

# QUETZALCOATL

ROBERT CHIN

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MONTEZUMA, <i>Emperor of the Aztecs.</i>	CORTÉZ, <i>A Spanish Conquistador.</i>
COCOZCA, <i>War Advisor to Montezuma.</i>	MARINA, <i>Aztec Princess and Advisor to Cortéz.</i>
TEUCH, <i>Aztec Priest.</i>	HECTOR
ZEIA, <i>Aztec Watchguard.</i>	CRISTÓBAL

} *Members of Cortéz's Party.*

*Citizens of Tenochtitlan; People of Cortéz's  
Party; An Aztec Man*

SCENE,—*Act One, Scenes One and Two take place in the main chamber in the palace of Montezuma. Act Two, Scene One takes place in the forest, shortly after the Cortéz Party disembarks from their ship. Act Two, Scene Two takes place in the outskirts of Tenochtitlan. Scene Three of the Same act takes place at the walls guarding the inner city. Act Three, Scene Two takes place in the inner city of Tenochtitlan. Act Three, Scenes One and Three take place in Montezuma's Palace.*

MOOD,—*In the tone of a Classical Greek Tragedy.*

### INFLECTIONS, —

CORTÉZ	\ 'Cor-tez\	MONTEZUMA	\ 'Mon-te-'zu-ma\
COCOZCA	\ 'Co-'coz-ca\	TENOCHTITLAN	\ 'Ten-och-'tit-lan\
CRISTÓBAL	\ 'Cris-'tó-bal\	TEUCH	\ 'Te-uch\
HECTOR	\ 'Hec-tor\	ZEIA	\ 'Ze-ia\
MARINA	\ 'Mar-'ina\		

ACT I.  
SCENE I. – *In the Palace of Montezuma.*

*Enter MONTEZUMA and TEUCH.*

- Mont.* A comet races across yonder sky! 1  
What, Teuch, do the gods have to tell us?  
Perhaps it is of a good crop season  
Or perhaps the Aztecs will win a war  
And, without bounds our power shall expand.  
Or is the end of mortal kinship near:  
Quetzalcoatl will come at last by sea  
To reclaim the glory of the Aztecs.  
Tell me, Teuch, what do the gods speak of?
- Teuch* My good king, do not hastily seek ends. 10  
The will of the gods will come in time alone.  
But perhaps I should make long pilgrimage  
The deities will surely give us clue  
If I should travel to the pantheon.  
Be forwarn'd: It is best to hide your hopes  
For often the gods give evil omen.
- Mont.* What treachery could come from the heavens?  
What dishonesty could come from the gods?  
Surely they have no motive to deceive. 20  
It's been far too long since the last good crop  
Too much time has passed since we last waged war  
Surely this sign is because they, like I,  
Are anxious for another sacrifice.
- Teuch* The gods will never shame for sacrifice.  
However I fear the gods have plans  
Far different than our destiny should be.  
But wait! Let us not yet speak of this case.  
For the great pantheon has yet to speak.
- Mont.* Come now, Teuch. It is best not to fear. 30  
For I am the king of Tenochtitlan  
Under my rule, no evil can transpire.  
The gods have not walked this earth in ages,  
They now forsake the land we live upon.  
What god would wish to leave his home for here?  
Fear not Teuch. I am ruler on earth,  
ruler of the Aztecs. Even the gods  
would be wise to fear my power and wrath.
- Teuch* Do not be foolish, magnanimous one. 40  
The gods have no reason to fear mortals.  
They, in all of their infinite wisdom  
Have seen fit to place you as emperor.  
Do not forget the intricate order,

Your power is naught without their mandate.  
But let us stop now our futile squabbling,  
We have no say in matters of the gods,  
We cannot hope to understand their aims  
For we are but slaves to their every whim.  
Let me leave now, the pantheon awaits.  
*Mont.* I bid you good luck on your long journey.  
And each day we shall hold a sacrifice: 50  
Perhaps the gods will weigh each willing death  
And perhaps by luck you will not return  
Not until the gods have been satisfied.  
Men will be grateful upon your return!

SCENE II. – *In the Palace of Montezuma.*

MONTEZUMA, *sitting on his throne.* Enter TEUCH.

*Mont.* Teuch! What good news do you bring to us?  
*Teuch* My news, I fear, is neither good nor bad.  
It is up to you to decide actions.  
*Mont.* What is it you mean?  
*Teuch* The great pantheon has spoken to me.  
It has said that the great one will return: 60  
The age of Quetzalcoatl has return'd.  
*Mont.* And what of Quetzalcoatl should I fear?  
*Teuch* It is said that your time is near its end  
And that none can stand against the white man.  
This is what the gods have decreed to us  
And now you must decide what will happen.  
*Mont.* This is not possible. I am ruler,  
No one can stop the king of the Aztecs.  
One white man cannot hope to gain power  
Against millions of proud Aztec people.  
No, we will catch this man. And he, himself 70  
Will be made a sacrifice to the gods!

*ZEIA enters excitedly.*

*Zeia* I bring great news mighty Montezuma!  
A large white foreign ship has just arrived!  
The men on this ship wear different clothes.  
Their ships are larger than we've ever seen  
And they have huge wind sails which move their boats.  
And, emperor, these men are more different:

Their skin is whiter than the whitest sand.  
 Their language is different than our own  
 They speak in foreign tongues. And these strange men 80  
 Travel on the road to Tenochtitlan:  
 They are on their way to the capital.  
 Mighty emperor, give us your bidding.  
*Mont.* You, Zeia, will take four men, and with them  
 My daughter will come as a sign of peace.  
 These men are strangers to our land, take heed.  
 Your duty is to me and then to your state.  
 If they mean good, you must bring them to me;  
 If their minds are evil, lead them astray.  
 I entrust my daughter's safety and also 90  
 The safety of Tenochtitlan to you.  
*Zeia* Are you sure your decision is wise?  
 Perhaps it might be better not to place  
 Marina, your daughter, in such danger.  
 Surely her place is in the capital –  
 These men could be savages!  
*Mont.* Then you shall have to take even more care.  
*Zeia* Surely–!  
*Mont.* Go, this is my will. Approach them in peace,  
 But do not be afraid to strike them down. 100  
*Zeia* Yes, master. Your will is action.  
*Teuch* I do not wish to question your actions,  
 But is it wise to bring your enemy  
 Into the capital?  
*Mont.* Hah! Surely Quetzalcoatl the divine god  
 Will know his own way to Tenochtitlan.  
 For if these are mere strangers in our land,  
 They will be led away from our city.  
 And if they do choose to come, than perhaps  
 Your return won't stop the sacrifices! 110  
*Zeia* Your words are all too wise.  
*Mont.* You, hurry! The white men are approaching!  
 Do not idle, our safety lies with you.  
*Zeia* But your daughter–  
*Mont.* Ah, yes. Marina!

*MARINA enters quickly.*

*Mar.* Father?  
*Mont.* Marina, you are to meet the strangers.  
 Go here with Zeia and four other men,  
 You will greet these new foreigners in peace.  
 Now go and do your father's bidding. 120

*MARINA and ZEIA exit.*

*Teuch* Are you not afraid, omnipotent one?  
What if these men are deceiving and come?  
Or perhaps these men are our deities,  
And this is a test to earn their respect.

*Mont.* Do not illusion yourself with these thoughts.  
If they are impostors, they will be killed.  
If they are gods, they will be worshipped.  
But, Teuch, perhaps you are somewhat right.  
Go, prepare an alter for sacrifice.

*Teuch* And what will we be sacrificing? 130

*Mont.* Prepare a strong citizen for his death.  
If these men are simply false impostors  
Then we will take them and sacrifice them.  
If these men are gods with Quetzalcoatl  
Then we shall sacrifice the man to him.

*Teuch* A most cunning and flawless plan!

*Mont.* Yes. Now go! There is much to be prepared.

TEUCH *exits.*

*Mont.* Nothing in this world can disturb my pow'r.  
I am the proud ruler of the Aztecs,  
And the gods have seen fit for me to rule. 140  
This is the kingdom of a thousand years,  
The land that exists without mortal fears.

## ACT II.

### SCENE I. – *In a dense forest not far from the Aztec Capital.*

*Enter* CORTEZ, *with* HECTOR, CRISTÓBAL, *and his* MEN.

*Crtz.* Behold, a land that none of our fathers  
Had neither dreamt nor known existed.  
Look at these leaves, at this dirt, at this land  
It is rich, beyond man's most futile gains.

*Hec.* But I see not gold nor silver nor wealth.

*Crtz.* Do not be so short sighted, my good friend.  
Surely a land so prosperous with green'ry  
Surely a land with great buildings distant 150  
Surely this land keeps its riches hidden.

*Crst.* What hold! Pagans approach!

A GROUP OF AZTEC MEN *enter, startled to see a man with white skin. The large weapon Cortéz wields scares them.*

- Crtz.* Halt! Surrender your riches!  
*Man* We carry nothing but our clothing!  
*Crst.* Forget about these men, they are worthless.  
They are too dumb to be of any use.  
*Hec.* Perhaps they know where the riches are kept.  
*Crtz.* Perhaps. Wait, who is that, there. A woman!  
*Crst.* I see! Behind the tree! Quick, men, grab her! *[The men of the party  
grab a women out from behind a nearby tree.]*
- Zeia* No! No! Please, do not hurt her! I beg you! 160  
*Crst.* Now tell us, sir. Where are the riches kept?  
*Man* Ninety–five paces in that direction!  
The treasures are marked by a golden bull!  
*Zeia* No! Give us this woman and I will tell.  
*Crtz.* Speak.  
*Zeia* Continue on this path until you reach Tenochtitlan.  
Go into the city, the king knows where they are kept.  
*Crtz.* Very good. Let us bring this young women with us.  
She may turn out to be much more useful  
Than she already has been. 170  
*Man* No, please...!  
*Hec.* Go away, dumb man. Do not push your luck.

THE AZTEC MAN *hesitates*, HECTOR *draws his sword*, and the AZTEC MAN *runs off in fright*.

- Crtz.* Do you still doubt, Hector, the great riches  
That exist in the large city yonder?  
*Hec.* When our holds are laden with heavy gold  
And we are safe aboard our Spanish ship  
Sailing away from this dangerous land:  
Only then shall I cease to doubt it all.  
*Crtz.* Do not fear for soon we shall be richer 180  
Than all of the wealth in heaven above.  
Lead us good native. Lead us to the king.

## SCENE II. – *The walls at the entrance to the inner city.*

*Enter* CORTEZ, *with* HECTOR, CRISTÓBAL, *his* MEN *and* MARINA.

- Cit.1* Hurry, open up the gates! The princess is below!  
*Cit.2* She brings men with them!

*Mar.* No! These men are not who you think they are!  
*Cit.2* Do you hear that? These are not men!  
*Cit.3* Quetzalcoatl has returned! The gates! The gates!  
*Cit.1* Open the gates, the gods have come back!  
*Crtz.* Yes! I am your god, take me to the king!  
*Cit.2* He wishes to be taken to the king! Take him to Montezuma! 190  
*Crtz.* I wish to go to Montezuma!  
*Hec.* I doubt pretending to be their god will—  
*Crst.* Do not fear, the gold is almost within reach!  
*Crtz.* Do not give away our vise or we shall be killed instantly.  
*Cit.1* Please, stop in my home, we have fresh fruits!  
*Cit.3* I have fresh meats in my home!  
*Crtz.* No, I must go to Montezuma!  
 You, take me to the great Montezuma,  
 Where the treasures hide in all their chroma.

### ACT III.

#### SCENE I. — *In the chamber of the palace of Montezuma.*

*Enter MONTEZUMA and TEUCH.*

*Mont.* Who are these men whom take my city?  
 Surely they cannot be our deities. 200  
 Their clothes are not godly, but of the earth.  
 Their words are almost like our own language.  
 Tell me Teuch, what do you think of them?  
 Do you not agree that they are not gods?  
*Teuch* Yes, these men are all too ordinary.  
 But what of the comet? The great omen?  
 And what of the quest to the pantheon?  
 Were all these sacrifices without rew'rd?  
 Perhaps these men are truly our great gods,  
 Their image has all been an illusion. 210  
*Mont.* I do not know. These men seem strange in ways,  
 Their actions different, unpredictable.  
 I know not what to expect from these men.  
 Yet it matters not. For they are but pawns  
 And these pawns will be our next sacrifice.  
 Have the altars been prepared?  
*Teuch* Yes, the altars have been readied.  
*Mont.* Good, all is in place for their arrival.  
 Be prepared to lead them to their deaths.  
*Teuch* My life has been lived for this one moment. 220

*Mont.* It seems as if our guests have just arrived.  
Yes, I can hear them coming closer now.  
Be sure that these men find their way in here.

*Teuch* Yes, most certainly I will.

*TEUCH leaves and then returns with CORTÉZ, HECTOR, CRISTÓBAL, and the CORTEZ MEN.*

*Teuch* This man claims that he is Quetzalcoatl.  
He says that he seeks out Montezuma.

*Mont.* If you are the one true Quetzalcoatl.  
Then I suppose you would want this gold mask.

*Crtz.* Thank you for the kind gift. You will not be forgotten.

*Crst.* Yes, Montezuma, we know all about you. 230

*Mont.* I am curious. What is it you know?

*Crst.* It is not your place to question our words.

*Crtz.* Yes, have faith in what we say.

*Mont.* Well, what is it that you seek coming here?  
Are you seeking our great riches and wealth  
Or are you seeking to rule the Aztecs?

*Crtz.* The workmanship on these golden objects is remarkable.  
I wish to see more of these beautiful goods.

*Mont.* Very well then. Teuch? Bring in the gold.

*Teuch* We are the wealthiest of all kingdoms, 240  
And our land stretches from sea to light sea.  
But these treasures are naught next to the great  
City of Tenochtitlan.

*Crst.* What other treasures do you have here?

*Teuch* Our treasuries contain gold and jewels,  
Silver and much more valuable things.

*Mont.* Yes, but our treasuries are built upon  
The great and remarkable city here.  
The greatest city of the Aztec men,  
The capital city of the vast world. 250

*Crtz.* The greatest cities are ruled by great wealth,  
And it is this that we wish to see more.

*Mont.* Very well then. Teuch, make sure our guests  
Feel welcomed in our grand city.

*Crtz.* Set fire to the city, and I will steal the riches from the castle. [Cortéz says  
this secretly to Christóbal]

*All Exit save CORTÉZ who secretly hides in the palace, and MONTEZUMA who stays behind  
to rule from his throne.*

*Mont.* These men will finally receive payment,  
Their sacrifice will quench the gods' anger.  
I am ruler of the Aztec people,  
No one can stop the ruler of the world.

SCENE II. – *The inner city of Tenochtitlan.*

*Enter* TEUCH, HECTOR, CRISTÓBAL, *and the* CORTÉZ MEN.

- Teuch* This, white men is our capital city. 260  
Is its great beauty not most amazing?  
Tenochtitlan is built on a salt lake,  
Have you ever seen such wonderful roads  
Or ever set eyes on gracious canals?  
Our great city is unique in the world,  
You will find nowhere else like it.
- Hec.* This city is most truly amazing.
- Crst.* Your city is so wealthy  
Where did you find such great wealth  
So as to sponsor so many architectural projects? 270
- Teuch* The decision was not made by money.
- Crst.* Than how did these buildings get built?
- Teuch* They were simply created.
- Crst.* I am afraid I do not understand.
- Teuch* I pity you and your small simple mind,  
There is so much you could learn, it is a—  
And here we are!
- Hec.* What do the flames represent?
- Teuch* The flames represent your impending death,  
Your sacrifice benefits all Aztecs. 280  
Your body will feed the flame and hot fire,  
Your mind will feed the gods.
- Crst.* But we do not wish to die!
- Teuch* It is not your choice.
- Hec.* Who's choice is it?
- Teuch* It is Montezuma, the emperor.
- Crst.* Is there any way we can get out of this?
- Teuch* Your sacrifice comes immediately.
- Hec.* You do not even know who we are.
- Teuch* It matters not, it is the king's bidding. 290  
Relax and submit.
- Crst.* I'm damned if I don't!      [*Cristóbal picks up a flaming torch and throws it  
over the side of the enclosure. The neighboring building bursts  
into flames. The fire soon spreads across the city of Tenochtitlan.*]

SCENE III. – *In the chamber of the palace of Montezuma.*

*Enter* MONTEZUMA *and* CORTÉZ.

Mont. My life, my city is bright with fire flames  
What has become of my awesome kingdom  
Once it struck fear into all my allies  
And horror into all my enemies.  
I am Montezuma, king of Aztecs.  
There is nothing that can stop my power.  
It is the gods' fault, for they interfere,  
Interfere in the daily lives of man. 300  
I curse each and every one of you gods  
For you each deserve the most painful death.  
And Tenochtitlan, the greatest city,  
Must not be destroy'd, lest the Aztecs die.  
This was never meant to happen to me,  
Never meant to happen under my reign.  
At least I have the comfort that those men,  
The men who claim to be Quetzalcoatl,  
Died in vain sacrifice to our own gods.  
No matter what happens to this great land, 310  
I will forever be Montezuma,  
Emperor of the proud Aztec people,  
Ruler of the world. Protect me great gods,  
Protect me from all future misfortune.

Crtz. You may be Emperor of the Aztecs  
But you shall never be ruler of Earth!      [*Cortéz, who is sitting behind the  
throne, pulls out a dagger and drives it into the  
heart of Montezuma*]

Mont. Who are you and why did you come to us?  
What brought you to the shores of our great world,  
What gave you rights to burn Tenochtitlan.  
You are not Quetzalcoatl, yet you 320  
Just as the great prophecies predicted,  
Brought final end to our mortal kinship.  
You have destroyed the greatest of powers,  
May the gods take wrath in our final hour.