having kids. Do you, by any chance, have a potion or mixture to help my woman have kids? In that case, I'd shut my mouth and stop complaining.

RAMÓN

Easy. You've only been married for two years. You and Felicita are still young. Give her some time, *compadre*. Later you'll complain that you can't feed them. That's worse.

CARLOS

I don't think so, *compadre*. It's my fucking bad luck. After I got married and we went to live at the cooperative, the government decided to remove subsidies and now nobody

buys our corn. Of course! It is cheaper to buy the one farmed up North. Yes, *compadre*, now we eat tortillas made in the USA. (*Stressing the words*)

RAMON (*bites a tortilla*)
They taste the same to me.

CARLOS
Then, last year's draught came and I lost my entire crop. I couldn't pay the loans and was left in debt to the top of my head. And to cap it all, my woman doesn't give me children. Barren land! Fruitless woman! Complete drought!

RAMÓN
I know that no one buys our native maize anymore. All our *compas* have left for the city or up North in search of work. But, don't complain anymore. You did okay when you were in the lumber business. Even though everybody in the community objected, you didn't fret to fell the trees to sell you damn wood!

CARLOS
Sure *compa*, I needed the money to support the family Felicita and I were planning.

RAMÓN
But Carlos, by cutting trees and burning the woods just to sell your damn lumber, you also took the life away from that land! In the eyes of the gods, you don't deserve that land! Don't you see that you are now being punished for all those times you went out with your power saw, your ax, and your machete to "harvest" in the woods?

CARLOS
God! I already have a wife talking about them everyday... I don't need my *compadre* praising those things.

RAMÓN
And how do you explain not having kids?

CARLOS
I should have married your wife instead, you son of a bitch. Just kidding, just kidding, don't get mad. I've tried everything so that woman gives me a son...

RAMÓN: (*Looks at the church's clock. Gets up.*)
Brother, I have to go. There's a procession at three. Enjoy your Coke!

CARLOS
Go and pray. Pray for me and say hello for me to your punishing god. (*He laughs while drinking Coke and belches.*)

BLACK OUT

KAN BALAAM

Scene 2 A 'Real' Deal

Characters: Felicita, Rosa, Carlos, and Braulio.

Setting: Carlos and Felicita's home. There's a Chiapas style altar, at the end of the room. Felicita is placing candles on the altar. She crosses herself. Behind her is a small table with cokes, tortillas, and other bottled soft drinks. There is knocking at the door. Rosa arrives.

FELICITA

Hi *Comadre!* Come in, come in. I've some *pozol* here. Do you want some?

ROSA

Thank you *Comadrita*. Your *pozol* is always very good.

FELICITA

Tell me, what's new?

ROSA

I'm a little worried. Have you heard the rumors?

FELICITA

What rumors?

ROSA

I heard some *compadres* talking at the store. They said that the soft drink company bought the area's water source to build a bottling plant.

FELICITA

Which soft drink company? Since when is water sold? Nobody owns the water. How can it be that they are buying the community's water sources?

ROSA

But, what can we do? If the government gives them authorization, there's nothing we can do.

FELICITA

It's always the same thing. Our Federal Government has no respect for the natives and takes their land to give it to companies like Coca-Cola. We are always on the losing end.

ROSA

The worst part is they said the company's agents are visiting farm owners to offer them 'real deals' with Coca-Cola so they don't jeopardize the company's operation. That is to say, to persuade us with golden mirrors.

FELICITA

No!, We cannot allow it, *Comadre!* That would be the downfall of our community...
(*Carlos comes in calling Felicita.*)

ROSA (*On hearing Carlos, stands up frightened.*)

'Later Comadrita. (*Leaves the scene through the back.*)

CARLOS

Felicita! Felicita?

FELICITA

I'm praying.

CARLOS

I'll never get it! Why do you lose so much time in such nonsense? Going to church isn't enough?

FELICITA

I won't say it again. Without God's help we won't get anything. You should come to church too.

CARLOS

Eeenough!! It's always the same. You and your foolishness! (*Grabs a Coke from the table.*) Go on with your praying. Get! And pray hard to your god to let you... (*Shuts up suddenly.*)

FELICITA

What? What were you going to say?

CARLOS

To... help you with... everything! Whatever!

FELICITA

Do you mean to help ... us both?

CARLOS

Is there a chance it is my fault? You know very well, it is your fault...

FELICITA

You're so unfair! To have children you need two.

CARLOS

Yes, you need two. But, you are not only dry; you are passing it to the land, to everything around us!

FELICITA

You don't understand anything. (*Upset.*) I'm leaving.

CARLOS

And my food?

FELICITA

(*Takes the candles, an egg, and a Coke. Puts everything in a bag.*)
Your food, of course! I left some *tortillas* with *chile* on the *comal*.

CARLOS

Bring more Cokes when you come back. You took the last one.

FELICITA

Over there is some *atole* and some *chía* ade. What do you need Coke for?
(*She leaves upset.*)

CARLOS

And what about you? Do you need it for your praying?

There's knocking at the door. Felicita, who is about to go out, opens the door to Braulio, the Coca-Cola representative, wearing an executive suit. He carries a briefcase.

BRAULIO

Good afternoon. Is Mr. Carlos Aguilar home?

FELICITA

Good afternoon. Carlos, someone is here to see you.

CARLOS

Good afternoon. I'm Carlos, and you are? (*They shake hands.*)

BRAULIO

It's a pleasure to meet you Sir. My name is Braulio Ramírez Sáenz. I am the Coca-Cola representative in charge of this district. I'd like to talk to you about the company's new initiatives.

CARLOS

Yes, come in.
(*Braulio comes in.*)

FELICITA

Would you like something to drink?

BRAULIO

Thank you very much, but no, thank you. I'm okay.

(Felicita stays behind the altar, listening.)

CARLOS

How can I help you, Sir?

BRAULIO *(Looking at Carlos straight in the eye.)*

Carlos, don't you remember me? *Compadre*? It's me, Basilio, Don Tacho Tucum's son. I left town a few years ago. Don't you remember me?

CARLOS

Basilio? Hey! *Compadre*! Look how much you've changed! What is this about Braulio Ramirez Sáenz?

BRAULIO

You know. To succeed, I had to change my first and last names, and everything else.

CARLOS

Yes, I see. Changed even friends and clothes. Wow *compadre*, what a suit! And look at that tie! Doesn't it feel like a hanging noose?

BRAULIO

Do you feel like having some *posh* with Coke? *(Pulls out the bottles from his briefcase and pours a mixture of both in glasses that are already on the table.)*

Look, *compadre*, I'm here to offer you a deal. I'm a Coca-Cola representative for this zone and I've come to tell you about a new project that we have for this area.

CARLOS

A project?

Mr. BRAULIO

Coca-Cola is exploring the springs. The project is to open a soft drink bottling plant. This will bring jobs and modernizing. They will start building it in two weeks.

CARLOS

Who authorized the building of this plant?

BRAULIO

Federal Government approved the project.

CARLOS

Compadre, we are the owners of this land. Nobody owns the springs. It is the community's water. Our *milpas* and crops depend on the spring water. If that company wants to come here, to our town, it has to ask our permission.

BRAULIO

The Government has already granted usage to the company.

CARLOS

Without asking us? The ones living in the *ejido*? The community?

BRAULIO (*Giving him another drink.*)

Don't get upset, *compadre*. Here's the deal. I like you and I think you are less outdated than the others, a little more open, more ... how should I say it? Civilized? I have come, in the name of the company, to offer you a job in the factory in exchange for...

CARLOS (*A little drunk.*)

For what?

BRAULIO

For your help in persuading your *paisanos*. Everybody will benefit. Work, industrialization, a future! Or, are you planning on living the rest of your lives in this dying place? Don't tell me you're doing well. (*Laughs.*) I see, yes I do. (*Looks at the poor place in a derogatory manner.*)

CARLOS (*Talking with difficulty because of the booze.*)

That spring is the only water source for the community! From it we get the water for all our needs, for our *milpa*, for cooking. It is our only source of drinking water... I should talk to the authorities first... That decision will affect us all...

BRAULIO (*With sarcasm.*)

Talk to the authorities? The Government has already granted usage to the company... (*Friendly.*) That's why I tell you, *compadre*, consider my offer. You are on the losing end. You will not be able to fight such a powerful company as Coca-Cola. Did I tell you that you'll have a pick-up? An assistant? An office? A good salary? You will see your life changing. Forget about all those poor good-for-nothing Indians. I will turn you into the Coca-Cola man!

CARLOS (*Is having another drink, looks drunk.*)

Let me think about it *compadre*.

BRAULIO

I'll come back, *compadrito*. Think about it. Listen to what I tell you, we are in a time of progress. It's time for *Chamula* to join modernity. Have a nice day. (*Shakes his hand and leaves.*)

Carlos looks thoughtful. Felicita comes in.

FELICITA

Is he gone? What did he want?

CARLOS

He offered me a job in the bottling plant.

FELICITA In the bottling plant? Doing what? You can barely read or write. It's a scam. Who knows what he really wants. Are you going to become a *ladino*, a traitor? Really?

CARLOS You don't understand, woman! Coca-Cola bought the spring to bottle its water. We won't have water for our *milpa* and we are not going to be able to bathe in the creek, either. Instead, we'll have plentiful Coke for the community! It's best to join them and benefit from this opportunity. I'll have a job. This time, I might stop being poor and maybe they'll even send me to the city.

FELICITA

And what about us? And your neighbors, the community? Carlos, please!

CARLOS The Company will bring progress, lots of trading and jobs for everybody. Don't you see? We won't be needing the creek because we'll have Coca-Cola!

FELICITA

We can't use Coke to water the *milpa* or to wash ourselves, and least of all, to eat. It's horrible! You won't let that happen, right? Promise you won't! What will happen to our crops? God will not allow this.

CARLOS

God! Why do you always talk about God? You get crazier by the minute! Go away! Leave me alone!

FELICITA (*With determination.*)

Yes, I'm leaving! I'm going to pray for you, for us, so you don't become a traitor to your people!

CARLOS (*Drunk, passes out on the table.*)

Shut up! Stop! Leave me alone!

Felicita leaves very upset. Carlos keeps on drinking while the scene gets dark.

BLACK OUT.

KAN BALAAM

Scene 3

Ritual in San Juan Chamula

Characters: Felicita and the Curandero

Setting: Inside Chamula's church.

Felicita is walking to meet the Curandero. Felicita carries flowers, two green candles, two white candles, two black candles, an egg, a coke, and a glass. The candles are wrapped in a piece of cloth. Curandero holds incense.

FELICITA

Good afternoon.

CURANDERO

Good afternoon to you too. Did you bring all necessary items for the ritual and your offerings?

FELICITA

Yes Sir. Here they are.

CURANDERO

Very well. Let us go inside the church.

Felicita and the Curandero enter the church. Curandero takes the offerings, which are wrapped in a piece of cloth. Curandero kneels down and prepares the area where the ritual will take place. Felicita remains standing and watches him. Curandero moves aside the pine branches that are on the floor. He puts the candles on the floor ordered by size and color. He spreads flower petals on the floor. The posh and Coke bottles are placed in front of the candles. Curandero lights the candles and the incense, and signals for Felicita to kneel beside him facing the altar.

Pre-Hispanic music is heard for the duration of the ceremony to give solemnity to the act. (Half-light gradually turns to twilight.)

CURANDERO (*Sprinkling a cup of posh on the candles, prays*)

nompere rioš totik,
nompere rioš nič'onil,
hesuk 'une, kahval.

CURANDERO (*Pouring Coke in a glass.*)

Our lord, the creator of the world and the heavens, help us to free her from the evil spirits that have upset her balance.

Felicita takes the cup filled with Coke, drinks it and burps. Curandero takes the cup and returns it to the altar beside the Coke and continues with the ritual.

CURANDERO

čahta ti ta 'alel 'une,
čahta ti ta lok'esel 'une, kahval,
yu 'un li stohol 'avok 'une,
yu 'un li stohol 'ak'ob,
tana ne kahval,
tana.

Curandero takes the egg and moves it first over the candles and then over Felicita's body for a cleansing. He is praying at the same time.

CURANDERO

Return health to her bones,
Bring back the energy to her muscles.
La' 'etuk ša me batel 'un, kahval,
'ič' 'abel lok'el tana 'un,
Mu šanvil mahbenal.

Curandero keeps moving the egg over Felicita's body and stops at her lower abdomen. Then, he takes the egg back to the altar he had put up, and in that moment, goes into a trance. The scene gets dark while Curandero speaks, to a black out as he goes on.

CURANDERO

Great lord Kukumatz, Great feathered serpent, Kukulcán spirit of the water, god, the creator, giver of life, we offer you the nourishment of our flesh made of maize. Accept our strength and our gifts, First Father. First Mother, Tepeu, sing for us the origins of our History.

TOTAL BLACK OUT/ SILENCE / CHANGE OF SETTING

KAN BALAAM

Scene 4 The Creation

Characters: Kukulcán, Tepeú, Man of Maize
Animals: Crocodile, Jaguar, Monkey, Bird

On screen (Night - Black). As the Healer speaks: lights will increase, we see the birth of flowers and trees. Sounds of the jungle, water, and river increase progressively. Pre-Hispanic background music.

CURANDERO- *(in off)*

This is the description of how everything was pending and in calm. There was nothing more than stillness and silence among darkness. Alone were the Maker, the Modeler, the Begetter, the Giver of Life, Kukulcán, the Feathered Serpent, and Tepeú, Lord of Heaven, our Parents. Then, they came to an agreement and decreed the creation of the trees and the reeds, the birth of life and the creation of man.

Gods Kukulcán (wearing a feathered serpent tunic) and Tepeú (wearing a jaguar's mask) appear in scene.

Dim lights. Sounds of crickets, frogs, and insects.

CURANDERO

Next, they created all land animals, the guardians of the woods, the spirits of the mountains... *(Animals come out. Bird, Monkey, Crocodile, and Jaguar, each one making their own sounds.)*

KUKULKÁN

Speak! Shout! Speak according to your own species! Say our names! Invoke our name! Worship us, the Creators!

Animals make the same sounds again.

TEPEU

Let's try again! Day break and dawn are near. Lets make that who will nurture and feed us. What should we do so we are prayed to and remembered on Earth? Our first creatures are not able to worship us. Let us try doing compliant beings to nourish and feed us.

On scene: Man of mud emerges. He has a grotesque appearance and no facial expression. In a dark spot, gods deliberate. They are not happy. Mud softens and crumbles and man dissolves away.

KUKULKÁN

It is evident this creature dissolves in water. It cannot walk or multiply.

On screen: The creation of Man of Wood. It is destroyed by fire.

TEPEU

The time of daybreak has arrived. It is time for the deed to be finished and for the coming of those who will nurture and feed us, our civilized servants. Let man appear! Let humanity come upon Earth's surface!

Lights go up. An image of the Sun at the horizon (dawn) lights up gradually. Noticing the Sun, gods work in haste. Man of Maize comes out. Man of Maize grows big and all-powerful, displaying strength, intelligence and power. Rain (Sounds of water and strong rain).

KUKULKÁN

This is the man made of maize. Neither water nor fire damage him. His flesh made of maize will be his sustenance. It will make him live, think, work, and laugh, and his descendants will be many providing they thank their makers and worship their name for all lunar cycles.

The Sun comes up in full. Gods are happy with their creation. Man of Maize makes an offering and worships the gods with reverence. Creation has ended. Animals move through the set and the scene ends as a picture of harmony among creatures in the universe.

Music of drums and marimbas.

KAN BALAAM

Scene 5 The rebel

Characters: Cuzán, Swallow, Monkey, Halach Unic, Tixcochoh (wearing a pectoral with the image of the Serpent-Jaguar in the middle), Ahkín (a priest to the Sun), Woman (Cuzán's companion), Subject, Artisan, and Tortillera (woman making tortillas).

Setting: Pyramid of Chichén Itzá with a protruding image of god Chaac. Ball game field (an arched goal). The cenote [a sinkhole with exposed rocky edges containing groundwater] is implied. Artisan paints with a brush on a piece of board, Tortillera makes tortillas. To one side, Ahkín, the astronomer, looks at the stars and makes astral calculations.

Cuzán comes out from the audience chasing after Swallow. The bird from the previous scene jumps from here to there to the stage.

CUZÁN

Swallow! Swallow! Where are you going?

(Swallow leaves the scene through the back in little jumps. Cuzán follows her. She feels curious and explores everything around her. She looks, smells, and touches everything.

AHKÍN *(center stage)*

Glorious town of Chichén Itzá, our ancients' secrets declare the arrival of a new Katún. By watching the Sun's shadow, I've estimated the time for the new beginning; the hour of the equinox. Great god Chaac, Lord of Rain, your faithful people ask you to send us rain and never drought! Give us fertility, abundance, and wealth for the Man of Maize!
(After finishing, Ahkín leaves with the other characters.)

Tixcochoh and Swallow come in. He approaches Cuzán.

TIXCOCHOH

Is she yours?

CUZÁN

No, she's not. Swallow belongs to no one; she's the bird of freedom.

TIXCOCHOH

And you? Who do you belong to?

CUZÁN

Me? *(Shy)* I'm Cuzán, I don't belong to anybody, either. *(Looks at his pectoral.)* What do you have on your chest?

TIXCOCHOH

It's my emblem, Kan Balaam's coat of arms.

CUZÁN

Kan Balaam, the great warrior, mediator for opposing forces: Serpent-Jaguar, life and death, day and night.

TIXCOCHOH

That's true, Swallow. I'm impressed by your knowledge.

Drums.

Halach Unic Ahí Pakán comes in followed by Ahkín and Subject. Ahkín approaches Tixcochoh and signals to follow him. Cuzán gets scared when she sees the prince.

HALACH UNIC (*to Tixcochoh*)

Welcome, Lord of Mayapán. My priest Ahkín will show you how to prepare for the ball game.

Tixcochoh salutes Halach Unic and stays with Ahkín in a dark spot of the ball game field.

HALACH UNIC (*Looks at Cuzán with interest.*)

(To Subject) Look at that beauty! What a curious girl! Her skin shines with the red and brown of the Kabán. Her complexion reflects our jungle's vitality, and her hair is as dark as swallows. I'll take care of this beauty of a bird.

SUBJECT

Oh! Halach Unic, my lustful lord, always in pursuit of helpless maidens!

HALACH UNIC

Bring her to my presence!

(Subject brings Cuzán before Halach Unich, while she tries to resist.)

HALACH UNIC

Where are you going? Did you lose something? Who are you? I, Halach Unic, Prince of the great city of Chichén Itzá, hereby order you to reveal your truth to me, for I'm your Lord!

CUZÁN

My name is Cuzán, my Lord, Halach Unic. I was looking for my bird that got away.

HALACH UNIC

Cuzán, a name for a swallow. Did you get lost in my garden? Well, I found you! Now know this, nothing gets away from me! *(Halach Unic grabs Cuzán by her upper arm and ogles her head to toe.)* Your incipient breast tells me you are still a full petaled flower. *(Smells her skin.)* I'll wait until you come to the month of your Kan'kin –ripening time. I'll make you my woman then! You will obey my every word. From now on, you are my

property and will live in my sumptuous palace. *(To Subject)* Go fetch the woman who will take care of Cuzán.

(Subject leaves)

CUZÁN *(Scared. Objects)*

But my Lord!

HALACH UNIC

Why do you try to fly away and refuse my offer? You don't know what a life awaits you! By my side, you'll live surrounded by luxury and attention. You will be let free in my garden, Cuzán. Tomorrow you'll attend the ball game tournament. *(He leaves followed by Ahkín and Tixcohcho).*

Subject and Woman come in to take care of Cuzán. Subject stands guard.

CUZÁN

I want to leave. It's not my wish to stay here...

WOMAN

For your own good, child, you must accept that you're now the property of our Lord Halach Unic Ahí Pakán. Set aside your anger. Rejoice, lucky Cuzán, for living in the palace is a privilege that common people, like us, do not know!

CUZÁN

I do not accept my situation as a captive. I'm not impressed by the promise of gifts. The palace is nothing but a prison. He, who you call lord, is nothing more than a brute. I don't care that he's a prince, there's nothing noble about him.

They both leave followed by Subject. Cuzán walks with dignity.

BLACK OUT.

KAN BALAAM

Scene 6

Ball game field. The actors from the beginning of the scene come to the game. Ahkín, Halach Unic and Tixcochoh get ready to play. Cuzán appears dressed in crowns and jewels with Woman by her side. They sit to watch the ball game.

Drums.

AHKÍN

Today, to honor our god Chac, the prince of Chichén Itzá, Ahí Pakán and the Lord of Mayapán, Tixcochoh, will compete in the ball game. (*Halach Unic and Tixcochoh come forward.*) Of these two great princes, who will be chosen to join you? (*Ahkín raises the ball.*) We call to thee, arbiters of man's destiny, that through this ball you reveal for us the secrets of the cosmos! Let the ball game begin! (*He throws the ball to the ball game field.*)

CUZÁN (*To Woman*)

The prince of Mayapán looks splendid. How he moves, look!

WOMAN

A more courageous and honest prince is not known.

CUZÁN

I talked to him yesterday. I hope he wins the contest.

WOMAN

Don't say that, child. You owe respect and obedience to your Lord Halach Unic Ahí Pakán. Don't rouse his anger. It could get ugly for you.

Halach Unic makes Prince Tixcochoh trip and loose his balance. He takes the advantage to throw the ball through the goal.

HALACH UNIC (*Laughing out loud*)

I've defeated you Tixcochoh! (*He tears off Prince Tixcochoh's pectoral.*) Gives him a shove and makes him fall on his knees. Everybody cheers rejoicing on their prince's victory.

Subject comes in to tie up Tixcochoh's hands.

HALACH UNIC (*Gives the pectoral to Cuzán.*)

I think you'll like this. Take it as a token of my devotion for you.

He puts the pectoral around her neck. Cuzán puts her hand on her neck when she looks at the prince being dragged away.

CUZÁN

What about the prince? What will happen to him?

WOMAN

The ritual must take place. Hunhunahpu, our first father, god of maize, has chosen Tiscochoh's head. Without him there won't be a new beginning. Tixcochoh will reincarnate in the corn.

CUZÁN

Oh great Tixcochoh, brave prince, radiant like the sun, courageous like Balaam! My Lord Halach Unic, don't let him die!

HALACH UNIC

You're so ungrateful! Is this the way you react to my great victory? This is an act of contempt against me. You insult me and put me to shame in front of my people! If I can't have your heart, you'll be offered to our gods and I will rise in my people's eyes.

BLACK OUT.

(Everybody leaves. Tixcochoh remains tied at the center of the stage.)

KAN BALAAM

Scene 7

(Dim lights) Tixcochoh is in the center of the stage, tied, kneeling, and with lowered head. Cuzán approaches him stealthily. She motions to him to keep quiet. She unties him. He tries to thank her. They join hands.

CUZÁN

Go! Go! *(She gives him back his pectoral.)*

TIXCOCHOH

What will happen to you?

CUZÁN

It doesn't matter. We'll meet again in another Katún.

Sound of drums. Tixcochoh gives her a hug and leaves quickly. Ahkín comes in with Subject. He finds out Tixcochoh is gone.

SUBJECT

She let the prisoner go!

AHKÍN

What have you done?

CUZÁN

I released the captive. He doesn't deserve to die.

AHKÍN

Woe betides me! Woe betides the Maya!

Our gods will not forgive this affront. Can't you see what you've done, child?

Punishment will come: There will be no rain and men's hearts will wither. A time of drought, famine, and desolation will come.

(Subject takes Cuzán prisoner and leads her to the side of the scene where the offering will take place. She resigns herself to it. Ahkín bows down to Chaac's statue.

Lights in full. Mujer comes in and prepares Cuzán for the offering. There should be copal (incense), a mirror, flowers, and jewels. Ritual music is on.

WOMAN

Don't worry, your maiden soul will fly like a swallow.

CUZÁN

My wings will be cut short. I'll be sacrificed for my defiance.

WOMAN

Nubile maidens are the favorite offering to god Chaac. It is your responsibility to be a messenger from the Maya people.

CUZÁN

What is the message?

WOMAN

You have to ask god Chaac to bring rain to every land of this region. It's the only way that corn will grow.

Cuzán, indifferent and submissive, accepts to be embellished for the offering.

Alach Unic comes in followed by all actors in this scene. Ahkín leads Cuzán to the edge of the cenote.

Strong drums.

AHKÍN

In reparation for your insult to our great prince Alach Unic, when you arrive before our god Chaac, beneficial god, man's steadfast friend, never an enemy, red god of the East, white Chaac, god of the North, black Chaac, god of the West, and Yellow Chaac, god of the south, you will tell them that we are faithful and that we treat people right. I hereby order you to ask them to give us rain and corn crops aplenty.

CUZAN (*Looks at the cenote's depth and raising her voice shouts*)

No! I won't tell them any of your remarks! Instead, I'll tell them you are tyrants and unfair, and I'll ask them to send drought and misery!

(She jumps in the cenote. Sound of thunder and lightning.)

Drums.

AHKÍN

The age of dusk is approaching, the second circle of the Katún.

The bearded, the ruddy-faced men will arrive from the East; the fake *ibeteeles* that detonate fire from the end of their arms. Woe betides Itzá and Hunab Ku and Chaac! Their names will mean nothing when the word of the god on the cross spreads throughout the land. Get ready to bear the misery coming to our nations because this Katún that is upon us is a Katún of sorrow, suffering, and oppression.

Welcome your visitors, the bearded men who will come to settle like older siblings; the men who will lay down the stone, who will build temples upon your temples, who will forever becloud/eclipse the glory of Mayab.

As Ahkín speaks, scene darkens and the scene changes to the Chamula Church set.

The look of the set returns to the San Juan Chamula Church where Felicita and

Curandero are found. Curandero comes back from his trance and stands up to end the ritual. He breaks the egg he used to clean Felicita, in a glass of water. The egg shows dark spots.

FELICITA

What does this mean? Did the gods accept the offering?

CURANDERO

Gods have been unhappy during many Katúns. Their children have scattered. The Man of Maize is melting like the Man of Mud. Spring waters are polluted and forests have been deforested. The serpent and the jaguar have been evicted from their homes.

FELICITA

What should I do to conceive, to have a child? My husband blames me unfairly. I'm afraid he'll want to get rid of me.

CURANDERO

Woman will not bear seed whereas Man of Maize doesn't go back to his origins. That is my message. The spirit of your ancestors must be redeemed. God Kukulcán is angry at his creation because they have forgotten about him, about who they are and from where they originate.

Curandero finishes with a prayer in Maya. It should be evident he prays to Christian gods.

Ik ti lajelale

Lekil viniketik xcha'uch

Yu'un oyuk ach' lekilal.

(Felicita and Curandero kneel inside the Church.

Pre-Hispanic music.)

BLACK OUT.

KAN BALAAM

Scene 8 The dream

Characters: Carlos, Kukulcán, Cocacoatl, Felicita

Setting: Carlos knocked over the table dead drunk. Felicita comes in and tries to wake him up.

FELICITA

Carlos, Carlos!!! Wake up! This is important!

Carlos, please! I have a message that could be a lifesaver for us.

He doesn't answer, motions to be left alone. Felicita tries again and after that, she leaves in despair.)

FELICITA

It's impossible. He'll never remember who he is, who we are... We're lost! *(She leaves.)*

Lights go down to an underworld mood.

Kukulcán appears before Carlos. He stares at him until he reacts.

Carlos rubs his eyes. He sits up, startled.

KUKULKÁN

Calm down, Man of Maize.

CARLOS

My name is Carlos.

KUKULKÁN

I know. You're on my list as a "semi-lost case".

CARLOS

What's this? A cheap joke?

Kukulcán grows to his Mayan splendor. He shines brightly. He stands tall and speaks in a loud voice.

KUKULKÁN

Carlos, you have not recognized my signs. Have you?

CARLOS

What? What signs are you talking about?

KUKULKÁN

My signs, Carlos, my signals!

CARLOS

I don't get it.

KUKULKÁN

All your life, I've tried to guide you. I gave you Felicita as your wife so you wouldn't forget to worship me. I gave you a mother who taught you to venerate the land that sustains you. I gave you a *milpa* so you can feed your family.

CARLOS (*showing hope*)

Are you saying that I'll have children?

KUKULKÁN

You completely forgot that you are the Man of Maize. I modeled you to endure all life's trials. You're acting as if you were made of mud or wood.

CARLOS

I'm so confused. I'm made of flesh and bone.

KUKULKÁN

You don't even remember your elder's teachings about the creation of man.

CARLOS (*understanding*)

Are you saying that you are the great Kukulcán, the feathered serpent, the creator and giver of life? Yes! I remember. My father always taught me our rituals and traditions. Is it you to whom my wife prays and glorifies? Not to the Christian god?

KUKULKÁN

To survive, Men of Maize were forced to worship the god of the cross, the one brought by the bearded men from the other side of the sea. But I'm always behind the image of the cross, which is also the sacred *ceiba* of my people, the Maya.

CARLOS

Life as a Man of Maize is not easy these days. We are insignificant creatures. The powerful exploit and oppress us.

KUKULKÁN

Only when you recognize the greatness of your people and your blood, will you be able to see that you are still a part of this world. You are tied to your woman, to your *compadres*, to me, and to the land. But you're no longer a Man of Maize. You have turned into a Man of Coke.

Scene gets darker. Suddenly, Cocacoatl speaks.

He comes in.

COCACOATL

Carlos! Do not listen to him. He's a phony! His only concern is to keep his people in financial ruin, in poverty, in misery, devoted to their *milpas*. I offer you wealth and abundance. Forget about corn. Those are ancient stories. The Maya disappeared many centuries ago. Progress is redemption. I invite you to become the Man of Coke.
(Loud laughter).

KUKULKÁN

Carlos, recover your warrior soul, your Serpent-Jaguar spirit. Don't be tempted by this false god that will bring misery to your people. Without the water spring, all Chamula people will die of thirst. All animal and plant life will perish and the life of man will too. You owe this to your people!

COCACOATL

Don't listen to him, Carlos. Look into the future and not at the past. Look what awaits you, wealth, money, Coca-Cola galore!

KUKULKÁN

Carlos! Where is your Mayan blood? This is my last signal. If there's a trace of the essence of your ancestors left in you, you'll know how to interpret my message.

(He gives him Tixcochoh's pectoral.)

Kukulkán y Cocacoatl fight while leaving the scene through the back of the stage.

LIGHTS IN FULL. Carlos wakes up startled. He rubs his eyes and looks around. He shakes off his bad dream. He looks for something to drink and he sees the Coke on the table. Grabs it. Looks at it in suspicion. Looks at the bottle filled with atole. He can't choose between them. Suddenly, he notices the pectoral on the table. Looks at it with interest.

CARLOS *(to himself)*

Kukulkán's sign. This pectoral... *(Tries to remember. Finds Kan Balaam's emblem. Thinks, remembers.)*

Serpent-Jaguar, Kan-Balaam. Our gods from the underworld and the spirit world together will not be defeated. Kan Balaam, the great warrior, the mediator for opposing forces!

Carlos stands up with a jolt. He has understood the sign. He yells, calling Felicita. As he leaves, he throws the Coke in the trash can.

CARLOS

Felicita! Felicita!!! Where are you? *(Leaves the scene calling her).*

BLACK OUT.

KAN BALAAM

Scene 9 The Recall

Characters: Guide, tourists, Felicita, Carlos.

Setting: Pyramid. The tourists from the beginning of the play take pictures and follow their Guide.

GUIDE

The Mayan world has been considered one of the most important civilizations. The Mayans were able to calculate the most precise calendar, even more accurate than the Roman calendar. They predicted all astronomic phenomena until the year 2012. No one understands why the Mayans vanished? Was it a drought? An epidemic?

Tourists look at everything, they show admiration and take pictures.

JIM

Oh, my goodness! Did you see that?

LINDA

Amazing, simply amazing.

MARY

What is that?

GUIDE

On this side you see the ball court. The ball game was a sacred event played by warriors in a special ceremony where the defeated would be sacrificed and offered to god Chaac, the god of rain. On this side, the cenote, the sacred well, where virgin maidens were offered to the gods. If Chaac was pleased with the offers, he would send abundant rain that year, if he was not, a drought would fall upon the harvests and the people would suffer because corn and water were the most important elements for Maya survival.

Tourists take more pictures. They leave the scene at the time Carlos comes in looking for Felicita. She's staring into the cenote, thoughtful.

CARLOS

Felicita, what are you doing there? I looked for you everywhere, at the church, at the market.

Rosa told me you were at the ruins. Why did you come here?

FELICITA (*sad*)

There's no hope, Carlos... You refuse to accept who you are, who we are, our background. You will join them, the *ladinos* who oppress us. Last night, when I saw you there, willing to cooperate with the soda plant, the ones that will finish our people and put an end to our ways and to our community's natural environment, I realized there's no

hope. If at least you understood the message from our gods... But it is too late. That's why I came here... *(Looks inside the cenote again, makes a move to jump in.)*

Carlos stops her. Shows her the pectoral and hugs her. She looks at him in surprise.

CARLOS

I've understood Kukulcán's sign. There was a time when you saved my life at the sacrificial stone. Today, I ask you to begin anew in our Katún...

Sound of thunder, lightning, and rain... They hug. A light could be left over Chaac's image. The sound of rain remains throughout the scene change.

KAN BALAAM

Scene 10 No to Coca-Cola

Characters: *Felicita, Rosa, Ramón, Carlos.*
Chamulas (Could be the same people who played other characters, animals, artisans, tourists.)

Setting: Carlos and Felicita's home. Rosa comes in. Felicita welcomes her.

FELICITA

Hi *comadrita*, come in, come in.

ROSA

Felicita, hi! How are you feeling?

FELICITA

I'm better. Sickness can get really strong sometimes. But I'm so excited about this meeting that I forget about any discomfort I have. If this is what I have to endure to have a child, then I'm glad!

ROSA

Goodness *comadre*! What a joy! Another child comes to the world. But, what kind of a world! We don't have the luxury of resting in our laurels.

FELICITA

We must act, at least for our children. But, where is Ramón?

ROSA He'll be here soon. Keeping a *milpa* is a lot of work.

FELICITA He'll be thirsty when he arrives.

Ramón comes in.

RAMÓN

Hello! Rosita, this *milpa* will break my back!

ROSA

Oh! I'm worried about you.

RAMÓN

Nothing to worry about! (*He sits down tiredly.*) At least we have a little *milpa*.

FELICITA

Hello, *compadre*, would you like some *atole*?

RAMÓN

Yes, thank you, Felicita.

ROSA

Ramón, do you see anything different with our Felicita?

RAMÓN (*drinks the glass empty and wipes his mouth in satisfaction. Looks at Felicita.*)

No, I don't see anything different with our *comadre*. Although I find her a little chubbier. Too many *tortillas*, Felicita?

FELICITA

The same number as always, *compadre*.

ROSA

Come on! Tell him!

FELICITA

Well, I haven't told anyone yet, but finally... (*She smiles happily. She touches her lower belly.*)

ROSA

We are going to be aunt and uncle, Ramón!

RAMÓN

Well, *comadre!* (*He hugs her.*) I imagine Carlos now feels fulfilled.

Carlos comes in.

CARLOS

Ramón, Rosa, How are you?

RAMÓN

Congratulations, *compadre!* I'm so happy for you.

CARLOS

Thank you, *compadre.* (*He takes a glass of atole and kisses Felicita.*)

I think it's time to start this meeting.

All chamulas come in. They say hello and find a place.

CARLOS

We are gathered here to come to a decision against the Coca-Cola Company's threat.

RAMÓN

What do you suggest, Carlos?

CARLOS

Compadres, neighbors, we have to ask our comrades for help.

RAMÓN

You're not talking about the Government, Right?

CARLOS

No, we cannot rely on the bad government any more. We will ask Oventic's Board of Good Governance for help.

FELICITA

Ask the Zapatistas?

CARLOS

Yes!

ROSA

What can they do for us?

CARLOS

They've been dealing with this problem much longer than us. They are more experienced. We need everybody's support to keep our land and our water. If we declare ourselves an Independent and Autonomous Municipality, we won't have to submit to any decision by the Federal Government. If you agree, sign this statement.

RAMÓN

It is true. The water spring is on our land. The Board of Good Governance protects the rights of indigenous communities and will not allow for the intrusion of those great corporations. They will not force us to hand over our rights or expropriate our lands.

(Carlos passes around the statement. Everybody signs. They talk satisfied among themselves.)

Braulio knocks on the door. Carlos opens the door and lets him in.

BRAULIO *(With an air of superiority.)*

Good afternoon everybody.

CARLOS

Mr. Braulio Ramírez Sáenz, I've asked you to this meeting to give you an answer to your offer before my *compadres*.

BRAULIO *(confused)*

Compadre, you can call me Braulio. We are *compadres*, right?

CARLOS

No, we are nothing at all. You are a traitor *ladino* who changed his name, his life, and his beliefs to be accepted by them. Well, we are not going to do that.

BRAULIO

What are you saying?

CARLOS

I'm saying that I will not accept your offer. The neighbors of this community have come together to ask you to leave and take your plant some other place.

BRAULIO

Oh yeah? It's your loss, *compadre*. You're damning yourself together with all of these starving losers.

CARLOS

I don't care. I'll stay with my people. You can go fuck yourself and take your soda plant with you!

RAMÓN

In this town, you will never be welcome. (*Gives him the signed statement.*)

BRAULIO (*Looks at the statement.*)

You'll be sorry! This document is not valid. It's ludicrous.

RAMÓN (*Challenging.*)

Try to prove it isn't a valid document. We'll wait here.

FELICITA Our people have resisted exploiting invaders like you for five hundred years. It won't be different this time.

BRAULIO (*surprised*)

There's nothing else to talk about. You've been warned. And I'd like to remind you that you are against the Government and a multimillionaire company. (*He laughs with scorn.*) Fools! I'm getting out of this dump!

EVERYBODY

We'll wait for you here, Braulio, our friend! Basilio Tacúm, a traitor, a *ladino*, bastard! *Braulio leaves looking scared. Everyone leaves after him tearing down all Coca-Cola signs, yelling and threatening him.*

Carlos and Felicita remain center stage. They hold hands.

FELICITA

What will happen now? You know he'll be back. They will always be back. If not him, others.

CARLOS

Now that we are having a child, we must stick together more than ever. Our son or daughter will follow our ancestors' traditions and teachings, and will protect our people from invaders.

FELICITA

The most important thing is that he remembers who he is, who we are: Kan Balaam, the strength of opposing forces, the never-dying magnificence of our people, the Maya!

They hug.

BLACK OUT.

[CURTAIN] All actors come in.

THE END