

THE MORE BEYOND

A Play (10-Page Sample)

by

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They that go down to the sea in ships,
that do business in the great waters;
These have seen the Glory of the LORD,
and know His wonders in the deep.

- Psalm 107: 23-24

*We're gonna stimulate some action
Get ourselves some satisfaction
Gonna find out what it is all about
After midnight*

- Eric Clapton

Je ne regret rien.

- Motto of the City of Key West

For Monica, my astrolabe.

Cast of Characters

NOTE: The play takes place in two distinct time periods and may be double-cast with 13 men, 4 women, and one guitarist, plus a chorus of 3 to 6 additional men and women playing all the roles. Additionally, it may be cast without doubling requiring up to 24 men, 5 women, one guitarist, plus chorus. See the character doubling matrix, below, for further ideas.

- 1622 - Crew and Passengers of the *Nuestra Señora de Javea*

ALFONSE DE PALMA: 30's. Ship's Pilot.

JACOVE DE VERNER: 40's. Fleet Silvermaster. Jewish, of Germanic extraction.

JUAN VARGAS DE BUERNA: 50's. Captain-General of the Spanish Armada Fleet.

JUAN LUPE DE MARIÓN: 40's. Governor of Cuba.

ANDRE LILET: 50's. Ship's Navigator. French.

ALLUENDA DE MATANZAS: 20's. A Spanish Noblewoman.

FR. EUGENIO DE BAS: 30's. A Priest.

PIETRO PROFIMAS: 20's. A Sailor.

ALONSO TURILLO DE YERNA: 30's. A Spanish Noble. Master of the Mint of Bogota.

PAOLO DE MATANZAS: 20's. A wealthy young land owner, Alluenda's husband.

SAILOR: 20's. A Sailor.

GUARD: 20's. A Spanish Marine.

KING PHILLIP, IV: 20's. The King of Spain.

THE SHIP: The *Nuestra Señora de Javea*

- 1980 - Welcome to Florida! The Sunshine State!

ANNIE WINGATE: 40's. Former Treasure Hunter.

SUGAR BREYER: 20's. Recent resident of Key West.

THOMAS "TIP" MACLEAN: 50's. Treasure Hunter.

ROBBIE BRISCOE: 20's. Treasure Hunter.

CHERYL DIVENTUO: 20's. A tourist.

MICHAEL MCPHERESON: Late-30's. Mayor of Key West.

WALLACE JENNINGS: 50's. City Chief of Police.

SATCHEL FORRESTER III: 50's. Monroe County Attorney.

HIPPIE: 20's. Visitor to Key West.

CAL (BARTENDER): 30's. Bartender at the Map Room.

LINDA (WAITRESS): 30's. Drag waitress at the Map Room.

ARCHIMEDES "MEME" MENDOZA: 40's. Of West Indian descent.

TOMMY DAVENPORT: 40's. A little bit richer, better.

JESUS ROMANDO: 30's. A Cuban intellectual.

DUANE CAVANAUGH: 20's. Treasure Hunter. Former marine.

ELLERD ROYCE: 40's. Professor, Ph.D.

HOWARD LAVIN: 40's. Lawyer.

EUGENIA PETTIGREW: 30's. State of Florida Marine Archeologist, Ph.D.

GUITARIST: A solo singer / songwriter reminiscent of James Taylor or Jimmy Buffet.

The CHORUS of LABORERS, GUARDS, TOWNSPEOPLE, SAILORS, and DIVERS should be of mixed gender and ethnicities, including Southeast Asian, African, and West Indies / Carib descent.

Scene

Havana, Cuba, Key West, FL, and the waters in between.

Time

September, 1622, and August, 1980.

Note

The action of the play should move relentlessly, growing in intensity, with the greed of the unending ocean. The two time periods are co-located, and at times may overlap in the storytelling - e.g., an ancient mariner tying up lines in the modern bar, a scuba diver examining the deck of a Spanish Galleon in full sail. Depending on the production, the guitarist may float freely throughout, inhabiting both domains, and songs may be trimmed accordingly. The desperate searching of all the characters for their *place* is paramount. What they wish to find is something worthy to worship.

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PROLOGUE - UNCOVERING

1980. UNDERWATER.

(TIP, 50's, a treasure hunter,
alone.)

TIP

Under water
you, under dirt, under water
are lost
buried in the womb.
Only noise you hear, the coosh of tides like the rhythm of a
heartbeat, slow
counts like a clock
in the shimmering dark
for three-hundred-fifty years.

Till one day you hear a new sound
progress, like a slap of lightning on a flagpole.
That's a sonar ping.
Another.
Another.
Sonar soaks through you,
like pain, bouncing offa hard edges,
mapping the private contours of your body
until it sees everything,
everything
it knows.
And then it stops.

(I can't say it's all gonna be alright.)

What happens next is the most unimaginable loudness you ever
hear. Enough to crack the Earth around you, fissures form,
blowing holes in the blanket.
The whole world breaks.
This is thrust from the blowers, directing prop wash from the
engines straight down at you, so we can see. Gotta chip away
the claybed, the crust, the years, ain't gonna be easy, and
it all gets sucked up into this whirlpool
a golden ocean, silver fish, swirl a sand
and light... unseen sunlight, this... glory, this riptide.

(MORE)

TIP (Cont'd)

And then the noises stop.

You feel a splash.

A man appears.

You remember man, men, one time, way back when.

(A man's... a broken man's a wreck. But a woman is a ship. A woman is a ship.)

This one, this man, dressed in black, has a silver face.

And he is looking for something.

He come closer.

He kneels down.

Reaches out his hand.

Looking for you.

And what the word *lost* is don't mean nothing anymore.

The word *wreck* been turned backwards, inside and out.

All you feel is pink palm,

hold you,

warmer next to the cool of the ocean,

and the faintest pulse

fragile

beats through the skin.

You have been found.

Lost treasure

you been found.

BLACKOUT.

END OF SCENE.

SCENE 1 - LADING

THE DOCKS OF HAVANA HARBOR, 1622.
IT IS A STICKY, OVERCAST, LATE-
AUGUST AFTERNOON. THE SPANISH
GALLEON, *NUESTRA SEÑORA DE JAVEA*,
DOCKED FOR LADING, DOMINATES THE
SPACE. SHE MAY CREAK AND SWAY, BUT
SHE IS SOLID AS ARCHITECTURE. SHE
IS MADE OF THICK WOOD TIMBER, AND
CAN FLOAT MORE THAN 500 TONS.

(At rise, the ship is crawling with
a swarm of dark-skinned bodies that
lift and lump cargo onboard in a
never-ending religious procession.
The stench of sweat, animals,
people, and overwhelming closeness
marks the last preparations for a
great voyage. The LABORERS are
weathered Spanish sailors and
slaves: Carib, Indian, African, and
Southeast Asian. As they work, they
sing the music of the Spanish New
Indies, part sailor's chanty, part
blues-like lament.)

LABORERS

(Singing.)

She is our Lady,

She is our love!

Ocean, woman, gives to me

Ocean, Mother, gives to all.

I come from mountains

Far beyond the sea.

I come from forests,

Up sacred river!

Up sacred river.

The rich men, and their silver,

The rich men made of gold,

Carry me over ocean, far from home!

Carry me over ocean, my new home.

(The chanting is punctuated by the sharp direction of the ship's pilot, ALFONSO DE PALMA, 30's, an experienced and capable seaman.)

DE PALMA

(Sounding his bosun's whistle.)

Move!

(The laborers chant as they hoist with extreme effort a number of small wooden chests. Their eyes are glazed from work and heat, but underneath can be felt the desires of *what is in those boxes*. Into this throbbing activity, a ROYAL SOLDIER escorts two nobles, DON JUAN VARGAS DE BUERNA, the Captain-General, head of the fleet, followed by DON JUAN LUPE DE MARIÓN, current Governor of Cuba, along with the fleet Silvermaster JACOVE DE VERNER and the ship's Navigator ANDRÉ LILET.)

VERNER

(To VARGAS DE BUERNA.)

And under no circumstance shall His Majesty's properties be stored near, or a deck below, common passengers.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Of course.

VERNER

The treasury must be secured in the sea-crate. Or the orlop.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Orlop.

VERNER

Or the mastage. Or, of course, my chambers, the stateroom.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

The second stateroom.

VERNER

(Bowling politely.)

Your Excellency! A most magnificent vessel so well bequipped as to have two staterooms!

LUPE DE MARIÓN

The King's wisdom wills that only the finest galleons o' the seas are fit to ferry His Majesty's lump back to the banks of Spain.

LILET

Stupendous.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

God's Grace and the King's pleasure.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

(Bowling.)

His Highness.

VERNER

(Bowling.)

His Highness.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

But we are behind schedule. We are port-side of a difficult voyage and I must demand, Lord Governor, from the King, that we, the entire fleet, set sail. Tonight.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Tonight! Tomorrow! Excellency...

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Today's the day. Our mast repaired, our keels are virgin clean. We will no longer be detained by endless bureaucraties.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Of course. Oh. Of course. But I'm afraid, Sir, this week, this month even, you see, is out of question. God shineth blessed light upon us all, by Grace, but there are, by my count, twenty-eight boats in fleet, am I right, Sir? An unlucky number, to be sure. And our most expert pilots watching weather from Stonetower are proposing a more... Autumnal crossing? Perhaps next Spring...

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Monsieur Lilet.

LILET

Aye, sir.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Ready your readings, if you please.

(To VERNER.)

Silvermaster, assess.

VERNER

Excellency.

(VERNER bows and heads to inspect cargo being brought on board. LILET exits onto the ship with his piles of instruments, charts.)

LILET

Lord Governor, your Excellency, I presently aboard to prepare for voyaging. My services will be rendered in the bittacle.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

My good Juan Vargas, friend, attend to reason.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

The King has debts to pay, Sir, months gone by. The King does not want to give the enemy impression that the King is as strapped for cash as the King most surely is. The King expressly wrote to me - to me, Lord Governor - and argued in persuasive terms.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

May I not also be persuasive?

VARGAS DE BUERNA

He's sixteen, Juan Lupe. What were you doing at sixteen? What was I? Not running a country, sure. The throne of Spain royals a pimpled boy.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

His Highness our Fourth Phillip is God's Sovereign Monarch, protector of us all. Rich with great wealth, immense, incalculable...

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Buried in a mountain the other side of the world.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

An unfortunate conundrum.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Make no mistake, Spain is a greed mechanical. Her gears will smoke and halt without the grease. If those silver cobs do not return...

LUPE DE MARIÓN

A few more days. A week at most. Another month.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

You know we're fighting a war. Did you know that, Marión?

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Yes, your Excellency.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Against, whom, my good Lord Governor?

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Against apostate Dutch, Sir.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Sea-travelling Dutch. Sniffing up our skirts. Lucky to make it home with both my eyes.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

The Dutch will never dare violate Gulf of New Spain! Our defenses here in Havana --

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Well placed, indeed, and will hold, by the Lord. But as in any war, there are expenses. Apparently men need to eat, did you know that, Sir?

LUPE DE MARIÓN

I did, Sir.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

And you have never run a war.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Oh, I've done my best to run from them.
Lay here in port. Purchase more supplies. Avail yourself of
sweet island pleasures. And you will make eventual return
that much more comfortable.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

The good greedy Governor's hand poking in every pocket.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

And the King's seal saying that I may best determine when
ships shall come and go. No, you will not leave my palm until
the New Granada Fleet arrives. We had word they embarked the
Vera Cruz and caught the wind; they may land soon, even
within a fortnight. And her cargo, now very much waylaid, is
most urgently expected back home. Meantime, have you acquired
the local skins of cow, perhaps, for your new wife?

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Man, I would employ the King's own hand to slap you if I had
it! My hulls are crammed full of pig heads and souvenirs. We
have no room for baggage from another fleet. We sail tonight.

(Calling to DE PALMA.)

Master Pilot!

DE PALMA

Your Excellency!

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Progress?

DE PALMA

Sir. Nearly all wine and food has been replaced, Sir.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Replaced?

DE PALMA

Aye, Sir. Rats, Sir.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

This island is full of vermin.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

A furry companion for the voyage home.

(Meanwhile VERNER has seated himself at his table with a scroll and quill, to examine the silver crates as they are loaded. He measures the 80-pound ingots and records his findings, testing the purity of each bar by removing a chunk with a hot iron scoop.)

VERNER

Here! Here! You fool. Set it on the table.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

(To DE PALMA.)

I brought your Silvermaster.

DE PALMA

I thank you, Sir. Once these bricks are emboweled, we should be buoyant, Sir, within the watch.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Most fortunate, indeed.

(A SOLIDER rushes on.)

SOLDIER

Lord Governor, sir! The Fleet have arrived, sir. The laborers heave to!

VARGAS DE BUERNA

Who has arrived, man?

SOLDIER

The Indians, sir, Excellency, sir.

(To LUPE DE MARIÓN)

As you predicted, Sir. A brown-skinned river, flowing from the sea.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

At last!

(A long line of slaves, mostly women, carry very heavy small chests. More and more of them.)

VARGAS DE BUERNA

No, no. We cannot float another chest. We sail!

LUPE DE MARIÓN

But, sir --

VARGAS DE BUERNA

(To the SOLIDER.)

Have them process this silver to Storehouse.
Lord Governor, be so good as to protect our bounty here. We
will account each last reale, upon return.
Pilot! Make ready!

DE PALMA

Aye, sir.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

A moment, Master Pilot. How many souls aboard?

DE PALMA

Some two-hundred, sixty-three, your Lordship, worth the
writing. Including nobles, soldiers, pay-passengers, and
crew. Plus some handful of our own slaves.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Ah, you can fit more.

VARGAS DE BUERNA

You are a Pilot now, as well?

DE PALMA

The bilges will protest, Sir.

LUPE DE MARIÓN

Suffer the stink a few weeks, man, to gain the glory of a
lifetime! History remembers great deeds, great men, not fools
who fondle their own comfort. See? This road of Indians from
the New Granada fleet tenders us riches, wealth untold, and
ready to be loaded up! A few more minutes cannot do you harm,
and what will come from voyaging this silver home, no man can
dream of more. Surely you would not risk the burning shame of
crossing God's green ocean with half-empty holds. Speak up,
choose a fate. We must believe great works, great words will
out. For what is man without the hope of glory in our lives?