

THE CONQUISTADOR'S WIFE

CHORUS 7: CORTÉS REVEALED

For all of the Naturales living under Mexica rule, the prophecy was clear. As the Year of One Reed dawned, it was not just Moctezuma II who feared for the empire's future. After all, how could mere men hope to defeat a mighty god returning to seek justice?

Cortés—so bold and powerful on horseback—had kept the deception alive for nearly nine months, and may have come to believe that he was, in fact, more a god than a man. Perhaps the Owlmen had seen him with his Spanish army when they gazed into the future. Perhaps he was the prophecy made real.

But, as Cuauhtemoc knew so well, Cortés was no god. He rarely bathed, had bad teeth, and could not tolerate the native foods. He was vain, ill-tempered, and often cruel. His men feared him, and felt little love for their commander. How then, Malinali must have come to wonder, could El Caudillo actually be Quetzalcoatl—great God of forgiveness and love?

If she had her doubts, they were never shared with others. She knew better than to cross Cortés and put her mission of vengeance at risk. Still, all was revealed when Cortés ordered Moctezuma's death just moments after she had spared the emperor and heeded Quetzalcoatl's own words: Let...Him...Live!"