

SPAIN

ACT I

Barbara and Conquistador are on opposite sides of the stage, unaware of each other.

BARBARA: The heart of Spain is gold. Warm. Welcoming. Culture and cultures mixing, glowing in the high heat of the noonday sun.

CONQUISTADOR: The discovery of the New World marked a major turning point in my life. It opened up doors, gave me options I never knew I had. I found a genuine sense of purpose. I really felt like I was doing something for a change.

BARBARA: The soul of Spain.

CONQUISTADOR: Conquering. It is a great feeling. Meeting uncivilized people. Killing them, making them your slaves, what not.

BARBARA: Roosters.

CONQUISTADOR: For the first time in my life, I felt good about myself. My parents were proud of me. My wife wanted to sleep with me all the time.

BARBARA: Flamenco.

CONQUISTADOR: She told me I had become so much more virile. It was true. BARBARA: The sweet sea smell of Barcelona.

CONQUISTADOR: My sexual appetite was insatiable. And I sated it quite often. Usually with my wife.

BARBARA: Red and Black and Yellow.

CONQUISTADOR: Ah, the New World, the new me.

BARBARA: Ferdinand and Isabella.

CONQUISTADOR: This helmet.

BARBARA: Picasso.

CONQUISTADOR: This beautiful shiny thing.

BARBARA: Gaudi.

CONQUISTADOR: Sometimes at night, I just sit on my bed and hold it on my lap.

BARBARA: Dali.

CONQUISTADOR: Trace the engraving. Look at my face in the reflection.

BARBARA: Lorca.

CONQUISTADOR: Who else gets to wear something like this?

BARBARA: Aft.

CONQUISTADOR: The Spanish blood is strong in our veins.

BARBARA: Music.

CONQUISTADOR: We go places and name them.

BARBARA: Fire in the belly. Nothing else like it.

CONQUISTADOR: And in the heat of battle. On my horse. This God-like thing on my head. I swing my sword down. I feel so . . . good. Really and truly good. Blessed.

BARBARA: I have never been to Spain.

CONQUISTADOR: And afterwards. Wipe off the blood, get off my horse, stick my feet in the new earth, drink with my friends, maybe rape a prisoner. BARBARA: I don't know Spanish.

CONQUISTADOR: This is what I was made for. I believe that. Look at me. This is who I am. I love myself.

BARBARA: The heart of Spain is gold.

(A guitar player appears, playing a fast Spanish dance song. Barbara dances in place, facing the audience. Conquistador does the same. They stop. The guitar stops.)

BARBARA: I first hallucinated him shortly after my husband of five years left me for some slut with a boob job.

(Lights reveal Conquistador sitting on a sofa with his feet up.)

BARBARA: He was sitting on my sofa with his feet up. His funny metal boots on my coffee table. I was not attracted to him in the traditional sense. I knew immediately he was not a real human being. He looked like one, smelled like one; when he talked I heard his voice like I'd hear anyone else's. But he was quite obviously a delusional fragment of a repressed childhood primal picture book memory, nothing more. I asked him: Who are you?

CONQUISTADOR: They call me El Tigre.

BARBARA: I asked him: Why are you here?

CONQUISTADOR: I do not know. It is a great mystery to me.

BARBARA: I asked him: What century are you from?

CONQUISTADOR: Sixteenth, year of our Lord, bless us and protect us, amen.

BARBARA: I did not ask him about his profession. Obviously he was a Conquistador. A real Spanish conquistador. Luckily, he spoke English. I did ask him to take his metal boots off my coffee table. And if I could take his sword and helmet.

CONQUISTADOR: *(Taking his boots off the coffee table.)* I will hold on to them, thank you.

BARBARA: And then I said: Where exactly were you before this and how do you think you got from that place to my apartment?

CONQUISTADOR: It is a strange story.

BARBARA: I called in sick to work. (*To him.*) I want to hear it.

(*Guitar Player strums.*)

CONQUISTADOR: Well . . . (*Stands.*) It was a raid like any other. Screaming, burning dwellings, what not. We rode through this . . . I suppose you could call it an alley or street . . . past the charred huts and dead Indians. And we came to an odd structure. A temple of sorts. We had seen it from a distance. A pyramid of sorts. Very tall, many steps. We all liked the look of it and decided not to destroy it. We would instead use it to throw a festival. It was perfect. I got off my horse with the others and climbed all those steps. I could hear my men behind me. Clomp, clomp, clomp. The air grew cooler, the breeze blew lightly. I came to a portal. An entrance. Inside, a fire was glowing. I walked in. I saw an ancient sitting before the fire. (*Conquistador walks left, into a new space. An implied fire is on the ground. An Ancient sits before it. Silence. Ancient and Conquistador look at each other.*)

ANCIENT: *Buenas noches.*

(*Conquistador draws his sword and prepares to strike. He stops, suddenly, to correct.*)

CONQUISTADOR: *Buenos días.*

ANCIENT: *Buenas noches, Señor.*

CONQUISTADOR: *No. Buenos días. (Pointing outside.) Días.*

ANCIENT: *No, Señor Tigre. Buenas noches.*

CONQUISTADOR: At which point there was a bright flash of light like lightning and I saw a vision. A man on a skeleton donkey. A monkey's head on his neck. A crowd of men in white robes and hoods surrounding him. And then I became the man with the monkey head and the white hoods fell. All their eyes glowed red. And lion claws reached out from white sleeves to touch me. And I closed my eyes and heard a voice.

ANCIENT: In the Mayan Calendar, days, weeks, and months are counted as are all numbers with dots and lines. And on this day of the four dots and two lines, there is predicted a shift in the very nature of time and continuity. That is to say, this raid of our culture was prophesied, and you are now to become the vessel of higher perception due to the fact that I already know everything and the rest of the village is dead.

(*Stage left goes black.*)

CONQUISTADOR: And then another flash of light and I found myself sitting on your furniture. (*Beat.*) Where am I?

BARBARA: We call it the United States of America.

CONQUISTADOR: America?

BARBARA: Yes. Look. Did I hear you say burn and kill people?

CONQUISTADOR: Savages.

BARBARA: Your sword. Oh God.

CONQUISTADOR: Blood of the savages. I would have washed it if I knew I was coming.

BARBARA: Suddenly I feel ill.

CONQUISTADOR: Plague?

BARBARA: Conscience. What an awful hallucination.

CONQUISTADOR: You are having a vision now?

BARBARA: I like Spain. I love Spain.

CONQUISTADOR: Good, I won't have to kill you.

BARBARA: But you represent everything I hate about Spain and mankind in general.

CONQUISTADOR: I don't understand you.

BARBARA: You are symbolic of fear and repression and colonization and every-thing evil.

CONQUISTADOR: Evil?

BARBARA: But I love Spain. Jesus. Why couldn't you have been Lorca or Picasso. Well no, not Picasso.

CONQUISTADOR: I am not evil.

BARBARA: Cervantes.

CONQUISTADOR: I am all good.

BARBARA: Dali.

CONQUISTADOR: I love myself.

BARBARA: I don't want to deal with this right now.

CONQUISTADOR: I'm not even going to rape you.

BARBARA: And that's when I left.

(*Black on all but Barbara and Diversion, her best friend.*)

DIVERSION: Barbara, I'm worried about you.

BARBARA: You're always worried about me.

DIVERSION: I'm always concerned. Now I am worried, this is worry.

BARBARA: You don't believe me?

DIVERSION: I do. I truly believe you are delusional.

BARBARA: But why him? Of all the delusions . . .

DIVERSION: Do you need to come live with me?

BARBARA: What?

DIVERSION: Being alone so suddenly. You're not used to being alone. And the circumstances.

BARBARA: I don't want to live with you.

(*Beat.*)

DIVERSION: Why not?
BARBARA: I have a place. I live in a place. I'm OK.
DIVERSION: You're having conversations with conquistadors!
BARBARA: I shouldn't have told you.
DIVERSION: Why not? I'm your best friend.
BARBARA: It's not like I'm doing harm to myself.
DIVERSION: You're missing work.
BARBARA: I hate work.
DIVERSION: No, you don't.
BARBARA: I do. I really do. I'm sick of escrow folders and phone calls to buyers and Roman with his roaming hands. I want to quit.
DIVERSION: Quit? Quit and do what?
BARBARA: Go to Spain.
DIVERSION: You're obsessive.
BARBARA: You should encourage me.
DIVERSION: You don't even know Spanish.
BARBARA: Maybe the Conquistador will teach me. (Silence.)
DIVERSION: I have to get back to work. Do you want me to say anything to Roman?
BARBARA: No, no. I already told him I was sick in bed.
DIVERSION: That's not the only place you're sick.
BARBARA: Go back to work. I'll call you tonight. *WEND*
(Diversion disappears. Lights shift. Conquistador is sitting with his helmet in his lap on the sofa. He looks at his face in its reflection. Barbara stands above him.)
BARBARA: You're still here.
CONQUISTADOR: Yes.
BARBARA: What are you doing?
CONQUISTADOR: Spending time with my helmet. It makes me feel peaceful.
BARBARA: Your helmet?
CONQUISTADOR: Yes. Look. Come look.
(Barbara walks cautiously over to Conquistador and sits beside him on the sofa. They look at the helmet together.)
BARBARA: What are these designs?
CONQUISTADOR: Beautiful, no?
BARBARA: Yes. But what are they?
CONQUISTADOR: Tigers. (He looks up at her and smiles.)
BARBARA: El Tigre.
CONQUISTADOR: Sí. (Silence.)
BARBARA: I know that if I touched you, I would actually feel you.

CONQUISTADOR: I do not understand.
BARBARA: I know it without even trying. And I know I don't want to try.
CONQUISTADOR: To try what?
BARBARA: To touch you.
(Conquistador looks at her. He places his hand on her breast.)
CONQUISTADOR: Like this?
BARBARA: (pushing his hand away quickly.) Don't. I don't want that.
CONQUISTADOR: I am beginning to.
(Barbara stands and moves away from him.)
CONQUISTADOR: Do not be afraid. I would not dishonor you without your permission.
BARBARA: You're a killer and a rapist.
CONQUISTADOR: Only with savages.
BARBARA: They're not savages, they're human beings, and you wiped them out of existence.
CONQUISTADOR: Where is your husband? (Silence. Conquistador holds up a photo frame with a picture of Barbara and a man in it.) This painting. I found it in your bedroom. Very true to life, especially for a miniature.
BARBARA: It's a photograph. I'm not going to explain what that is.
CONQUISTADOR: This is your husband, is it not? (Beat.)
BARBARA: It was.
CONQUISTADOR: He's dead? (Beat.)
BARBARA: Yes.
CONQUISTADOR: He was killed in battle?
(Barbara laughs. Conquistador looks at her.)
BARBARA: John never fought a battle in his life.
CONQUISTADOR: He was lame?
BARBARA: Yes, he was very lame. Lame, boring, cowardly, lying, cheating.
CONQUISTADOR: How did he die? Did somebody kill him?
(Barbara looks at his sword.)
BARBARA: I killed him.
CONQUISTADOR: You?
BARBARA: Sure. I found him with another woman and killed both of them.
(Silence.)
CONQUISTADOR: Hm. Good. Did you kill them in sleep?
BARBARA: No. I killed them in the heat of their passion.
CONQUISTADOR: Good. Good.
BARBARA: You approve?
CONQUISTADOR: I would do the same to my wife if I found her with another.
BARBARA: Would you rape her first?