

ACT ONE

Scene 1

*An outdoor Pueblo scene in, or near, the central plaza.
Ku-tsa-yi is alone at first, then she is joined by an elderly woman*

KU-TSA-YI:

Many years, many long years ago they came,
the “Shiny Helmets” with their black guns
and their “Haysus.”
Impatient. Cruel.
They don't know us.
They don't know the Great Mother.
We have been here
since she first opened her arms.

In the beginning we welcomed them,
they were so few and weak.
We shared our food and gave them warmth:
their holy men kept silence.
We gave them land,
and they grew stronger,
they built houses for their Haysus,
they grew crops and made children:
their holy men spoke of joy, peace and love.

Soon they were many:
new holy men arrived
who spoke out against our ways.

Then the whippings started.

(Off stage “Keening” chorus - the onstage characters freeze until the chorus is over)

They said their “Haysus” was the one true God
and we would learn to love him
either from their Book
or the end of a lash.

They don't know us.
They don't know the Great Mother.
We have been here
since she first opened her arms.
Soon they will be gone
like the dew on the morning corn.

CRONE:
Dreams, dreams!
a young girl's innocent dreams.
Still you think that they will leave us,

and the old ways be restored.
Still you believe Po'pay will lead us,
in peace defeat the white skins' swords.
Too deep his scars,
too long the wounds
too hot the hatred in his veins.
Too many moons
his anger rages
in his heart no love remains.

Stop, Wise Mother stop! You don't know Po'pay as I do
or what sleeps within his heart.

Stop, Wise Mother, stop! You don't know Po'pay as I do
or the goodness in his heart.
He has seen enough of death.

What did you say, wise mother?

Know what? I have not heard this story.

No, no, Wise Mother,
please, Wise Mother, no. Stop!

I do not understand.

You speak in riddles.
Po'pay will lead us
Our ways will be restored
Po'pay *can* love.

CHORUS

Weave for us a garment of brightness
from the white light of morning
and the red sun of evening
that we may walk fittingly upon your earth.¹

Sleeps, sleeps!
A scorpion hides by day but beware the night!

“When the scars on your back heal,
then will you know”

“When the scars on your back heal,
then will you know”
That's what I told him, the day they whipped
him in Santa Fe.

I told him: “You are the One, who will lead us”,
but the path of peace will not be his path.
Too deep his scars,
too long the wounds
too hot the hatred in his veins.

Beware, Ku-tsa-yi,
the marks on his back may have healed,
they may shine only in the light of the moon,
but the scars on his soul lie deeper:
too soon will they be revealed.

Too many moons his anger rages
In his heart no love remains
no love remains . . .

¹ Freely adapted from a prayer identified as Tewa, available from many public domain sources

KU-TSA-YI

He will follow the way of peace
if he loves the Great Mother.

CRONE

I can only tell you what I have seen.

Scene 2

The Governor's Office in Santa Fe. Two Franciscans, an army captain and the Governor are deep in conversation.

CAPTAIN so you see, I simply can't allow you to have any more natives.

BROTHERS The position of the church is clear: the completion of our new building is the first priority. The natives must be assigned to us so that construction can be completed by the Saint's Day.

CAPTAIN Out of the question!

BROTHERS We are sure that the captain does not mean to imply that the work of the Holy Church is not important?

CAPTAIN Of course not.

Brothers Or that the building of God's house should not be accomplished?

CAPTAIN No, no, no, no!

BROTHERS We must show these savages His power and majesty to bring them into the fold for the salvation of their eternal souls.

CAPTAIN My mens' stomachs are more important! The souls of the natives can fend for themselves (*The Brothers are disgusted*). They are simple, child-like creatures: they already think their gods have abandoned them. Surely you can see that if there are no crops and we have nothing to eat, your God won't seem very magnificent to them either.

BROTHERS "Our God"? CAPTAIN: No food, no building!

BROTHERS "Our God"? He is your God also, or have you renounced Him?

GOVERNOR Enough! Calm yourselves, gentlemen: this is a very old argument. You know perfectly well what the Captain means - such petty insinuations might be effective in front of the Inquisition, but I will not tolerate them here.

You are both right: the new church is an important symbol of our power and authority (*the Brothers look smug*), but if we have nothing to eat we will all be meeting our Creator rather sooner than we care to, don't you think?

(The Captain looks satisfied, ignoring the Brothers)

This infernal drought has no end in sight: the fields are almost barren and the cattle are dying of thirst. But we have been charged to hold this inhospitable and arid land for the glory of Spain and the honour of King Carlos.

CAPTAIN The honour of El Hechizado? What a joke! They say he can't even hold it himself when he pisses...

GOVERNOR Mind your tongue.

CAPTAIN Everybody knows it is Valenzuela who rules, at the Queen's 'pleasure.'
(he makes a crude gesture)

BROTHERS How dare you! Her Majesty is a benefactress of the Holy Church!

GOVERNOR Enough! *(to the Captain)* You'll moderate your language if you want to keep your commission. *(to the Brothers)* Perhaps you haven't heard that the Queen is no longer Regent? *(to the Captain)* . . . or that Valenzuela has been exiled? *(to both)* We are far from Madrid - its ever changing intrigues are of no importance here. Our position is simple: we have been charged to hold this inhospitable and arid place, and, like it or not, that is exactly what I intend to do.

Backward or Godless as they may be, the natives know this land and how to get the best out of it. My requests for fresh supplies have gone unanswered: if you don't improve production, I will have to order another cut in rations...
(He goes to a side cabinet and pours a glass of wine)
... and none of you wants that.

(to the Captain) Take them from their fields by force if you have to.

(to the Brothers) As for you, if work stopped less often for your religious observances it would proceed a little faster, don't you think?

BROTHERS We make them worship with us to teach them the love of Christ and the evil of their old ways...

GOVERNOR ...but the ones you "love" too much when they refuse are useless for weeks. Sing your interminable psalms to them, if you must, while they work, but get the church finished and convert them afterwards.

(He returns to his desk, sits and takes up a pen)
Then you can whip them as much as God requires.

(both Captain and Brothers see this is the end of the discussion and prepare to leave, passing a young nobleman on their way out)

GOVERNOR *(testily, to the young nobleman)* Who the hell are you?

PEDRO Juan Pedro Francisco de la Cerda, at your service.

GOVERNOR Just what we need - another noble here to feather his nest.

PEDRO Forgive me, I believe I see the root of your misunderstanding. I have only recently taken Holy Orders and am not yet accustomed to my new title. Fray Pedro, at your service.

GOVERNOR Same feathers, different nest.

PEDRO I do not know what I can have done to merit such a low opinion. I merely came out of politeness to introduce myself and bring greetings from my father (*he pauses to let this sink in*) but I see the niceties are not observed this far from Spain. Permit me to withdraw and trouble you no further. (*He bows and makes to leave*)

GOVERNOR My apologies, sir. My most recent audience was quite trying. May I offer some refreshment?

PEDRO (*he demurs with a gesture to the people who have just left*) I see you are a busy man, and I am anxious to see my new accommodations.

GOVERNOR I suspect they will be a little less commodious than you are used to.

PEDRO That is of no concern. My faith is sincere. I am not here for my comfort, but for the spiritual care of the natives.

GOVERNOR (*to himself*) Then I fear you will find yourself uncomfortably unique.

PEDRO (*ignoring the Governor's response*) I believe all souls are immortal, and equally worthy of God's love.

GOVERNOR An opinion that might not elicit universal agreement, don't you think?

PEDRO I don't care for politics. I am a simple man, here only to do God's will.

GOVERNOR Simple nobleman? Humble priest? How can two such rare creatures inhabit the same body? You are an enigma indeed. Or are you perhaps merely. . .

PEDRO (*interrupting*) Priest I may be, sir, but grateful nevertheless if you would not insult me twice in a single day. My motives are my own: the natives shall receive my care and the love - and protection - of their Creator.

GOVERNOR (*examines Pedro before continuing*) A wise man gets his bearings before he sets out in unfamiliar territory.

PEDRO An apt metaphor. But it is equally true that the man who does not take the first step will never reach his destination.

GOVERNOR Tread carefully, Fray Pedro, tread carefully.

Scene 3

As the lights come up, we see Po'pay alone, in a wilderness or outdoor setting, at the end of a moment of private prayer. He is wearing some kind of ceremonial clothing and facing away from the audience. He hums to himself, and then turns to face the audience, throwing corn pollen to the East

PO'PAY

The sun rises
Slowly its light spills
over the red earth and
fills the day.
Its warmth makes blood leap,
muscles strong,
eyes clear.
Soon will come heat,
when, shadowless,
all must return from the hunt,
or come in from the fields,
to gather in house and kiva,
to give thanks for the day,
and await the cooling breath of the Mother.

So has it always been. *(He removes his ceremonial clothing)*

A group of Puebloan leaders enters

TUPATU
Are we disturbing you?

I have completed my morning ritual.

Then I greet you in the name of our
brothers here assembled, brothers from
Po-sogeh, Tanogeh, from Walatowa
and Khe-wah, Ke-wai and Nampé.

I am honoured by your greeting and your presence here.

The Council has finished its deliberations.
We have elected Conixu to speak for us.

Say what is on your heart.

CONIXU
You have been with us in our meeting halls,
you have both listened and spoken as we
debated through the night.
Too many the stories,
too numerous the indignities we have
endured, too deep the lake of our suffering
since the *Castyilash* arrived.

What you say is true and well-attested.

Conixu, our ways are our strength:
they bind us to our ancestors and to the land.

Our ways are our strength,
the root of everything we are.
Without that faith, we are nothing.

Ah, with that serpent I am well acquainted:
its bite is deep, its tooth long.
I was one of the Forty-Seven:
my arms were bound, my hair hacked off,
my body stripped naked.

At first the crowd roared,
they howled in anticipation,
but with the first crack
silence welled up with the marks on my back.
They wanted to hear me cry out,
but with the help of Po'se yemu
with each stroke I grew stronger.

When I was cut down, I turned to face them.
The fire in my eyes made some recoil,
I could feel the fear rise like a mist in the air,
but even as my blood dried on the ground
the patient God cooled my anger.

I was healed by a Wise One. She said:
"You are the one who will lead us".
I did not understand. Many days she tended me,
and each one I asked what she meant.
She said only:
"When the scars on your back heal, then you will know."
As my wounds slowly faded,
I pondered her meaning.

Often have you told us we are in danger
of losing our path:
our dances are forbidden,
our holy objects destroyed,
our rituals debased.

The land no longer sustains us:
what little grows is taken to feed
the beast that devours us.

Our ways are faltering:
many already wander and are lost.
Some now bend the knee to Haysus
and sing new songs:
some have joined the *Castyilash*
to avoid the whip.

Well do we know this story,
how Po'se yemu sustained you
as you suffered under that lash.
Too many have fallen,
too numerous the injuries we have endured.

Conixu, your words honour me.
Every day I ask Po'se yemu
why he gave my spirit wings that day,
for what purpose?
Yet, he has chosen to remain silent.

Then he speaks to many, not just me.

When our kivas are empty we are all hollow.

(angrily)
Do not put that whip into the hands of Po'se yemu!
(he regains his calm)
Pain is a ready counsellor, but a poor guide.

He did, and we shall find a way,
but we must be patient a little longer.

(Po'pay reasons with them, gradually winning them over)
My brothers, do animals not fear fire and
and keep their distance, but when it has
consumed itself, do they not return?
However, does a stream not flow around the rock
until it becomes mighty enough to move it?

Then let us together become the river that
quenches the thirst of this parched land,

PO'PAY and CONIXU
that cleans the wounds of the white-skins' lash

PO'PAY, CONIXU, TUPATU and MALACATE
and washes open the doors of our kivas.

(The Puebloans exit, buoyed by Po'pay's speech/ Po'pay takes Conixu aside)

The Wise One spoke truth.
The time has come for a single leader,
one bright beacon to lead us out
of darkness, for if the flame of leadership
burns low, the boot of the Shiny Helmets
will never be removed from our necks.
Po'pay, it is time to fulfill her prophecy.

TUPATU
Perhaps he speaks through the sufferings
of our people.

MALACATE
Perhaps he speaks through the white-skins
churches and our forbidden kivas.

[trio] Perhaps he has shown the way forward
in the marks on your back.

TUPATU
Did Po'se yemu not sustain you that day
with a vision of our land restored?

(the Puebloans show their dissent silently)

CONIXU
It is true: with enough hands
the heaviest object can be moved.

We must be careful. Not all eyes are friendly,
not all hearts true. Trust no-one.
Speak of this only with me.
Now go in peace and do not make a move
until I send word.

ACT TWO

Scene 1

*Ku-tsa-yi is alone in an environment similar to Scene 1, preparing some ceremonial corn.
Some time has passed.*

KU-TSA-YI

My mind is no longer my own,
my thoughts are tossed about like leaves in an autumn storm,
blown this way and that,
never knowing when or where they will land.
The Wise One's words still haunt me.
She told me:
"Too many moons his anger rages -
in his heart no love remains."

Is it true?

My brother has walked a lonely path
since that day in Santa Fe,
the scars on his back like armour,
letting nothing in - or out.
Where is the boy that ran on the wings of the wind?
Where is the young man that raised his voice in song?

She said:

"Too deep his scars, too long the wounds, too hot the hatred in his veins."

Is it true?

Does my brother know his path is darkening?
Does he see the fork in the road ahead?
Will he take the easy downward slope, so gentle - at first,
or brave the sharp-edged, difficult climb?

Which rules his heart, the kiva or the lash?

*(Po'pay enters. Although time has passed since the Act One,
he is still buoyed by his meeting with the Elders)*

PO'PAY

Greetings, little sister:
surely the day is too beautiful

There you are, Po'pay: the sky is indeed brighter
than my spirits. It is many days since I have seen you.

I had heard as much, but had to wait to learn of it
at the well, with the other women.

The eagle rides the edge of the storm,
but those who cannot rise so high
remain below, buffeted and battered.

Brother, I am afraid.

Not 'of what', afraid *for*.

I'm afraid for us, for our people. For you.
Of you, a little.

Yes, then I knew you, boy and man.
Then your soul was free, your face open.
Now your eye is clouded and I cannot see through.
Now your heart is like a fist and I do not know
how to unclench it.

You have cause to resent the *Castyilash*.
With reason their laws offended you,
with reason you resisted when they forbad our ways,
with reason their cruelty angered you.
But the Great Mother used to sustain your heart
and keep it open.

Better a brother with a heart of cold stone
than a leader impelled by red-hot hatred.

(she pauses)

Brother, I am afraid.
Do you not remember?
Have you forgotten how many died?
Do you not see how many mothers still weep,
how many a wives sleep alone,
how many children are fatherless?
I beg you, do not let the scars on your back
be a map to the past.

for this dark mood?

I am sorry for it, but there is much to
discuss, many things to be decided.

The world is gathering pace, Ku-tsa-yi,
and I am carried with it, like a bird on the wind.

Little sister, what is troubling you?

Afraid? Of what?

I don't understand.

You're afraid of me? How can that be?
Did we not grow up under the same sky?
Did we not run together by the same river,
and warm ourselves by the same hearth
in the cold of winter?

Am I so different?

When they whipped me in Santa Fe
that heart was hardened.

The *Castyilash* swords are tempered in fire,
their black guns forged in the smithy of contempt.

Ku-tsa-yi, you do not understand.
Those welts are ceremonial marks
of leadership: their cruel lines
will show the path to victory.
If we are united and rise as one
the *Castyilash* will tremble
at the purity of our resolve;
their resistance will crumble
as they see the power of the Old Ways,
their high pride we be humbled
when they feel the wrath of the Ancients.
Before, we were scattered,
like wasps around a bull.
Now we will be one mind, one thought:
we will be the hoof to crush the nest.
Then, and only then, will we be free to
return to the simple pleasures of our youth.

O Po'pay, I too yearn to dance our dances.
I too long to sing our songs.
But who will pay the price?
How many will not see that day?
How many more will join the ancestors
and never again feel warm sun or soft caress?

Do you think that weighs less heavily on me?
I have no desire to see the ranks of our ancestors
swelled by a single brave soul before his race is run.
But there are different ways of dying, Ku-tsa-yi:
who is to say whether the swift blow is worse
than the slow suffocation of the oppressors' boot?

There are also different ways of living:
which is the greater threat,
the one that surrounds us, or the foe within?

*(before they can reconcile, they are interrupted by the sound of children's
laughter offstage and PEDRO enters with some Pueblo children.
Po'pay is frustrated and leaves immediately. Ku-tsa-yi remains, watching Pedro interact with the children)*

Scene 2

CHILDREN *(the following are individual lines)*
But it's easy!

We learned your language quickly,
We learned it very fast!

Why do you want to be friends with us?
None of the others do.

(All) But we have our own Gods!

PEDRO
I will never be able to learn your language!

Yes, for you.

Perhaps you are just cleverer than I am!

Because God loves you and I love God.

(solo) Do you love them, too?

Shall we tell you about them, like you tell us?

And we think that's silly!

(All) We think that's silly!

If your God is so big, how does he fit in such a tiny house?

(laughter)

We're not allowed in there any more. It's not fair!

How can we? He doesn't even speak our language!

(the children dance round him chanting "try again!" Ku-tsa-yi comes over to them and joins in)

KU-TSA-YI

Yes, try again won't you? Try again!

(the mothers collect their children and lead them away)

KU-TSA-YI

Very well, thank you Don Pedro.

But are you not a warrior for your Haysus?

Then why did your people conquer us?

Don, Prince, King - what does it matter?
Whatever the name our lives are not our own.
You say you are bringing us to God,
but we have been speaking with the Great
Mother since before your Haysus was born.

... are cruel. Do they not follow this Prince of Peace?

(She pauses to let this sink in)

Some of our warriors also prefer the way of the Wolf.

Po'pay? What of him?

(She pauses again, uncertain)

He's a Runner, that is all

I don't know them.

We believe there is only one, the True God
Ruler of All.

(before he can react, another question is fired at him)

Do you not have your kivas?

We want you to know the One True God.

PEDRO

Oh, it's you, Ku-tsa-yi
How goes the day?

May I remind you, I am not a Don,
I'm a churchman, not a warrior.

I seek to do his will, but I am no soldier.
He is the Prince of Peace.

Our soldiers claim new lands for King Carlos,
I seek new souls for God.

I am beginning to understand that.
But the soldiers. . .

I am beginning to see that they do not.

And your brother?

Which way does he prefer?

A Runner? What is that?

Sometimes your ways are strange to us as well.

We have a story, an ancient story: a young warrior went to seek the advice of the Wise Man in the kiva. "Old Father", he said, "sometimes I feel a war inside, a battle between a coyote and an eagle. One schemes, full of hatred, one rides on the wind, angry but proud. I don't know which one will win."

He asked: "Which one will you feed?"

Po'pay? He believes if he can run fast enough, one day he will soar like a bird
(she turns to him)
...if his coyote is not fed by others.

What was the old man's reply?

(He pauses)
And Po'pay?

(They turn from each other immersed in their own thoughts. Finally Pedro comes to a decision)

Ku-tsa-yi, there is something I must tell you.
I am like that young man,
I too have sought the advice of
One whose wisdom I hold most dear,
The Lamb who died for us all.
I too am torn inside:
For years we have been taught
that there is only One Way,
we have been told
it is an act of love to bring the wayward
back into the fold
for the good of their immortal souls.
But, when I see the pain,
when I hear the screams,
when their blood flows so freely,
I don't feel the love,
I can't see the Way
I see only death and degradation.
Where are you, God of Love?
Is this truly your will?

Pedro...

*(he turns and they face each other, but there is constraint between them.
Unobserved, Po'pay enters and watches their last exchange)*

Pedro...

Is this truly God's will?

I should go now. I have already said too much. *(exits)*

PO'PAY
What did you tell him?

KU-TSA-YI
Nothing, nothing.

What did you tell him?

Do you deny you have feelings for this Priest?

But he is not one of us. How can you give yourself to a Whiteskin?

The Whiteskins enslaved us, tortured us, killed us: how can you say there is anything good?

He sees only a beautiful, gullible young girl

Those scars were put there by men like your Whiteskin!

(He sees she is stung by this, softens his approach)
He is a Priest - his Haysus is just another weapon to harm us, another excuse to take our land and defile our kivas

(mockingly)
Pedro! Pedro!
You see with the eyes of one who has never felt the scorpion's kiss!

For love?
It is true: my heart was hardened by the Whiteskin's lash. It is true that I do not often allow the salve of love to soften it.
If I could live in the home of the eagles or run on the wings of the wind, perhaps would my heart beat to a gentler drum.

Nothing.
(angrily)
Do you think so little of me to believe I would ever betray us?

I do not deny it.

How dare you! I have not given myself, but I am not so consumed with hatred that I cannot see where there is goodness.

Pedro has not. He has not killed, he has never tortured. He has seen their cruelty, and knows it is wrong.

And you see only with the scars on your back, through the red mist of anger and revenge.

(still angry)
Do not pretend that you are acting only to protect the Great Mother.
(she now tries to reason with him)
Pedro is not like the others, his eyes have been uncovered.

But I have seen the results of its venom. I too have felt the sting of loss, I too have seen the whippings, I too have recoiled at the screams of rape. I have eaten bitter corn and drunk deeply from the well of tears, but I will not submit to the embrace of hatred. There is room in my heart for love.

Perhaps then I could give voice once more
to the song of the morning.
Then would my blood thrill with the pulse of the Mother,
my eyes clear,
my feet swift,
my back unbent, unsullied,
my spirit, free. . .

There is room in your heart for love!

(she goes to him and takes his hands)

But. . .
How can I rest while the Whiteskins are in our lands?
How can we be free until our young men
are no longer whipped,
our young women
no longer turned from our ways,
until our crops are our own,
our kivas inviolate
and the shadow of Haysus
no longer darkens our red earth?

(she pulls away)

O Po'pay, beware this darkness
before it consumes you and destroys us.
If you expel the warriors
and burn the churches,
will that satisfy you?
What will ever be enough?
Blood cannot cleanse blood,
tears will not wash away sorrow,
wounds cannot be healed
by the thrust of a blade.

The Council of Elders is meeting;
Our fate is where it should be,
in the hands of the Gods.

Scene 3

*The scene is the same, or similar, to Act One Scene 3.
A large gathering of the Elders is reaching its end.*

CONIXU
It is decided then.
Our words have been many
and honourable, but let there be an end to them,
that they do not become so many
that we are ensnared by their weight.

TUPATU
May it be as Po'pay has designed it:
his plan is clear and brave.
Let us now be united,
as one to bring it to life.

As Po'pay has described to us,
each runner will each take a
knotted rope, the number of knots
being equal to the number of days needed

to reach each destination.
Every day, at the setting of the sun,
a single knot will be untied
until the rope is as straight as the sun's last rays.

As the sun grows in the East on that day,
our hearts will glow with its fire.

At sunrise after the last knot has been untied,
we shall rise.

As the sun climbs towards its zenith
the *Castyilash* will turn their faces and
hide their eyes. They will scatter before us like
pollen in the storm.

BOTH

When the knots are untied we will claim our destiny.
When the knots are untied we shall be free.

(Po'pay rises)

PO'PAY

My brothers,
for many years our prayers have been disturbed,
our thoughts troubled,
our vision dimmed,
our path unclear.

But, tonight we set our minds to be men.
We cleanse our hearts and clear our thoughts
to quicken the blood, to harden bone and tendon.

We shall not be alone.

Our fathers have prepared the way.
The Gods have set their sacred places.
We add their strength and will to ours.

May we be blessed with life,
blessed with hope,
may we soon be blessed with victory!

*(he removes his shirt, and slowly turns his back
to the audience, revealing hideous scars)*

Never again will we bear such marks on our back:
never again will we know the rope's embrace:
it is time to let the snake loose.

Never again will our kivas be forbidden,
never again will our children's future be the lash and the Cross:
it is time to set the snake loose.

CHORUS

It is time to let the snake loose.

ACT THREE

Scene 1

The Governor's Office in Santa Fe. The same two Franciscans, the army captain and the Governor are again deep in discussion. Pedro is present, but not at first part of the conversation.

BROTHERS The position of the church is clear: these religious practices are devil worship and must be rooted out by any means necessary. Not only are their immortal souls in danger, but their heresy might infect the newly converted.

GOVERNOR I fail to see why that is my concern.

BROTHERS Because you were appointed by the King and this mission was sanctioned by the Pope. You are duty bound to help us achieve God's will.

GOVERNOR I have already ordered their *estufas* to be filled in, and outlawed their religious practices. I really don't see what else you can expect me to do.

BROTHERS But they continue to practice their satanic rituals in private!

GOVERNOR What if they do? There is nothing can be done about it. We could search every house every morning and still have no idea what they were up to by lunchtime.

CAPTAIN I agree with the Brothers. The souls of the natives are not my concern, but when they cling to their religion they are much harder to control. They become sullen, unwilling to work.

BROTHERS They are proud of their sin, call out to their false Gods. They have wickedness in their hearts, they dishonour the Most High.

GOVERNOR You've described the symptoms very well, but, as usual, failed to suggest a remedy. I repeat, what else can I do?

CAPTAIN We need to show them who's in charge. . .

BROTHERS ... show these savages God's power and majesty. . . .

CAPTAIN ... round up their leaders...

BROTHERS ... they must be punished!

PEDRO Perhaps I might make an alternative suggestion?

(The Brothers are annoyed at Pedro. The Captain ignores him. The Governor is a little wary)

Forgive me, but have all these things not been tried before? It does not seem sensible to expect a different outcome. To increase the severity of our actions will only result in an equally severe response.

(The Brothers and Captain show their disgust with this line of argument)

GOVERNOR *(with exaggerated politeness)* Pray, continue, Fray Pedro.

PEDRO You do not know them as I do. You have not shared God's Holy Word, you have not lifted up your hearts together in prayer. They are beloved of God, spiritual people, not beasts to be harnessed or animals to be trained. We should not force them into the lion's den like Daniel, at the point of a sword, but open wide the gate to God's love.

GOVERNOR An interesting line of reasoning: however - discredited, don't you think?

CAPTAIN *(to himself, but making sure he is overheard)* I had heard you like your meat a little dark.

PEDRO *(containing his anger, he appeals to the Brothers)* When we teach them how to pray with the whip it only drives them further from God.

BROTHERS Spare the rod and spoil the child. Evil must be exposed and rooted out.

PEDRO They are not children. . .

CAPTAIN That redskin bitch has really turned your head! Learning to love Jesus on her back, is she?

GOVERNOR *(cuts Pedro off before he can reply) (to the Captain)* Enough! I don't care if he copulates with the entire female population *(to the Brothers)* and I don't give a damn who they worship. Is that clear? The only important consideration is that the authority of the crown be upheld. Everything else is secondary.

*(The Captain and the Brothers look shocked, but chastened.
The Brothers are about to speak up, but see that the Governor will brook no discussion)*

PEDRO There is another consideration.

GOVERNOR *(exasperated)* What the hell is it now?

PEDRO Do you not realize that we are considerably outnumbered?

GOVERNOR Go on.

PEDRO If we stoke their anger too high and they rise up, *(to the Captain)* would you be able to defend us?

CAPTAIN We've always dealt with them before, and will again. It's amazing how soon their resolve falters when a couple of 'em are kicking at the end of a rope.

GOVERNOR *(considering Pedro's point)* No, no, Captain, we may fault Fray Pedro's theology, but not his logic. That bastard Po'pay is still dangerous.

CAPTAIN Po'pay? That rabble-rousing son of a bitch? Your predecessor should never have let him go. *(to Pedro)* Isn't he your slut's brother?

PEDRO *(finally shows anger)* I am her Priest!

CAPTAIN That's not what I heard. . . BROTHERS How dare you!

GOVERNOR Enough! *(turns to Pedro)* Is this true?

PEDRO *(regaining control)* My dealings with Ku-tsa-yi are above reproach. But, yes, she is Po'pay's sister. *(The Captain looks triumphant)*

GOVERNOR *(incredulous)* And it didn't occur to you that it might be a dangerous entanglement?

PEDRO Preaching the Gospel is never an 'entanglement'!

GOVERNOR *(He approaches close to Pedro, examining him like a scientific specimen)* Such sweet innocence! You really have no idea, do you? *(moves away)* Why her? Why that one? *(Pedro again tries to protest)* It doesn't matter whether you have bedded her or not. Given the pristine reputation of our Holy Brethren, Po'pay has ample reason to suspect that you have, and I can't imagine anything more perfectly calculated to enrage him. *(to the Captain)* This is a spark in search of a fire. We must make sure there's no tinder to nurture it. You know whom to arrest, but do it quietly.

CAPTAIN And Po'pay?

GOVERNOR Leave him be, for now. *(The Captain exits)*

BROTHERS What should we do?

GOVERNOR For God's sake exercise some restraint. Round 'em up into the church, if it pleases you, preach the evils of devil worship, sing your miserable dirges 'til your voices are hoarse, but harm no-one, do you hear me? Not a hair on their head. We must not give Po'pay any excuses. *(chastened, they exit)*

(to Pedro) And as for you, I suggest that you stay out of trouble. Keep your nose in your bible and your cock out of the natives.

Scene 2

*The scene is a Pueblo village. A group of women is conversing while accomplishing a common task.
Ku-tsa-yi is among them.*

WOMAN 1 I hear your husband kept you up late last night.

WOMAN 2 We all heard it! *(laughter)*

WIFE It was good to see him again after his long journey.

WOMAN 1 Which tired him more: the journey, or the return? *(more laughter)*

WOMAN 2 He has been away often recently.

WIFE And to many different villages.

WOMAN 3 My husband too.

WOMAN 4 And there was a big gathering three nights ago: they talked long into the night.

WOMAN 1 Tell me something new! (*laughter*)

WIFE This feels different. (*they look towards Ku-tsa-yi*)

KU-TSA-YI Don't ask me! Po'pay tells me nothing.

WIFE They don't normally meet so often and in such large numbers.

WOMAN 1 When you have been married a little longer, you will appreciate those meetings!
(*more laughter*)

WIFE It makes me uneasy.

WOMAN 2 Ku-tsa-yi, I haven't seen you with your Priest recently.

KU-TSA-YI He's not "my" Priest.

WOMAN 3 But you do spend a lot of time together.

KU-TSA-YI He is kind and he listens.

WOMAN 4 It doesn't hurt that he is young and unmarried. . .

KU-TSA-YI Their holy men don't have wives.

WOMAN 1 You don't have to be married to. . .

WIFE (*interrupting*) Perhaps you could talk to him: he might be able to persuade the others to let our lives be a little easier.

KU-TSA-YI I don't know. . .

WOMAN 2 Have you not seen the way he looks at you? He would do it if you asked him.

WIFE Please try!

WOMAN 1 A woman can generally persuade a man to see things her way when she needs to.

KU-TSA-YI Pedro is not like that! Their priests do not. . . .

WOMAN 3 That never stopped the others. . . (*laughter*)

KU-TSA-YI (*to keep it light, she joins in the laughter*)
Perhaps it's not just Pedro that has no interest in sampling those delights, however good looking he is.

WOMAN 4 "Ku-tsa-yi the Virtuous!"

WOMAN 3 "Ku-tsa-yi the High Minded!"

WOMAN 2 “Ku-tsa-yi the Heart Breaker!”
WOMAN 1 “Ku-tsa-yi the Eternal Virgin!” (*much laughter*)

The laughter is interrupted as a woman enters. Immediately the mood changes.

WOMAN 5 Return to your homes. Gather up your husbands and your loved ones.
Shut your doors, board up your windows. The *Castyilash* patrols are out again.
They have already taken many. I have seen it for myself.

WIFE Have they taken my husband?

WOMAN 4 It is beginning again.

WOMAN 3 Is this why the men have been talking into the night?

WOMAN 2 Or because they have been meeting?

WOMAN 1 Talk to your priest, talk to Pedro!

KU-TSA-YI He is powerless to do anything.

WOMAN 1 Powerless, or unwilling?

WOMAN 5 Return to your homes. Do not delay!

WOMAN 4 It is beginning again!

WIFE Have they taken my husband?

WOMAN 2 Talk to the priest. Go to him!

KU-TSA-YI I will find Po’pay and talk to him. He will know what to do.

WOMAN 3 Perhaps it is Po’pay they have come for?

KU-TSA-YI (*to Woman 3*) Even the *Castyilash* know better than to do that.

(*to Woman 1*) Pedro is blameless in this.

(*to everyone*) We must remain calm until we know exactly what has happened.

Go home. Be safe. I will talk to Po’pay.

Scene 3

An outside setting. Some time has passed since the previous scene

PEDRO

Good day, Ku-tsa-yi. It’s good to see you again: I was afraid you would want to avoid me.

KU-TSA-YI

Why would think that?

These last few days must have been difficult:
Try as I might, I could not change their minds.

I thought as much, but no-one would listen.

What do you mean?

I tried to explain that you mean us no harm.

You? Nothing, but you are not like the others: they demand only obedience. They are hard and without joy.
Do they not realise that love of God can no more be commanded than corn can be forced to grow?

May I ask: why are you so different from the other priests?
They say one thing but do another:
Your words and your actions are the same.

It would be better if they were more like you.
You see who we truly are: you listen.

Where do you hear it?

We know that love, but give it a different name.
We call her our Great Mother:
we have been here since she first opened her arms.

I don't understand why a name is so important.

There must be more I could have done...

I have won no-one's trust but yours.

I cannot speak for them.

That's why I became a priest, to learn to listen for God's voice.

"If I take the wings of the morning
or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even
there God will be with me and sustain me."

This is not what we have been taught about
your religion.

Perhaps we must look beyond the name.

BOTH

The eye through which I see God is the
same eye through which God sees me.
My eye and God's eye are one eye,
one seeing, one knowing, one love. ²

This charm represents the Great Mother:
Here, take it, so you will be reminded of ...
our conversation.

Musical Interlude depicting the Battle

Scene 4

*A scene outside Santa Fe. The uprising has been successful. Po'pay is surrounded by many Pueblos.
Conixu, Malacate and Catiti enter and take Po'pay to one side to report to him.*

CATITI

Our scouts report that the *Castyilash* are withdrawing
with their tails between their legs!

² Meister Eckhart, *Sermon IV*, translated by Raymond Blakney

They gave way at the strength of our resolve,
just as you said they would.

They proved to be not so brave when they were
at the other end of the sword!

PO'PAY

Let them leave.
Their God is dead: he was made out of rotten wood.
Let them leave: our numbers and
strength will grow in the telling.

There has been enough death this day.
Let not one more drop of our blood
darken this sacred earth.

(to the assembled crowd) (Ku-tsa-yi enters)

With the help of Pose-yemu,
we have prevailed.
We became the mighty river and removed
the *Castyilash* boot from our necks.
Now return to your people:
Rebuild your kivas, dance the ancient dances.
Embrace your families, reclaim your true selves,
reject the ways of those we shall no longer name.
Give offerings in the morning and thanks at the setting of the sun.
So has it always been.
So it shall be once more! *(shouts of rejoicing)*
(Po'pay sees Ku-tsa-yi and goes to her. They embrace)

ALL So it shall be once more!

(All exeunt except Po'pay, Ku-tsa-yi, Catiti, Conuxu and Malacate)

I, too, am glad that you are here
at this new beginning.

Their soldiers are defeated,
the Governor has surrendered,
their families are leaving with all their possessions.
Now we can rule our own lives.
We are free to return to the sacred ways of our ancestors.

MALACATE

Just as you predicted, when we struck as one fist
their resistance melted like ice in the spring.

We lost many good men in the first assault,
but in the end they saw that the only way to
retain their lives was to leave while they still
had them.

CONIXU

Should we follow them into the valley
and make an end of it?

MALACATE

A beaten dog licks its wounds and
returns to the fight...

KU-TSA-YI

Po'pay! I'm glad to see you!

Are they really gone?

O Po'pay!

(They embrace again, but Ku-tsa-yi shows something is bothering her)

Their churchmen? *(Po'pay cannot face her)*
Yes, and no.

They have been granted their dearest wish.

They are now enjoying the loving embrace of their
Haysus.

They were shown greater mercy than they
ever showed us!

What danger?

What of their churchmen?
Did they leave too?

I don't understand.

(she knows the answer, but makes him say it)
What is this riddle?

(she receives the news like a body blow)
How could you?

How could you put us in such danger?

Your hatred and lust for revenge
is now matched only by that of the
Castyilash. They revere their holy men.
All you have achieved is their certain
return, in greater numbers and with greater
ferocity! With their iron weapons they will sever
us from our land and from our gods.

*(hearing the commotion, Conixu, Malacate and Catiti have come over to see what is happening.
Ku-tsa-yi sees the token she had given Pedro round Catiti's neck. She grabs it and confronts him with it)*

Where did you get this?
This is Pedro's.
I gave it to him.

(She looks from Catiti to Po'pay, neither will catch her eye)

(to Catiti) Why do you have it?

(the truth she has been denying finally hits her)

(to Po'pay) How could you?
What harm had he done?

“What harm?” He was a Priest.

Ku-tsa-yi, can you not see he was
taking advantage of you?

His kind enslaved us, tortured us, killed us!
And you say he was “kind”?

He was kind to me.
He listened.

He understood us.

Pedro did not!
Do not pretend that you acted for me:
Your pride did this.

Your rage did this.
The emptiness of your heart did...
(she throws the token at him)
... *this*.

(the ensuing silence reveals the sounds of off stage celebration)

(Po'pay picks up the token and starts towards her)
Ku-tsa-yi....

You have betrayed me.

(from off stage - chorus "so shall it be again!")

You have betrayed us all.
I will never forgive you.

(Po'pay drops the token and steps away)
I don't understand...

(she goes to pick up the token)
When the scars on my heart heal,
then you will know.

(he moves imploringly towards her)
Ku-tsa-yi....

(coldly)
Don't come near me!
Do not call me by that name again.
You are no longer my brother. *(She exits)*

(realising Po'pay needs to be left alone, Conixu, Malacate and Catiti also exit)

Ah! Ku-tsa-yi!
You alone know me,
you alone could wound me so.
Now is the first sweet sip of victory
turned sour and bitter,
like ash on my tongue.

What should I have done?
Give in? Give up? Do nothing?
How many more lashes should I have taken?
Ten? Twenty? A hundred?
Then would I still be your brother?

Does the eagle starve its young to spare the prey?
Does fire refuse to burn to save the bough?
Does a snake hold back its fangs as the unseeing foot descends?

How much longer should I have kept silent?

Then would you love me still?

No, I cannot... that way darkness lies. . .

This heart, this broken drum,
whose once proud rhythms
stutter and fail,
must make now a new music.
I have forgone a sister's love for this:
Tomorrow we will take feathers
and corn pollen
and in freedom
offer them to the Gods.

Scene 5

The scene is the same as Act One Scene 1, but 12 years have passed

WOMEN'S CHORUS (*off stage*)

Weave for us a garment of brightness
from the white light of morning
and the red sun of evening
that we may walk fittingly upon your earth.³

WOMAN 1 We sing to the Great Mother, but still the rains do not come.

WOMAN 2 It is true, they are late, but they will come.

WOMAN 3 They were late last year too, and the year before they never came.

WOMAN 2 They came then and will again. The Great Mother will provide as she always has.

WOMAN 4 I remember when the harvest was so bountiful we could barely store it.

WOMAN 1 Were we not promised that those times would return?

WOMAN 2 Was it better when the *Castyilash* were here?

(*to Woman 3*) Has your brother been whipped?

(*to Woman 1*) Has your son been forced to profess the name of Haysus?

(*to Woman 4*) Have you had unwelcome visitors in the night?

WOMAN 5 We are free to live as we wish. The kivas live and breathe, our dances are joyful
and our children have never known fear. Is that not what Po'pay promised?

WOMAN 1 Some choose not to dance. Some have forgotten how.

³ see note at Act One Scene 1 above (p.2)

WOMAN 5 Then we must teach them.

WOMAN 3 And if they do not want to learn? We are forgetting who we are. Po'pay is not here to rekindle the flame.

WOMAN 4 Some say the Great Mother has left us because so many *Castyilash* were relieved of their lives.

WOMAN 1 Especially the holy men.

WOMAN 2 Did they not show us the greatest cruelty?

WOMAN 3 They taught us "an eye for an eye" is wrong.

WOMAN 2 Yes, to protect themselves!

WOMAN 1 The Great Mother gives the same advice, so we shall not be consumed by hatred.

WOMAN 5 Does not a mother kill to protect her cubs? How else does the coyote feed his young? Po'pay did not free us from the *Castyilash* for us to be ruled instead by despair.

WOMAN 1 You are young and have not seen the many faces of death. For you he is a distant stranger, but I feel him on the edge of the breeze, see him in the eyes of friends and hear him in the whispers of my heart.

WOMAN 3 We are forgetting who we are. We have lost Po'pay. The chord is unravelling.

WOMAN 4 The world is changing. We are changing.

WOMEN 1, 3 & 4

Our eyes grow dim,
our spirit timid.
The old ways are fading.
The drum hesitates and
the dancers falter.
The flute has fallen silent.
Has the Great Mother has left us?

The old songs no longer bind us together,
our young fall away and
our crops fail.
Where is the singer to weave new melodies?
Where the poet to breathe new life?
The past recedes, the present is silent,
the future no longer beckons.

WOMAN 2 What do you say, Ku-tsa-yi?

(they look to Ku-tsa-yi, who has been silent up to now, deep in her own thoughts)

KU-TSA-YI

What do I say?

When the rain comes,
you will lay seeds to rest
in the breast
of the Great Mother,
to be made anew,
rising proud and strong
full of flowers and pollen. ⁴

But the future is a dream.
It cannot wash away the past.
Those we have lost will not be returned,
scars will not be softened, nor hearts mend.
Tears can never be unshed.

When the rain comes
I will go walking in the fields.
I will climb up into the mountains and ride the clouds,
my feet on the wind,
my arms stretched wide,
and my heart, worn out with love,
at rest at last,
O Great Mother.

END OF OPERA

⁴ (freely adapted from *An Introduction to Zuni Ceremonialism* by Ruth Bunzel)