

SETTING: Dog Face's palace c. 1500 and superimposed on it, Doña Esperanza's house. The floor is littered with bridles, chains, hooks, trowels, cloth, and other objects that might collect in a pre-industrial age. Tunnels lie beneath the floorboards.

AT RISE: In darkness, is heard the sounds of Doña Esperanza's breathing. Next we hear the 'snap!' of tarot cards being laid out.

WOMAN I (whispering)

Esta la cubre. (Snap!) Esta la cruza. (Snap!) Esta está abajo de ella. (Snap!) Esta está destás de ella. (Snap!) Este la corona. (Snap!) Esta está enfrente de ella. Esta es lo que le da miedo. (Snap!) Esta es la opinión de su familia. (Snap!) Esta es su esperanza. (Snap!) Esta es la última éxito. (Snap!)

[The three WOMEN speak simultaneously. WOMAN I and II whisper. WOMAN III who translates WOMAN II is heard clearly. WOMAN III does not need to wait until WOMAN II has finished, before translating her words.]

<p>WOMAN I (whispering) Aquí está el árbol de la vida. (Snap!)</p> <p>De sus raíces, crecen las ramas. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la armonía. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la disciplina. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una del amor. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la naturaleza del deseo. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la naturaleza de la inteligencia. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una, de la naturaleza de la espiritualidad. (Snap!)</p>	<p>WOMAN II</p> <p>Entonces, este, le dicen este va a contar, este, la Señora Esperanza, la doña Esperanza. La Señora Tezcatlipoca, la de la invisible.</p> <p>WOMAN III (translating)</p> <p>Then, this, they say, this is going to tell of, well, Señora Esperanza, Doña Esperanza called, the Tezcatlipoca, the Invisible. In Nahuatl, Tezcatlipoca, the invisible, yes.</p> <p>WOMAN II</p> <p>Bueno. Pues, la señora es muy vieja cuando se murió, muy, muy viejita y este es el cuentito sobre su vida.</p>
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<p>Aquí está el árbol de la vida. (Snap!)</p> <p>De sus raíces, crecen las ramas. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la armonía. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la disciplina. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una del amor. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la naturaleza del deseo. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la naturaleza de la inteligencia. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una, de la naturaleza de la espiritualidad. (Snap!)</p> <p>Aquí está el árbol de la vida. (Snap!)</p> <p>De sus raíces, crecen las ramas. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la armonía. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la disciplina. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una del amor. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la naturaleza del deseo. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una de la naturaleza de la inteligencia. (Snap!)</p> <p>Una, de la naturaleza de la espiritualidad. (Snap!)</p>	<p>WOMAN III Now. Now the woman is very old when she dies, very, very old and this is the tale of her life. Yes.</p> <p>WOMAN II Cuando es niña, la señora vive en el campo, la señora. Viva en el campo.</p> <p>WOMAN III When she is a little girl, she lives in the fields, this woman. She is living in the fields.</p> <p>WOMAN II (Y como en antes, antes, más antes había los ehecates.) Y éstos, los ehecates, los llaman y la pican, y lleva la señora. Bueno.</p> <p>WOMAN III (And as before, before, way before, there used to be the Achihuanime, spirits of lightening.) And these, the spirits, call to her and speak to her and prick her and carry her away.</p> <p>WOMAN II Es niñita. Así lo pasó. Ya. Así.</p> <p>WOMAN III She is just a girl, a little girl. Then it happens. So. Like that.</p> <p>WOMAN II Cuando es vieja, cuando es mujer, no recuerda nada de esto. Nada.</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;">WOMAN III</p> <p>When she grows old, when she becomes a woman, she does not remember any of this. Not a moment. Nothing. Yes.</p>
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WOMAN II (silencing them)

Bueno. Y ahora, el cuento.

(Light change.)

(WOMAN I continues to read the cards. She speaks to WOMAN II and III prompted by what they tell her. Meanwhile, WOMAN III speaks always as if translating for the other two.)

WOMAN II

What beautiful lines she can draw! Right from her heart to—

WOMAN I

You steal her lines.

WOMAN III

She loses the lines and now she searches for what she thought

ALL THREE WOMAN

She thought she had lost.

WOMAN III

The 'infanta' lives on her toes.

WOMAN II

[Interrupting]
What tricks you play on the child, Esperanza.

WOMAN I

You prick and take.

WOMAN III

She lets her hair grow, and remembers nothing.

WOMAN I

You creep around her house, watching her, waiting to see what will happen.

WOMAN III

She says to her father that the jugs of water tell her where to dig for light and sorrow.

WOMAN II

We say, "In the hollows of trees or foxes' nests and

WOMAN I (interrupting)

inside the curls of women's wigs."

WOMAN III

She brings her papa these fantastic things

WOMAN II

Keys to stable doors

WOMAN III

Iron padlocks rusted shut, '

WOMAN II

Rings, and dead bolts.

WOMAN III

Her hands drip with ore from the ground.

WOMAN II

She brings him headstalls and bridles

WOMAN III

And links of chain, hooks, and trowels.

WOMAN II

She has no idea why she collects these things.

WOMAN III

She drops these things all over the house.

[Woman II and then Woman I one phrase behind]

WOMAN II

Like a tide they spread over the house and wash up against her feet, iron bars, traps, ores, a kettle, tin flatware, precious foils thin as ash, and anvils, tongs, and pokers.

WOMAN I

When you visit, the child Esperanza gently takes you into the hall. You stand together watching things pouring out of the living room.

WOMAN III

"Never mind," you say, "Keep them," you say.

WOMAN I

She thinks she had lost.

WOMAN II

The sounds of Esperanza breathing.

WOMAN I

She thinks she has lost...that.

(Light change. Portentous music.)

CORTEZ

Muy alto y muy poderoso, excelentísimo príncipe, muy católico y muy grande reye y señore, sacra majestad, invictísimo emperador y señor nuestro. Most high and powerful, most excellent prince, most Catholic and great king, my lord and holy majesty, invincible emperor, Charles the Fifth. I relate to you the adventures of Don Hernan Cortes, Marquis del Valle.

(The Three Women whisper while Cortes speaks.)

<p>CORTEZ</p> <p>We tortured the cacique, Dog Face, by burning his feet with oil, and extorted the confession that four days before he had thrown his treasure of gold into a lake, together with the cannon and muskets he and his men had captured from us. So six soldiers and myself took him there. But when we arrived he said he had only told us this story in the hopes of dying on the road, and invited us to kill him, for he possessed neither gold nor jewels. We did not believe him and began to dig up his floors, but then outside we heard a noise and looked to see a company of Indians</p>	<p>WOMAN II</p> <p>What beautiful lines she can draw! Right from her heart to—</p> <p>WOMAN I</p> <p>You steal her lines.</p> <p>WOMAN III</p> <p>She loses the lines and now she searches for what she thought</p> <p>ALL THREE WOMAN</p> <p>She thought she had lost.</p> <p>WOMAN III</p> <p>The 'infanta' lives on her toes.</p>
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there. Quickly we carried Dog Face to the roof, and I commanded him to tell his people that the attack must cease, since we wished to leave the city. He was badly hurt and could barely sit or stand or kneel with any comfort, but he began to speak very lovingly to his people, telling them that if they stopped their attacks we would leave Mexico. Many of the chiefs and captains recognized him and ordered their people to be silent. They addressed him in tears, "Oh lord, our great lord, we are indeed sorry for your misfortune and the disaster that has overtaken you and your family. But we must tell you that we have promised the gods Huichilobos and Tezcatlipoca to keep our land free and safe from enemies and if things end as we hope, we will hold you in greater regard as our lord than we have before. And we beg for your forgiveness. As if from no where, even I could not see where our men had been standing as if ready for a signal, a sudden shower of stones and darts descended. Our men who had been shielding Dog Face had momentarily neglected their duty. Dog Face was hit by three stones, one on the head, one on the arm, and one on the leg; and although we begged him to have his wounds dressed and eat some food and spoke very kindly to him, he refused. Then quite unexpectedly we were told

WOMAN II

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WOMAN III

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<p>that he was dead. It was stated that he had reigned for seventeen years, and was the best king they ever had in Mexico, and that he had personally triumphed in three wars against countries he had subjugated. And before we could search the hacienda, we were attacked and spent many days in violent battle before we could fight our way out of the city.</p> <p>El oro y joyas y piedras y plumajes que se han habido en estas partes nuevamente descubiertas, a los muy altos excelentísimos príncipes y muy católicos y muy grandes reyes lords, the queen, doña Juana, and the king, don Carlos, her son, our lords, I send you the following:</p> <p>Item: A vast wheel of gold with a figure of a monster carved in intricate details and which in weight is equivalent to three thousand, eight-hundred pesos.</p> <p>(Whispering)</p> <p>Item: four gold heads of animals, two like wolves, and two like tigers and from them hang sixty-four bells of gold. Item: two birds made of threads of gold and plumes and they have down feathers, and wings, and tails and claws and eyes and of gold, and underneath and within the feathers is a decoration of gold.</p> <p>Item: four gold heads of</p>	<p>WOMAN II She brings him headstalls and bridles</p> <p>WOMAN III And links of chain, hooks, and trowels.</p> <p>WOMAN II She has no idea why she collects these things.</p> <p>WOMAN III She drops these things all over the house.</p> <p>[Woman II and then Woman I one phrase behind]</p> <p>WOMAN II Like a tide they spread over the house and wash up against her feet, iron bars, traps, ores, a kettle, tin flatware, precious foils thin as ash, and anvils, tongs, and pokers.</p> <p>Woman III When Esperanza's father dies, she buys the house in town. Dog Face House. When she was a child and had stood on her toes, what beautiful lines she had drawn. Now Doña Esperanza has lost the lines and looks for what she thinks she has lost.</p> <p>WOMAN II She cannot carry her haul from the country to town.</p> <p>WOMAN I This covers her from head to foot</p>
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<p>animals, two like wolves, and two like tigers and from them hang sixty-four bells of gold.</p> <p>Item: two birds made of threads of gold and plumes and they have down feathers, and wings, and tails and claws and eyes and of gold, and underneath and within the feathers is a decoration of gold.</p>	<p>WOMAN I & WOMAN II [Alternate these words quickly] Mantillas, veils, combs, earrings, petticoats and skirts with trains, scarves, a cloak and hood, stockings, boots.</p> <p>[Repeat until end of page.]</p> <p>WOMAN III But always flicking her head, snapping her arms, brushing the cloth from her face, kicking it from beneath her feet.</p> <p>WOMAN I & WOMAN II [Alternate these words quickly] Mantillas, veils, combs, earrings, petticoats and skirts with trains, scarves, a cloak and hood, stockings, boots.</p>
<p>DOG FACE</p> <p>All I can see is her head, an eye for dancing, her arms, I want to move in and fill the space between her breaths between her breasts and then I see more and more of her. She wears clothes like a hive around her. She can hardly see me. Sometimes she brushes against a carving. And me: one eye at the keyhole, one hand on a latch, one leg on a window sill. I lie next to her at night alone. I dream of her always just out of sight. I pant love.</p>	<p>WOMAN III</p> <p>When she talks, her fingers move the hot, thick air as if it is full of fireflies. The fireflies cover her face. Seas of fireflies, her arms, her legs, her feet. How heavy she grows. How her feet can barely carry her.</p>

WOMAN II	Woman III
<p>Doña Esperanza does the sensible thing. She digs up the living room first, then the bedrooms, the dining room and the servants' rooms. Only the walnut couches and the piano rest on hard floor, the rest is a pit. En algunas partes cubre su trabajo con alfombras. Y en todas partes, la tierra. Por la mañana, la cierra y la amontona, y pues la amontona por la noche, y decalza, la cierna otra vez por la noche. Pierde la esperanza. El tesoro esta ya encontrado, o nunca estuvo allí. Cuando abre las ventanas para dar aire a los cuadros, se enpolva la hacienda.</p>	<p>Doña Esperanza does the sensible thing. She digs up the living room first, then the bedrooms, the dining room and the servants' rooms. Only the walnut couches and the piano rest on hard floor, the rest is a pit. In some places, she covers her work with rugs. And everywhere, the dirt. She sifts it and piles in the morning and, barefoot in her nightgown, she sifts it again at night. She despairs. The treasure has been found already, or it was never there at all. When she opens the windows to air out the rooms, the hacienda becomes a dust storm.</p>

WOMAN II

She lets no one dig unsupervised.

WOMAN III

And in her spare time

WOMAN I

she sells off the moon-shaped chandeliers [Snap] each with sconces for a hundred candles,

WOMAN II

the sandstone statues of soft-boned whales,

WOMAN III

and all but one of the peacocks. She shreds the floor boards to splinters and scrambles in the earth beneath. Down there darkness and silence await her with outstretched roots. She clears her bedroom until it is a barren pit.

WOMAN III (Cont.)

And over it, she hangs a webbing of bridges and scaffolding. She spends so much time below, that the people began to bring her pictures of their newly dead.

WOMAN I

Has she seen them? [Snap] Will she say a word? [Snap]
Pass on a message? [Snap]

WOMAN II

She hangs copper pots of flowers from the ceiling.

WOMAN III

From all over people come with pictures of the dead and these she carries with her into her tunnels and burrows. They become wet with dirt and then she pins them to the wall.

WOMAN I

First ten, then fifty,

WOMAN II

a hundred, years,

WOMAN I

two hundred,

WOMAN II

years and years,

WOMAN I

Has she seen them? [Snap] Will she say a word? [Snap]
Pass on a message? [Snap]

WOMAN I

thousands, she carries them down and guides them across.

[She scoops up her rows of cards]

WOMAN III

She rids the house of all the furniture; only the pictures covering the walls, covering even the dog faces.

WOMAN I

The oldest man in the village falls in love with Doña Esperanza. They call him 'The Man Who Will Never Die.' He is centuries old. For breakfast he eats the mountain Ixtasigüatl, the pyramids are children to him.

WOMAN II

He comes on his cane to woo Doña Esperanza. He comes every day and leans on his cane and woos Doña Esperanza. He woos her. Who knows how he woos her? God, god knows how. And they are down there in the earth every day and every night and digging and he is wooing her constantly, always he is wooing her with his words, and his strength, and his voice and the smell of Toltec fires.

<p style="text-align: center;">WOMAN III</p> <p>And Dog Face gets more and more jealous. The old man hangs his hat on Dog Face's snout. He leans his shoulders on Dog Face. Dog Face hates the shroud every day of the old man's cane.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DOG FACE</p> <p>They took my body and swept it into a hundred pieces and buried it in the walls of my house. I have smelled carvings of dogs and I seep towards them at night. What's left of me. I am no longer man not bone not life not muscle, not earth, not water, not hair, not teeth, not fingers, not fist, not odor, not fire, not breath, not moment, not quick, not ready, not movement.</p>	<p>[The two women wildly mock, elongate, and play with the words 'Dog Face'.]</p> <p>WOMAN I [She continues to lay down cards after every line.] Dog Face.</p> <p>WOMAN II Face of a dog.</p> <p>WOMAN I Arhooooo!</p> <p>WOMAN II A do-o-o-o-o-g.</p> <p>WOMAN I D-o-o-o-o-o-g F-a-a-a-a-c-e.</p>
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CORTES

[Whispering this over the others, above]
Potentsimo señor, Dios Nuestro Señor la vida y muy real persona y muy poderoso estado de vuestra cesrea majestad conserve y aumente con acrecentamiento de muchos ms reinos y seos como su real coraz¿; n desea. Potentísimo señor, de vuestra cas¿ rea majestad muy humilide siervo y vasallo que los muy reales pies y manos de vuestra alteza besa.

Don Hernan Cortes,
El marquis del Valle

<p>WOMAN I [Softly, but as before with the snap of cards.] Aqui esta el arbol de la vida. De sus raïl ces, crecen las ramas. Una, de la armonïl a. Una, de la disciplina. Una, del amor. Una, de la naturaleza del deseo. Una, de la naturaleza de la inteligencia. Una, de la naturaleza de la espiritualidad.</p> <p>[Whispered] Aqui esta el ï rbol de la vida. De sus raïl ces, crecen las ramas. Una, de la armonïl a. Una, de la disciplina. Una, del amor. Una, de la naturaleza del deseo. Una, de la naturaleza de la inteligencia. Una, de la naturaleza de la espiritualidad.</p>	<p>WOMAN III Then this, they say, Dog Face is sick with calling to Doña Esperanza. He can only delay Esperanza, linger her until she has no sense, they say. Her house is filled with dirt, they say. Doña Esperanza grows horribly slow, and slower. She hardly moves. Well. While the tide of earth washes against her legs, she stands and stands, and stands. Year after year, they say, the house comes crashing down. Two birds made of threads of gold come to the Oldest Man to tell him. But he knows, he knows, well, he knows, they say. So, he is eating his fire, all the fire. So, they sift the earth for her bones, and, they say, they find only tunnels and roots. And, they say, the old man sits inside them and listens to the wind.</p>
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[We hear the snap of cards, the breathing of Doña Esperanza, the old man's stick, and the dice.]

WOMAN II

[voice dying away]
Entonces, este, le dicen este va a contar, este, la Señora Esperanza, la doña Esperanza. La Señora Tezcatlipoca, la de la invisible.