

1492: CONQUEST OF PARADISE

by

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FADE IN:

CREDITS AND MUSIC OVER:

INT. AUDIENCE ROOM - GRANADA - DAY

We start on a man's elegant slipper. He is seated in a splendid chair. Moving up the stocking leg, we pass the garter of Castile, coming to rest on a pair of delicate hands. His fore finger impatiently plays with a large topaz ring. Over this, we hear distant footsteps, echoing on marble floors.

CUT TO:

A Castilian face: aquilaine profile, olive complexion, dark eyebrows and meticulously sculpted beard. This is **TREASURER SANCHEZ**.

A door slams somewhere, the footsteps getting closer. We can now here a subdued conversation.

TREASURER SANCHEZ stands up as:

The door opens at the far end of the large gilded room. A WOMEN, magnificent in somber taffeta, enters. QUEEN ISABEL OF SPAIN moves towards him.

He bows slightly as she sits at the end of the large table. She is followed by a PRIEST, BROTHER BUYL, and three dignitaries of Church and State.

All sit beside her. TREASURER SANCHEZ takes a document and starts to read aloud.

On screen the words: GRANADA - SPAIN - 1500

SANCHEZ

Your Majesty would wish to know the true facts concerning the island of Hispanola, our first settlement in the New World, and the activities there of your servant, Christopher Columbus, Admiral of the Ocean Sea, Governor of that Island. You will remember with what hopes and promises he beguiled us -- the truth is that he now presides over a state of chaos, degradation and madness beyond imagining.

SANCHEZ punctuates each word carefully.

SANCHEZ

From the beginning, Columbus proved himself incapable of managing the affairs of the island. He appointed his brothers to important positions, at once injuring the pride and dignity of the nobles who had gone with him. He promised to build a city, the City of Isabel, named after Your Majesty. What he actually built was nothing but a collection of huts, and that in the wrong place, for all of it was easily swept away by rain and mud. Is that not so, Brother Buyl?

The PRIEST nods.

BROTHER BUYL

Yes, Your Honor.

SANCHEZ

He promised gold. Not finding the easy quantities he promised, Columbus commanded each Indian to pay an annual tribute. Most being unable to, they were barbarously punished, against the express wish of Your Christian Majesties...

ISABEL lowers her eyes.

SANCHEZ

Since provocation and injustice never ceases, many of the Indians have fled to the forests, or have begun to slay the Christians.

ISABEL looks over at BROTHER BUYL.

ISABEL

Could it be so?

BROTHER BUYL

Yes, Your Majesty.

SANCHEZ

But there is worse. From the beginning, he forced the nobles to undergo physical labor, treating them equally with the Indians, all of them reduced to slavery. When the nobleman Adrian de Moxica protested against such treatment...

(he pauses)

... he was executed.

(pause)

Is that not true also, Brother Buyl?

BROTHER BUYL

Yes, Your Honor. It is all true. All of it. I saw it with my own eyes.

SANCHEZ

He has lost control. His great arrogance has led him into depravity. He encourages our soldiers to marry the native women. He promised a paradise, but he has made a hell full of all its horrors.

Silence.

ISABEL

Is that the man I knew, Treasurer Sanchez?

SANCHEZ

Yes, Your Majesty.

CUT TO:

INT. HUT - ISLAND - DAY

CLOSE ON the FACE: COLUMBUS is stretched on a bed, sweating heavily in fever, clearly delirious. Insects crawl over his face, he makes no effort to swat them away. There is a dripping sound of water.

FERNANDO (V.O.)

Of all the words my Father wrote and there were many, I remember these the most. "Nothing that results from human progress is achieved with unanimous consent..."

Rain is falling into the room over documents spread on a table. COLUMBUS stands up and moves to the table. Some of the walls have been blackened with smoke and flames. A lizard scuttles into the shadows.

FERNANDO (V.O.)

"And those who are enlightened before the others are condemned to pursue that light in spite of others..."

COLUMBUS stares down at the documents, moving them away from the rain drips. He stares out by the window, and we see:

A devastated landscape. Flooded roads, half-destroyed huts, broken trees... A dog picks its way through the mud.

FERNANDO (V.O.)

There was a time when the New World didn't exist...

TO:

DISSOLVE

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A vast stretch of ocean. It fills the screen. Unbroken, infinite, luminous, mysterious -- it stretches away, meeting and blending with the sky in pale ribbons of pearl and misty light.

FERNANDO (V.O.)

... The sun set in the west on an ocean where no man had dared to venture. And beyond that, infinity...

Pulling back, we discover:

A TEN-YEAR-OLD BOY and a strongly built man in his middle thirties, are riding a mule. The MAN'S weather-beaten face frames unusually bright eyes.

On the screen these words: ANDALUSIA, 1491

COLUMBUS AND HIS SON are following a windthrashed path at the top of the hill. COLUMBUS hums a song, and FERNANDO looks up at him in adoration.

FERNANDO (V.O.)

Once I asked my Father where he wanted to go. And he replied: "I want to travel all over the seas. I want to get behind the weather..."

FERNANDO laughs. He then starts to hum along with his **FATHER.**

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE APPROACH TO LA RABIDA - DAY

A rugged landscape, remote and steep, with lines of stone walls and thousands of sheep.

FERNANDO, rushes down a slope, barking like a dog, chasing the sheep who fan out in droves in front of him. High-spirited and wild, FERNANDO laughs and tumbles over.

COLUMBUS rides his mule along the narrow track, watching his SON'S antics with amusement. In the distance, the solitary figure of A MONK SHEPHERD.

COLUMBUS calls out to his son:

COLUMBUS

Fernando!

FERNANDO runs over. COLUMBUS lifts him up onto the mule.

As they move along the track we now see, perched on a distant hill, isolated and austere, the Monastery of La Rabida, their destination.

EXT. CLOISTER - LA RABIDA - DAY

As they dismount and walk into the quiet cloisters, FERNANDO suddenly spots a familiar FIGURE, standing under the ROMAN arches.

FERNANDO

Diego!

He rushes over, full of joy, to kiss his BROTHER -- an adolescent dressed in the novice-robe, with a solemn, delicate face. DIEGO'S response is constrained.

COLUMBUS

Diego! Aren't you going to kiss your brother?

DIEGO smiles a little, and kisses FERNANDO -- who is immediately distracted by a procession of hooded MONKS, hurrying to the refectory, as a bell begins to chime.

The MONKS all turn to greet ANTONIO DE MARCHENA, a white-haired, elderly man -- and a monk cosmographer. MARCHENA'S gesture is broad and elegant as he opens his arms to greet COLUMBUS. He pats FERNANDO'S head and turns to DIEGO.

MARCHENA

Diego, take Fernando to the dining hall. He must be hungry.

DIEGO

Yes, Father.

Both CHILDREN leave under the arched roof. COLUMBUS and MARCHENA begin to walk across the cloister.

MARCHENA

Diego is a bright boy -- a pleasure to teach -- but so serious... Brothers should be raised together, Colon. Even brothers from different mothers...

COLUMBUS

Father, I am doing what I think is the best for him. And he has the teacher I would have chosen for myself.

MARCHENA laughs at the compliment.

MARCHENA

Just be careful you don't lose him.

They have crossed the cloister. MARCHENA pushes open a door.

INT. A HUGE LIBRARY - LA RABIDA - DAY

Hundreds of books lined up on the shelves, displaying the miracle of printing, a recent German discovery. Several MONKS, perched on high stools behind lecterns, are busily "ILLUMINATING" some of these massive volumes, delicately painting around the letters in bright colors and gold leaf.

Rays of light fall diagonally through high openings, projecting geometric patterns on the tiled floor. As MARCHENA and COLUMBUS move forward their conversation is punctuated by light and shadow.

MARCHENA

(fumbles in a pocket under his robe)

I have something for you.

Almost casually, he hands COLUMBUS a letter.

MARCHENA

You will be heard at the University of Salamanca...

COLUMBUS stops dead in his tracks. Almost frantically he tears open the letter, hardly able to believe his eyes.

COLUMBUS

God... That's in a week!

MARCHENA

That's what it says.

COLUMBUS

How did you manage it?

MARCHENA

(smiling)

With some difficulty. I had to promise them you were not a total fool.

MARCHENA pushes open a second door, hidden behind a wooden panel.

INT. STUDY - LA RABIDA - DAY

MARCHENA is not a tidy man. Books are piled up on the floor, the desk, on every shelf, along with maps, instruments of astronomy... the visible evidence of an inquiring mind.

With practiced familiarity, as if they had done this a hundred times -- which indeed they have -- MARCHENA sits behind his desk, and COLUMBUS opposite him. MARCHENA lights a candle and considers the mess. Then methodically, he slowly sweeps it from in front of him with his sleeve, exposing a large map underneath.

When he looks up again, there is a new severity in his expression. He turns over an hourglass.

MARCHENA

Why do you wish to sail west?

COLUMBUS

To open a new route to Asia. At the moment there are only two ways of reaching it...

He leans forward, and points to the map spread out on the desk.

COLUMBUS

By sea, sailing around the African Continent -- the journey takes a year...

His finger traces the journey, from west to east.

COLUMBUS

Or by land...

We are CLOSE now on the map, as we watch his finger tracing a line between Europe and the Far East.

COLUMBUS (O.S.)

... But the Turks have closed this route to all Christians. Trading with the Orient has become arduous, if not dangerous.

(he pauses)

There is a third way...

We notice that the outline of the European continent is familiar. But we also notice that, in that great expanse of ocean, the whole American continent is missing.

COLUMBUS

By sailing West across the Ocean Sea.

CLOSE ON MARCHENA'S FACE, touched by the mystery.

MARCHENA

How can you be so certain? The Ocean is said to be infinite.

COLUMBUS

Ignorance! I believe the Indies are no more than 750 leagues west of the Canary Islands.

MARCHENA

How can you be so certain?

COLUMBUS

The calculations of Toscanelli Marin de Tyr, Esdras...

MARCHENA

(interrupting)

Esdras is a Jew.

COLUMBUS

So was Christ!

MARCHENA throws his quill in the air in frustration. He glances at the hourglass:

MARCHENA

Two minutes... and already you're a dead man. Don't let passion overwhelm you, Colon.

COLUMBUS

(mockingly)

I'll try to remember that,
Marchena...

MARCHENA

Father Marchena!

COLUMBUS

(ignoring this)
Passion is something one cannot
control!

MARCHENA

(heatedly)
You get so carried away when you are
being contradicted!

COLUMBUS

I've been contradicted all my
life... Eternity!

MARCHENA

(amused)
Only God knows the meaning of such
words, my son.

EXT. COURTYARD - LA RABIDA - EVENING

DIEGO and FERNANDO wait in the courtyard. COLUMBUS
appears and lifts FERNANDO onto the mule. DIEGO turns to
go.

COLUMBUS

Diego.

COLUMBUS walks over to him, squats down so their eyes
meet. He looks at his SON for a moment.

COLUMBUS

Would you like to come and stay with
us?

Uncomfortable with the proposition, DIEGO cannot find an
answer.

COLUMBUS

I'll do whatever makes you happy.

DIEGO

I am happy, Father.

COLUMBUS reaches out -- and touches his shoulder.

He climbs up behind FERNANDO, who waves back to his
BROTHER as they ride off.

EXT. CADIZ - STREETS AND CATHEDRAL SQUARE - NIGHT

COLUMBUS leads the mule, carrying the sleeping FERNANDO, through narrow streets. There's a clamorous noise in the air. Suddenly a large group of YOUNG MEN, shouting with excitement, run up the street and brush past them. Then more people. FERNANDO sits up straight. The noise grows, rowdy, rumbling, sharp with excitement and violence.

Huge CROWDS have thronged the massive old square outside the cathedral. Holding the mule by its reins, COLUMBUS tries to push his way through... Suddenly, as a gap opens in the crowd, we see the cause of the excitement: in the center of the square stand three pyres, already alit. HOODED EXECUTIONERS are busy around the fires.

FERNANDO

Look, Father!

Before COLUMBUS can stop him, FERNANDO has slipped off the mule and into the crowd.

COLUMBUS

Fernando!

But the BOY has been swallowed into the mass of people. COLUMBUS tries to follow him. Flames leap into the night sky with a terrible crackling, lighting up the square with a lurid glow. Prayers are being chanted somewhere.

FERNANDO has elbowed his way to the front of the crowd.

A PRIEST brandishes a crucifix in front of the face of a MAN bound to a post. The heretic wears the "sambenito", a robe made of coarse fabric on which his sins have been crudely illustrated -- we see cabalistic signs, indicating that the man is Jewish.

THE MAN'S eyes are mad with fear. But he refuses to kiss the crucifix, as a sign of his repentance.

FERNANDO is transfixed by the scene, but still doesn't realize what is happening. He is too close to the platform to see what is in the flames of the other pyres.

COLUMBUS

Fernando!

He motions to his son, takes the BOY'S hand, and drags him away from the scene. But FERNANDO looks back. The distance now allows him to see inside the flames.

A HALF-CHARRED FIGURE -- THE MAN'S face is distorted in a silent scream... The neck snaps like burning wood, and the head falls on one shoulder. Then the whole body collapses into the fire.

INT. BEATRIX'S HOUSE - HALLWAY AND STABLE - NIGHT

COLUMBUS and FERNANDO lead the mule into the white-washed, stone-floored hallway of the modest house. FERNANDO is mute, shocked by what he just witnessed. COLUMBUS takes the mule into its stall, and as he does so, his mother, BEATRIX, appears from the kitchen to greet them. She is a beautiful woman in her twenties, a calm, strong, domestic personality. COLUMBUS tousles the BOY'S hair. FERNANDO glances at his MOTHER but looks subdued and doesn't say anything.

INT. BEATRIX'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

COLUMBUS joins BEATRIX in the kitchen, where a MAID is cooking. He explains Fernando's subdued manner.

COLUMBUS

Executions. In the square.

BEATRIX nods. He goes to the stone butt and pours water on his hands.

COLUMBUS

They've agreed to see me in a week.

BEATRIX puts the candle on the table. Her face lights up with a smile. He walks to her, and kisses her.

COLUMBUS

I could be gone for years.

BEATRIX

I know.

COLUMBUS

I haven't given you much of a life.

BEATRIX

(amused)

Well... that's true. I have a child by a man who won't marry me! Who's always leaving...

COLUMBUS

Are we going to argue?

BEATRIX

I'd love to argue with you sometimes. But you're never here!

They laugh and kiss.

COLUMBUS

Perhaps I was never meant to live

with a woman...

BEATRIX

(still kissing him)

I find that hard to believe.

DISSOLVE

TO:

INT. BEATRIX'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

They are eating around the table, and FERNANDO is unusually silent and thoughtful. COLUMBUS pours a little wine into FERNANDO'S water, to distract him. FERNANDO looks up at him, surprised. COLUMBUS smiles, then looks over at BEATRIX.

COLUMBUS

Fernando, don't you think we are lucky to live with such a beautiful woman?

He winks at FERNANDO. BEATRIX smiles.

INT. BEATRIX'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room is dark. As COLUMBUS approached the bed with a candle, it illuminates the naked body of BEATRIX. BEATRIX looks up at him intently. A drop of wax falls on her skin. She flinches, murmurs...

They make love.

EXT. SALAMANCA UNIVERSITY - DAY

A medieval "campus". Students-novices are playing "pelote", with basket-gloves and a hard ball. They run with their robes tucked around their waist, revealing white legs. Others are studying, reading, hurrying to their class.

We find COLUMBUS watching the game from the steps above the court. Others are waiting with him. A MONK comes from a door, and looks around the group.

MONK

(hesitant)

Christopher Columbus?

INT. AUDIENCE ROOM - UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA - DAY

An El Greco painting. A tableau of twenty MEN sitting on dark, sculpted seats. Candles throw a gloomy light on their faces. Some are Churchmen, others are dressed in

bourgeois outfits.

Only one of them is richly dressed in the grand Spanish fashion -- he is SANCHEZ, Treasurer of the House of Aragon. A MONK (Don AROJAZ) holds a stick with an ivory claw at the top. Languidly, he scratches his back -- his off-hand manner only makes him more impressive than his peers.

AROJAZ

You say Asia can be found by sailing west?

COLUMBUS

Yes, your Eminence. The voyage should not take more than six or seven weeks.

AROJAZ

Unfortunately, Don Colon, that is precisely where our opinions differ...

(pause)

Are you familiar with the work of Aristotle? Erathostene? Ptolemeus?

COLUMBUS

I am, Your Eminence

AROJAZ

Then you cannot ignore that according to their calculations, the circumference of the Earth is approximately...

(he leans forward)

22,000 leagues or more. Which makes the ocean... uncrossable.

He leans back, satisfied, and pauses for effect.

AROJAZ

But you may have found new evidence proving that these men of knowledge are totally mistaken!

A ripple of mirthless laughter.

COLUMBUS

Your Excellencies are aware of the statements of Marin de Tyr?

HERNANDO DE TALAVERA

We are.

COLUMBUS

Then you are also aware that his theories contradict Ptolemeus... De

Tyr believes the Ocean to be only
750 leagues...

A murmur of protest spreads among the members of the
Commission. But Columbus is determined to press his
theories.

COLUMBUS

The Florentine Toscanelli and the
French Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly both
think that Marin de Tyr is accurate
in his calculations. And therefore,
that the ocean can be crossed.

Indignant and amused murmurs. DIEGO DE DEZA raises his
voice to quiet the assembly.

DIEGO DE DEZA

Gentlemen, let us suppose Marin de
Tyr is right...
(the laughter
subsides)
Are we here to examine this proposal
or not?

Silence.

DIEGO DE DEZA

(to Columbus)
In your opinion, how long would the
voyage be?

COLUMBUS

Seven weeks. Six, during the summer
months.

The murmur increases.

AROJAZ

Marin de Tyr is wrong -- and has
been corrected many times over the
centuries by the finest geographers.
Your voyage, Don Colon, would take a
year!

A MAN of simple bearing, that COLUMBUS identifies as
being a seaman, interrupts.

VICUNA

How would the crew survive without
being able to land for fresh water?
Water is undrinkable after six
weeks! You'd never be able to turn
back!

COLUMBUS

We wouldn't have to turn back! We

would find land at this point!

AROJAZ

Senor Colon, an experienced captain such as yourself will understand our concern with the crew. I am not willing to have on my conscience the loss of men who would have relied upon our judgment.

COLUMBUS

Excellency, you are right.

Instantly, the protests stop.

COLUMBUS

I am a seaman, not a scholar... But as a simple man craving for knowledge, I have read all the work of these renowned geographers and discovered that none of them could agree on the exact width of this ocean...

He pauses, and starts walking in front of the experts, as a lawyer before a grand jury.

COLUMBUS

Therefore, as a modest man, I wonder: who is right?

The experts listen. CLOSE ON SANCHEZ'S FACE, impressed by the boldness.

COLUMBUS

Who is right? This question remains unanswered.

He walks and stops before TALAVERA, and catches the look of SANCHEZ, sitting just behind him.

COLUMBUS

Your Eminence, there is only one way to settle the matter. And that is to make the journey.

(to the assembly,
with passion)

I am ready to risk my life to prove it possible.

AROJAZ

Your life, and that of others!

COLUMBUS

If they agree to follow me, yes.

SANCHEZ (O.S.)

Suppose you cross this ocean.
Suppose you reach Asia. What would
Spain do there?

Conscious of a friendlier voice, COLUMBUS sees the
Treasurer SANCHEZ, an imposing man in his fifties.

COLUMBUS

Trade, Your Excellency. According
to Marco Polo, the Kingdom of China
is one of the richest of the world.
Even the meanest buildings are
roofed with gold.

AROJAZ

(interrupting)

Is that all that interests you?
Gold?

COLUMBUS

No. The Portuguese have already
discovered black-skinned people. I,
too, will find other populations --
and bring them to the word of God.

THE MONK smiles thinly.

AROJAZ

Christopher -- Christo Ferens -- the
Bearer of the Cross!

MONK

(ironic)

And Colon -- the one who populates!

Another small rill of laughter.

AROJAZ

If God intended our proximity to
Asia, do you believe he would have
waited for you to show it to the
world?

COLUMBUS

Did He not choose a carpenter's son
to reveal Himself to the world?

A hum of interest. CLOSE ON SANCHEZ -- watching COLUMBUS
intently, a hint of an admiring smile on his lips.

AROJAZ

So you consider yourself the chosen
one?

A pause.

AROJAZ

Don't you realize your words could
be considered heretical?

COLUMBUS

(calmly)

Blind faith is what I consider
heresy!

The murmur turns to an audible gasp. AROJAZ gets to his feet and leans forward, threateningly, the flame of a candle only inches from his face.

There is absolute silence. COLUMBUS meets the MONK'S gaze unflinchingly.

COLUMBUS

(quietly)

Asia can be found to the west -- and
I will prove it.

AROJAZ

IF-GOD-WILLS-IT!

EXT. TERRACE - UNIVERSITY - DAY

The JURY is alone to deliberate. Food and wine has been laid out on tables. In the distance, students' cries carry over the conversation.

SANCHEZ approaches.

AROJAZ

The Treasurer of Spain honors us
with his presence.

SANCHEZ bows slightly.

SANCHEZ

The State has some reason to be
interested in this man's
proposition, Your Eminence...

AROJAZ

The Judgment is ours!

SANCHEZ

Naturally. But I would really
deplore the loss of such a potential
opportunity for Spain for a...
dispute over a point of geography.

SANCHEZ helps himself to some grapes, looks round at the other members of the committee, who pretend not to be listening.

AROJAZ

(interrupting)
He is a mercenary! Did he not
already try to convince the King of
Portugal of his absurd notions?

SANCHEZ

Indeed. The world is full of
mercenaries -- and states often make
use of them, when it benefits them.
(casually)
My only concern is the welfare and
prosperity of Spain.

AROJAZ understands the hint, and stops smiling.

AROJAZ

You would use your influence to
assist this... intriguer?

SANCHEZ reaches for a decanter of sherry.

SANCHEZ

You know, Your Eminence, the
fascinating thing about power, is
that what can be given so
effortlessly...

He offers the decanter to AROJAZ, who automatically lifts
his glass. But instead, SANCHEZ pulls back the decanter,
pours himself a drink, and replaces it on the table,
leaving AROJAZ staring at his own empty glass.

SANCHEZ

... can so easily be taken away.

And he drinks with a smile.

INT. LA RABIDA - MARCHENA'S STUDY - EVENING

MARCHENA reads aloud the Commission's letter.

MARCHENA

... and therefore nothing could
justify the participation of Your
Highnesses in the venture that
relies upon such feeble assumptions,
and which any man of knowledge
would take to be impractical... if
not impossible.

He shakes his head, puts the letter down. COLUMBUS looks
appalled; devastated.

COLUMBUS

They didn't listen. They didn't
want to listen!

He paces about the book-lined room.

MARCHENA

You mustn't give way to despair.
You must wait.

COLUMBUS

Wait! I've waited seven years
already! How much longer do you
want me to wait?

MARCHENA

If God intends you to go, then you
will go.

COLUMBUS

(angrily)
Damn God!

MARCHENA is shocked.

MARCHENA

Colon!

COLUMBUS

Damn all of you! You all set up
theories based on what? You never
leave the safety of your studies!
Go out! Find out what the world is
about and then tell me something I
can listen to!

He seizes a beautiful book from MARCHENA'S desk.

COLUMBUS

These don't mean anything! They're
full of assumptions! Out of the
heads of old men who've never been
past the end of their gardens!

He hurls the book across the room. MARCHENA is horrified.

MARCHENA

No...! My books...!

COLUMBUS seizes more books from the shelves, just sweeping
them to the floor.

COLUMBUS

All of them! Just lies!

MARCHENA

Colon! Don't!

MARCHENA tries to stop him. In his fury, COLUMBUS
accidentally knocks the poor old MAN to the ground. His

cries bring three MONKS rushing into the room.

As COLUMBUS continues to rage and scatter books everywhere, they try to stop him, struggling with this big, powerful man -- to almost comical effect. Finally, a short, muscular MONK delivers a quick punch that sends COLUMBUS crashing to the floor.

INT. CHAPEL OF LA RABIDA - EVENING

COLUMBUS lies face down on the stone floor. He is dressed in a homespun robe. His arms are stretched out in penance. FERNANDO and DIEGO look down at him.

FERNANDO

Father?

DIEGO

Sssshhhh...! One can't speak to a man doing penance.

FERNANDO

What can you do?

DIEGO

Nothing. That's the point, Fernando.

A pause -- and then FERNANDO lies face down on the floor beside his FATHER, and stretches out his arms in the same way. DIEGO is left looking on, unable to bring himself to join them.

EXT. CLOISTER - LA RABIDA - DAY

Along the cloister, maps are drying, hanging like laundry in the light breeze. COLUMBUS pins up a new addition. Another MONK works nearby, in silence.

PINZON (O.S.)

Senor Colon?

COLUMBUS turns, to see a small, stocky MAN approaching: a middle-class gentleman. He nods.

PINZON

Ah, thank God! I've been looking all over Seville for you! Never expected to find a sailor in a monastery, eh?

He laughs. COLUMBUS smiles, but doesn't say anything. PINZON is clearly a little surprised.

PINZON

Name's Pinzon, by the way. Martin
Alonzo Pinzon. I'm a ship owner
from Palos...

COLUMBUS glances around cautiously, and walks a little way
down the cloister, away from the other MONK, gesturing for
PINZON to follow him. PINZON is yet more surprised by
this strange behavior.

PINZON

(indicating the
monk)

Is he a spy?

COLUMBUS shakes his head. PINZON stares at him,
perplexed.

PINZON

What is it? Are you a Trappist?

COLUMBUS shakes his head again.

PINZON

Vow of silence...? Penance?

COLUMBUS nods vigorously.

PINZON

Jesus! Just my luck!

He takes off his hat, wiping his forehead with a silk
cloth.

PINZON

Listen. I'll do the talking for
both of us. You just nod. Agreed?
Just as I do with the wife.

COLUMBUS nods.

PINZON

I know that the Commission turned
you down, right? What do you
expect? You're a foreigner... But I
want to help you.

COLUMBUS gives him a glance like one throws a question in
the air.

PINZON

You wonder why I believe in you?
Hey, I am a seaman. And we don't
like to be told where to go, and
where not to go.

COLUMBUS looks at him, and bursts out laughing. The other
MONK looks round severely. COLUMBUS ducks behind a map,

PINZON following him. PINZON lowers his voice.

PINZON

I don't look like it, but I have friends at the Court. The Treasurer of Aragon, for example. He finances me. His name's Santangel. Ever heard of him?

COLUMBUS shakes his head, but looks increasingly interested by what he's hearing.

PINZON

He can get you an audience with the Queen! You know why...? She owes him money. That's how it is. You -- me -- the Queen -- the world and his mistress -- agreed?

COLUMBUS nods.

PINZON

So. What do you say?

COLUMBUS looks around, catches the disapproving face of the MONK, crosses himself, then speaks:

COLUMBUS

Where can I meet this man?

PINZON

(indicating with a nod)

Immediately.

COLUMBUS turns and sees an elegant Lord in his fifties, examining the maps.

EXT. STREETS OF GRANADA - DAY

A huge Islamic Crescent being pulled down from the minaret of a mosque. SOLDIERS are holding back a crowd at the foot of the tower. To the ecstatic cries of the crowd, a Cross is hoisted up in its place... Astride horses, COLUMBUS and the Treasurer SANTANGEL are watching the scene.

They push through an extraordinary scene. The city of Granada has just been reclaimed from the moors after several years of siege. All around them, SPANISH SOLDIERS are herding, bedraggled columns of the defeated MOORS, bearing only a few possessions. Ragged, half-starved men, women and children.

SANTANGEL

These people built Granada...

Centuries ago! It is a great
victory over the Moors, Don Colon --
and yet what a tragedy it is!

The THREE HORSEMEN pass a procession of grateful
PENITENTS, who are crawling on their knees, chanting
psalms and flagellating themselves. At the head of the
procession, HOODED PRIESTS carry a statue of the Virgin
Mary swathed in silk and lace.

The gates of the Alhambra Palace are in sight.

COLUMBUS

Is this a good time to meet her?

SANTANGEL

It couldn't be better. Victors
can't say no.

Bells are pealing triumphantly. The noise is tumultuous.
They ride towards the magnificent palace.

EXT. ALHAMBRA PALACE - GARDENS - DAY

Fabulous Moorish gardens: ponds filled with golden carp;
exotic bird cages hang from lemon trees... The distant
sounds of victory.

SANTANGEL and COLUMBUS walk through the gardens, escorted
by HALBERDIERS. SOLDIERS pass by, carrying coffers or
piles of documents.

As they approach the inner sanctum, however, there are
fewer people. They stop by the Lion's Fountain, where
several DIGNITARIES are waiting patiently for an audience.

SANCHEZ appears. They bow. SANTANGEL approaches to
murmur a compliment.

SANTANGEL

Your Excellency... truly grateful...
your help... as ever...

SANCHEZ protests softly, and looks over at COLUMBUS, a
half-smile forming on his lips. Then a DUENA appears, and
motions for COLUMBUS to follow.

INT. ALHAMBRA PALACE - THRONE ROOM - DAY

An ornate Moorish door is pushed open by the DUENA'S hand.
We enter the Throne Room -- sculptured colonnades,
mosaics... At the far end, windows open onto a view of
Granada's rooftops.

Against this dazzling light, the delicate silhouette of

QUEEN ISABEL OF SPAIN. The light in her blonde hair creates a halo around her head as she turns. COLUMBUS falls to his knees.

ISABEL

Rise...! Come forward!

He approaches the window, stopping close to her. ISABEL scrutinizes him quickly.

ISABEL

I should not even be listening to you, since my council said no. But Santangel tells me you are a man of honor and sincerity... And Sanchez, that you are not a fool.

COLUMBUS

(bold)

No more than the woman who said she would take Granada from the Moors.

ISABEL smiles, enjoying the lack of obsequiousness.

ISABEL

The ocean is uncrossable?

COLUMBUS

What did they say about Granada before today?

ISABEL

(a beat)

That she was impregnable.

ISABEL smiles again.

ISABEL

I cannot ignore the verdict of my council.

COLUMBUS

Surely you can do anything you want.

A direct challenge. She doesn't know what to make of this man.

ISABEL

How little you know.

This little hint of vulnerability subtly reverses their positions for a moment. Now we sense COLUMBUS scrutinizing her.

COLUMBUS

May I speak freely?

ISABEL

(with a smile)

You show no inclination to speak otherwise!

COLUMBUS

I know what I see. I see someone who doesn't accept the world as it is. Who's not afraid. I see a woman who thinks... "What if?"...

ISABEL

(amused at his familiarity)

A woman?

A slight pause.

COLUMBUS

Forgive me... but you're the only Queen I know.

She bursts out laughing.

ISABEL

Then we are equal... since you are the only sailor I know!

A beat.

ISABEL

How old are you, Senor Colon?

COLUMBUS

Thirty seven, Your Majesty... And you?

Once again taken off guard, ISABEL flushes, and turns away slightly to hide it.

ISABEL

Thirty eight...

A pause.

ISABEL

You will be informed of our decision.

COLUMBUS bows and goes to leave. As the DUENA opens the door for him, he turns back.

COLUMBUS

Actually, I thought you were younger than me!

And he goes out, leaving her stunned.

EXT. SANCHEZ'S ESTATE - TREE-LINED ROAD - DAY

A chalk white road, lined with trees. Two liveried SERVANTS are walking down the road, one carrying a large silver tray, the other a smaller tray.

They are overtaken by an ADMINISTRATOR who hurries along the road, with documents under his arm.

EXT. SANCHEZ'S ESTATE - STABLE BLOCK AND PADDOCK - DAY

The CLERK enters an imposing stable block.

In the paddock, SANCHEZ is training a magnificent young horse, making it step sideways, bending it to his will. The ADMINISTRATOR watches him, unable to interrupt.

Behind him the two SERVANTS can be seen bringing in the silver trays, with covered dishes of food, a decanter of wine. They begin to lay them out on a table.

EXT. SANCHEZ'S ESTATE - STABLE BLOCK AND PADDOCK - LATER

SANCHEZ pours himself some wine, tucks into his his food, while the ADMINISTRATOR, clearly working himself up into a frenzy, reads from a document.

ADMINISTRATOR

... and he demands... he DEMANDS to be made a Knight, with the right to bear the Golden Spurs! He will receive the title of Don Cristobal Colon -- which will be extended to his descendants for ever more...

The ADMINISTRATOR looks up. He is reading the contract that COLUMBUS has proposed. SANCHEZ, his mouth full, gestures for him to continue.

SANCHEZ

Go on!

ADMINISTRATOR

He will be named Great Admiral of the Ocean Sea. Viceroy of the West Indies... Governor of all islands or lands discovered or as will be discovered with his help...

The ADMINISTRATOR looks up again.

ADMINISTRATOR

The highest titles of nobility, Your

Excellency! To an immigrant
sheltered by monks!

SANCHEZ gestures for the document. Wipes his mouth.
Continues reading, calmly:

SANCHEZ

Furthermore he will receive one
eighth of all wealth or monies,
precious gems, pearls, metals,
spices and other lucrative sources
conquered within the boundaries of
his admiralty...

He smiles, hands the document back.

SANCHEZ

It's very underdone.

ADMINISTRATOR

(exploding)

Underdone! It's monstrous,
Excellency!

SANCHEZ

No, the pheasant. It's almost raw.

And he carries on eating.

SANCHEZ

You worry too much, Carvajal... The
man will have to lower his demands.
Believe me, he WILL!

INT. ALHAMBRA PALACE - A RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

Close up on COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS

I WON'T!

A WOMAN'S HAND quietly, carefully opens a cover of a spy
hole in the wall. Two beautiful eyes peer through a
grille, into the next room.

What they see:

SANCHEZ and COLUMBUS together. COLUMBUS is visibly upset.

SANCHEZ

(calmly)

We have considered your -- demands
very carefully, Senor Colon... Your
expectations are... excessive, in
every way.

COLUMBUS tightens his fists, tries to remain calm.

COLUMBUS

If I am right, my requests are fair!

SANCHEZ holds up a document.

SANCHEZ

We have prepared our own contract...

He offers the document to COLUMBUS, who takes it, scans it quickly, shakes his head.

COLUMBUS

No...

SANCHEZ

No?

COLUMBUS

NO...! I have waited too long,
fought too hard. Now you expect me
to take all the risks while you take
the profit! No... I will not be
your servant!

The eyes behind the screen -- the mouth, forming a little smile.

SANCHEZ

I remind you, Senor Colon, that you
are in no position to bargain with
me.

COLUMBUS

I'm not bargaining!

SANCHEZ

(steely)

Then you are too ambitious.

COLUMBUS leans over the table, faces him.

COLUMBUS

And were you never ambitious,
Excellency? Or is ambition only a
virtue among the nobles, a fault for
the rest of us?

SANCHEZ

(abrupt)

If you won't accept our proposal,
we'll simply find someone who will.

COLUMBUS smiles.

COLUMBUS

If you can do that, Excellency --
I'll become a monk!

He turns, strides towards the door. We hear a WOMAN'S muffled laughter.

As COLUMBUS goes out, ISABEL appears through a secret door. SANCHEZ bows.

ISABEL goes over to the window and looks out.

ISABEL

You were right, Don Sanchez... His demands could never be granted.

SANCHEZ

Never, Your Majesty. Although...

She turns, questioningly, towards him.

SANCHEZ

... Although one may always renegotiate a contract. Especially signed by Royal Hands.

EXT. ALHAMBRA PALACE GARDENS - POV - DAY

SANCHEZ joins ISABEL at the window. They see COLUMBUS striding out and away.

INT. ALHAMBRA PALACE - A RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

BACK TO SANCHEZ

SANCHEZ

(quietly)
... Into a monk...

ISABEL

(with a smile)
Yes. It would be a pity, wouldn't it?
(turning to Sanchez)
Call him back!

EXT. STREET - EVENING

Teeming life. COLUMBUS pushing his way through crowds. He is expressionless and distracted.

He looks around him, stops walking. And then, unexpectedly, shouts.

COLUMBUS

YEEEEEEES!

All heads turn as if he were totally insane. He walks on as if nothing happened.

INT. BEATRIX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

COLUMBUS is sitting at the kitchen table, by himself, with a glass of wine. There is a movement behind him. BEATRIX is standing at the foot of the stairs, in a night-shirt.

COLUMBUS turns and looks at her, almost sad.

COLUMBUS

She said yes.

BEATRIX

(moved)

Thank God...

She smiles. But he seems to be unable to share her happiness.

COLUMBUS

If I ever come back, I swear I will...

She crosses to him quickly, placing her hand gently on his mouth.

BEATRIX

(softly)

I'm not asking you to swear to anything.

COLUMBUS

I don't want you to wait for me.

BEATRIX

(smiling)

That's something you can't decide.

COLUMBUS kisses her.

INT. CORRIDOR - BEATRIX'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Strange, unearthly music... A flickering light in a dark tunnel. FERNANDO, holding a candle in front of him, walks slowly down the dark corridor.

Quietly opening a door, he walks into COLUMBUS' study.

INT. COLUMBUS' STUDY - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: A huge illustrated map of western Europe and Asia. FERNANDO'S candle moves slowly across the Atlantic Ocean, to the edge of the map. There, the illustrator's imagination has created monsters: terrifying demons; creatures half-human, half-animal.

Sitting at his desk, COLUMBUS is looking at the map.

FERNANDO (O.S.)

You can't go there!

Turning, COLUMBUS finds his son beside him.

COLUMBUS

Why not?

FERNANDO points at the monsters. He pulls the boy to him.

COLUMBUS

There aren't any monsters, Fernando.
The only monsters are in here...

(he taps his own
forehead)

Watch!

He takes a pen, and draws a smile on one of the terrible monsters, transforming it at once. FERNANDO laughs immediately.

FERNANDO

I want to go with you!

COLUMBUS

There'll be a time.

FERNANDO

You promise?

(Columbus nods his
head)

Do you swear on St. Christopher...?

FERNANDO pulls the chain with the St. Christopher medal from under COLUMBUS' shirt.

FERNANDO

Do you swear on all the Holy Saints
in heaven?

COLUMBUS

(laughing)

Yes... Yes, I do... On all of them!

And he hugs his SON tightly.

EXT. HILLSIDE AND GATE - PRE-DAWN

A luminous procession passes through a Moorish stone gate, down to the harbor. We see the faces of the SAILORS and their FAMILIES -- COLUMBUS, PINZON AMONGST THEM -- We sense the fervor and apprehension of the departure. The procession is lead by MARCHENA and four young NOVICES carrying the Madonna. All hold long, burning tapers, saying the rosary. A SAILOR pushes through the crowd, and kisses the Madonna's feet.

EXT. PALOS HARBOR - DAWN

Hundreds of candles flicker in the pre-dawn light, held by the FAMILIES and FRIENDS of the SAILORS.

The SANTA MARIA the PINTA and the NINA nestle against the quayside. Dwarfed by the hulls, a flotilla of smaller fishing craft, returning from night fishing, accidentally witness this event.

EXT. MAKESHIFT CONFESSIONAL - DOCKSIDE - DAWN

MARCHENA sits on a barrel and crosses himself. Behind a curtain sits COLUMBUS.

MARCHENA

In Nomine Patris et Filius, et Spiritus Sancti.

COLUMBUS

Forgive me, Father. For I have sinned.

MARCHENA recognizes COLUMBUS' voice.

MARCHENA

I am listening, my son.

COLUMBUS

Father, I have betrayed my family. I betrayed my men. And I betrayed you.

MARCHENA

What are you saying?

COLUMBUS

I lied. The journey will be longer than I said.

MARCHENA

How long?

COLUMBUS

I am not sure... It could be twice the distance.

A pause.

MARCHENA

May God forgive you...! You must tell them! You must tell your men!

COLUMBUS

If I tell them, they won't follow me. You know that I am right, Father. You trust me...

MARCHENA

My son, my son...
(he shakes his head)
Your certitudes are sometimes frightening...
(pause)
Christopher, you must speak to them. And if you don't I will.

COLUMBUS

You are bound by an oath, Father.

A long silence.

MARCHENA

I believed in you...

COLUMBUS

Give me absolution.

No response.

COLUMBUS

Give me absolution, Father!

Devastated, MARCHENA reluctantly makes the sign of the cross.

EXT. HARBOR AND SHIPS - PALOS - DAWN

COLUMBUS walks over to where BEATRIX and FERNANDO are waiting. He kisses and hugs FERNANDO.

MARCHENA (O.S.)

Ispo Te Absoluto. May God forgive you and have mercy on your soul, Christopher Columbus. Go in peace.

TO:

DISSOLVE

EXT. HARBOR AND SHIPS - DAWN - LATER

The CROWDED QUAYSIDE. COLUMBUS stands in front of

FERNANDO.

COLUMBUS

Be good to your mother, Fernando.
Do you promise?

FERNANDO nods, tears in his eyes. Then COLUMBUS embraces BEATRIX tightly. She whispers into his ear.

BEATRIX

Speak to Diego.

But COLUMBUS and DIEGO are unable to find words, and instead they clumsily hug. Someone taps COLUMBUS' shoulder. He turns around to see SANTANGEL. Wordlessly, they hug.

CUT TO:

Activity on the ships, orders are being shouted, ropes fore and aft are cast off, splashing into the water... Now the SHIPS are slowly moving parallel to the quayside. The CROWD starts walking abreast to the VESSELS. WOMEN holding up babies, blowing kisses, old PARENTS crying... BEATRIX, HER SONS, AND SANTANGEL are among them.

COLUMBUS suddenly unties the chain around his neck, and throws it at DIEGO.

COLUMBUS

Diego! Here!

DIEGO catches it. Opening his hand he looks at the medallion. Then looks up at his FATHER, elated.

THE SANTA MARIA is now two meters from the QUAY.
SANTANGEL is now opposite COLUMBUS.

SANTANGEL

(casually)

Take care of my investment, wherever you're going!

COLUMBUS

(ambiguous)

I have to tell you Santangel. I don't know where on earth I am going!

They both laugh.

A FISHERMAN, standing in his shrimp-boat lets his hand slide gently along the gigantic hull. He stares up at the SAILORS leaning on the rail.

SAILOR

Vaya con Dios! (Go with God!)

They wave back.

CUT TO:

MARCHENA walking towards the Moorish gate. He finally turns, sad and distraught. He sees:

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIPS AT SEA - WHALES - DAY

THREE SHIPS ON A BOUNDLESS OCEAN.

The sea resembling a DORMANT MONSTER, holding its breath. A living being, all powerful, capable of unpredictable metamorphosis. Music reflects the loneliness, the anxiety of the crew, the fear of the unknown...

ENORMOUS WHALES moving slowly alongside, surging majestically through the waves. Sinking back, disappearing, their cries taking precedent over the music.

EXT. DECK - DAY

A SHIP'S BOY is throwing buckets of water on the deck.

A SAILOR is busy clearing the ropes around the mast.

A COOK is blowing life into a brazier, in preparation of the evening meal.

TEN MEN heaving on a heavy rope, raising the top sail, punctuating their efforts with a sailor's chant.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - NIGHT

The crystalline north star -- as if seen through an instrument.

COLUMBUS' silhouette, by an oil lamp, standing at the prow. Holding a quadrant he is aiming at the stars.

SOME SAILORS are watching with curiosity. One of them is ALONSO, a rough, stocky Basque.

Near COLUMBUS, on a tressel, various books and charts. He makes an entry in the log. Then goes back to his quadrant. He senses MENDEZ standing next to him.

COLUMBUS

(softly)

Due west, Captain Mendez. And may God be with us...

MENDEZ

God be with us admiral.

MENDEZ doesn't move, continuing to observe COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS

What is it Mendez? Speak!

MENDEZ is hesitant. He nervously clears his throat.

MENDEZ

Well... It's the men, Sir. They wonder how you know our position. We've lost sight from land days ago...

COLUMBUS

(still taking readings)

And what do you think Mendez?

MENDEZ

Well, I surely know what a quadrant is! But I've never seen it used at night before.

COLUMBUS

Come over here.

MENDEZ hesitates, then motions to COLUMBUS. The SAILORS are watching, and some approach to hear the conversation.

COLUMBUS

Now, find the North Star. Do you have it?

CUT TO:

The picture swims across the heavens, until we see the north star.

COLUMBUS (O.S.)

Steady yourself...! Keep the plumb line vertical...

The picture steadies.

CUT TO:

MENDEZ nods -- and loses equilibrium. The plumb line swings.

COLUMBUS

Don't move! A mistake of one degree and we'll be off 6,000 leagues!

MENDEZ tries again.

COLUMBUS

What do you read?

MENDEZ

Twenty eight.

MENDEZ turns to COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS

That's it. The twenty eighth parallel. And we'll follow it until we reach land.

ALONSO does not seem convinced.

ALONSO

How do you know land is on the twenty eighth parallel?

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - DAY

A blazing sun. The ship is like a furnace, its brass fittings too hot to touch, the blistering heat making the air shimmer over the decks.

Desperate for shade, sailors are sheltering under the sagging prow sail.

The SHIP'S BOY throws an empty bucket attached to a rope over the side and hauls it back up again, brimming with water. As he turns, we see his face, disfigured by a hair lip. He drenches himself... From the shade, ALONSO watches him.

ALONSO

Chicken-ass face!

The others laugh. The BOY, ashamed, tries to ignore them. ALONSO'S hand accidentally touches a brass fitting; he reacts like he was burnt.

ALONSO

Shit!

He sucks his blistered fingers.

ALONSO

I never seen heat like this! Not even in Las Minas!

SAILOR

The water's going putrid in the barrels.

ALONSO

You'll be drinking your own piss...
For the glory of Spain... and
Admiral Colon...! Bastard!

The SHIP'S BOY glances round at them.

ALONSO

What are you listening to, chicken
ass?

SAILOR

Ah, leave him alone. He's doing no
harm.

ALONSO

With a face like that?
(to boy)

I don't want you looking at me. You
hear?

The BOY turns away, dropping the bucket back into the sea.

ALONSO

He's the devil's child...

SAILOR

We'll all go crazy...

The BOY throws more water over the deck. A SAILOR takes
his guitar, and starts singing an improvised song.

SAILOR

Culo de galina es el hijo del
demonio... (Chicken ass mouth is the
devil's child... Born from the loins
of a stinky old goat etc...)

They all laugh. The BOY, hearing this, climbs to the
crow's-nest like a monkey.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - RIGGING AND CROW'S-NEST - DAY

We experience a sense of vertigo as we near the top of the
main mast, high above the rolling deck.

The BOY curls like a fetus in the swinging crow's-nest,
exhausted by the heat, and scared. His eyes are turning
white. He begins to piss himself...

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - DAY

Piss is dripping on the deck. THE SAILORS do not seem to
care. THE COOK takes a chicken from a cage. He breaks
its neck, and starts plucking it. The OTHERS continue

their bitter conversation.

ALONSO

We should have seen land.

SAILOR

We left three weeks ago, Alonso.
Can't be that near.

ALONSO

Can't be that far, I say. Also, I
don't like the smell of the sea
around here. Smells like a cunt.
Bad sign...

The COOK starts laughing. They turn to him.

COOK

(shaking his head)

Of course it smells like it! That's
why sailors take to the sea!

They all laugh. Alonso looks up at COLUMBUS standing on
the poop deck, scrutinizing the horizon, waiting for the
land to appear.

ALONSO

And why does this one take to the
sea? Nobody knows. Never says a
word...

MENDEZ has sensed the danger of this lack of respect. He
approaches them.

MENDEZ

To your post! At once!

They split in silence.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - NIGHT

The SHIP is plowing on, pushed by a hot wind -- SAILORS
sleep on deck.

The SHIP'S BOY is singing to himself. Despite his hair
lip he has a pure, melancholy voice...

COLUMBUS, leaning over the prow rail, staring ahead, hears
it carry over the darkness.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - DAY

CLOSE UP ON AN HOUR-GLASS, nearly through its time.

The SHIP'S BOY throws an "ampoulette" over board. We

follow the bulb attached to a rope, passing the full length of the hull. As it reaches the poop deck, another SAILOR shouts "MARK". A very primitive system of calculation for distance and speed.

Sitting near the SHIP'S BOY, COLUMBUS is making entries in a log-book, watching the hourglass.

SHIP'S BOY

Mark. Twenty nine, Sir!

THE HOUR-GLASS runs out. COLUMBUS converts the mark into a daily average for distance and speed.

COLUMBUS

Six hundred and twenty nine.

THE SHIP'S BOY cups his hands to his mouth to shout.

CUT TO:

EXT. PINTA - DAY

PINZON, his OFFICERS beside him, looks across at the SANTA MARIA.

SHIP'S BOY

Six hundred and twenty nine!

AN OFFICER turns to PINZON to repeat the message.

OFFICER

Six hundred and twenty nine, Sir!

PINZON does not seem too pleased.

PINZON

I heard.

THE OFFICER examines his own calculations.

OFFICER

Captain, I don't understand.

PINZON

I think I do.

He goes back to his cabin.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIPS - SARGASSO SEA - DAY

ABSOLUTE STILLNESS. A FURNACE. The three ships like dots, on what seems to be a prairie of weed.

The caravels are being towed by three rowing boats.

CLOSE ON THE MEN, rowing, drenched with sweat.

FROM THE PROW, COLUMBUS is staring at the horizon.

ALONSO pulling at his oars stares at COLUMBUS' distant figure with hate and resentment.

ALONSO suddenly ships his oars, throwing the whole boat into disarray. Chaos.

Total silence. MENDEZ and ALONSO stare at each other.

MENDEZ

Continue rowing!

ALONSO

To where?

ALONSO defiantly stares at MENDEZ. He then starts to beat a rhythm on the hull with his fist, followed by the others. In the two other boats, the MEN begin to follow suit, beating a rhythm of protest on the hulls.

MENDEZ looks up to COLUMBUS, in panic.

ON BOARD PINZON'S SHIP, an OFFICER cups his hands to his mouth.

OFFICER

Captain Pinzon requests permission to board.

CUT TO:

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DAY

COLUMBUS

Granted.

INT. COLUMBUS' CABIN - DAY

PINZON enters. He looks furious.

PINZON

You lied! You cheated! We're way past 750 leagues!

COLUMBUS

(calmly)

Six days ago, yes.

PINZON

You must be mad...!

COLUMBUS

We have to keep the hopes of these men alive!

PINZON

We're on the verge of a mutiny, Colon!

COLUMBUS

You think I don't know that?

PINZON

We're lost!

COLUMBUS

The land is there. I know it!

PINZON

You don't know anything! Listen Colon, these are my ships, right? So I'm telling you we're turning back!

COLUMBUS

And then what? Half of the water has gone, the rest is nearly putrid! You know that!

PINZON

(apoplectic)

Jesus Maria! I should have never listened to you!

COLUMBUS

You never did. You did all the talking for both of us, remember?

PINZON

You bloody...

COLUMBUS

Pinzon, Pinzon... All we can do now is go forward! Think about that!

PINZON

You tell that to them!

COLUMBUS

You're right. Let the men decide.

COLUMBUS moves to the door. As an afterthought, he takes his scarlet-embroidered jacket from a hook.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - DAY

Most of the men are now back on board.

They go silent as COLUMBUS appears. He walks slowly over to them. All, including ALONSO, are surly, threatening...

COLUMBUS

Who gave you the order to come on board?

He looks up and down the line, finishing on ALONSO. They stare at one another.

ALONSO

God doesn't want us to cross the ocean...! This voyage is cursed!

Some of the MEN murmur their agreement.

COLUMBUS

Cursed?

ALONSO

We set sail for greed. God has abandoned us. The voyage is cursed. There are signs...

ALONSO glances towards the SHIP'S BOY, with his hair lip. The BOY lowers his eyes. COLUMBUS moves towards him, pulls him forward, stands him in front of ALONSO.

COLUMBUS

This boy has the voice of an angel. What comes out of his mouth is blessed, Alonso. What comes out of your is evil.

Some of the men laugh at this statement. ALONSO is ill at ease. COLUMBUS pauses, looks around at all the MEN.

COLUMBUS

Listen to me! Every man is afraid who does something for the first time. But those who overcome their fears, will find their rewards. I do not know if it is God's will that we cross this ocean -- but I am certain it is the devil who puts fears into our hearts...

The MEN are listening. We sense a subtle change of mood...

COLUMBUS

This jacket to the first man who sights land! I want a man up that mast day and night.

COLUMBUS points at the SHIP'S BOY.

COLUMBUS

You start first.

The SHIP'S BOY rushes up the mast. As he climbs, the mainsail starts to fill with wind. The deck begins to move under their feet.

This movement under their feet seems to imperceptibly erase the fears and the angers.

MENDEZ

Alonso! Jaime! Don't let this wind escape us.

CRIES from the other ships, as the sails snap taut, filling with wind. MEN rush to their posts. PINZON stares at COLUMBUS, shaking his head in disbelief.

PINZON

(murmuring)

You lucky bastard...

COLUMBUS walks away to his cabin, then turning back to **PINZON**.

COLUMBUS

Pinzon, the more I sail, the luckier I get.

Turning abruptly, he enters his cabin.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - PROW - MISTY NIGHT

COLUMBUS is seated, isolated at the prow, wrapped in his cape, struggling against the sleep. MENDEZ approaches him with a bowl of soup.

MENDEZ

Shall I take my turn?

COLUMBUS shakes his head no, and starts drinking from the bowl.

CUT TO:

COLUMBUS' head nods lower and lower to his chest. He is asleep. We become aware of a sharp buzzing sound. It becomes louder as we move closer to COLUMBUS' face.

A mosquito lands on his temple. COLUMBUS reflexively slaps it. He wakes up, and looks at his fingers -- a spot of blood, a crushed mosquito. He stares at it for a moment. Then slowly gets to his feet.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - NIGHT

In the luminous moonlight, COLUMBUS is standing, staring up at thousands of insects that wheel around the mast lantern. We hear the flutter of their wings and see the bats as they swoop and dive in a feeding frenzy.

COLUMBUS turns, stares into the darkness, desperate to see the land that must be close.

He kneels by MENDEZ, wrapped in a blanket. He touches his shoulder.

COLUMBUS

(murmuring)

Mendez! Mendez!

MENDEZ grimaces, and opens one eye.

COLUMBUS

Land...

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIP - DAWN

An opaque dawn. COLUMBUS, riveted, staring forward as if to pierce the mist. The entire crew are clinging to the rail, and standing on the shrouds.

Suddenly, the SHIP BOY'S voice cracking with emotion.

SHIP'S BOY

TIERRA...! TIERRA!

COLUMBUS strains his eyes; he still can not see anything.

The entire CREW stand and stare, silent, holding their breath.

As the sun begins to rise, the fog dissipates -- slowly, exquisitely, revealing a single palm, so close it seems almost as though they could touch it. Then a white slash of beach.

Near COLUMBUS, a SAILOR falls to his knees and burst into tears. Others laugh with joy. COLUMBUS watches this vision in disbelief, his mouth open as if it were difficult for him to breathe. Tears come to his eyes. He closes them. Then opens them again. The land is there -- a green paradise.

On screen the words: OCTOBER 12, 1942. GUANAHAN ISLAND

EXT. BOATS - DAY

Three row boats plunging through the surf towards the

beach. COLUMBUS stands in the prow of the first boat. MENDEZ is in the second. PINZON the third. They stare entranced at the lushness of the foliage, and the blue clarity of the water...

As the first boat beaches, COLUMBUS leaps out and wades ashore. Behind him the rest of the landing party splash through the sun-dazzled water, carrying the banner of Castille and Aragon.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

They stand on the beach, almost in a dream. There is silence. The ROYAL NOTARY, ludicrously overdressed, now wet through, stumbles over to COLUMBUS and holds out his contract and a pen. COLUMBUS scrawls his name.

The MEN stare at him, filled not only with new respect, but with something amounting to awe.

COLUMBUS turns to them, tries to speak.

COLUMBUS

By the... by the Grace of... God...

He swallows. Tears have sprung to his eyes. He is so moved he cannot continue. Coming to his rescue -- THE SHIP'S BOY starts to roll the drum. He then stops.

COLUMBUS

(pulling himself
together)

In the name of their Gracious
Majesties of Castille and Aragon,
and by all the powers vested in me,
I claim this island and name it San
Salvador.

The MEN cheer as the flags are rammed into the sand, flapping in the wind.

COLUMBUS starts to walk towards the jungle, and in silence the rest follow.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Immediately they are met by an incredible wall of SOUND! The jungle is filled with NOISE. The impossibly-loud CRIES of EXOTIC BIRDS, the CHATTERING of MONKEYS. The SPANIARDS are overwhelmed.

They move forward. Rays of sunlight pierce through the high canopy of leaves, like the roof of a magnificent cathedral. The sounds and smells intoxicate their senses. They are filled with wonder.

Then PINZON stops. He has seen something. Another stops, then a third, staring ahead of them...

MENDEZ

(whispering
urgently)

Arquebuses!

Several of them raise their weapons to their shoulders, pointing them into the jungle.

From COLUMBUS' POV we slowly scan the face of the thick jungle ahead. For a moment we don't see anything -- and then, with a shock, we see the first INDIAN. Naked, painted like an idol, carrying a hunting lance.

As if they had materialized from nowhere: the rest of the HUNTING PARTY, with their bows and spears. Silent. Watchful. They stare back at us.

The SPANIARDS nervously finger their weapons.

COLUMBUS slowly lifts his hand into the air: a clear signal not to fire. Then, removing his sword, he drops it on the ground, and starts to walk forward, fixing his gaze upon the first INDIAN he saw.

PINZON

(warningly)

Colon!

COLUMBUS ignores him, even though some of the INDIANS have raised their weapons. He stops in the no-man's land between them. The INDIANS don't move -- but something excites them.

The SHIP'S BOY, wearing COLUMBUS' embroidered jacket and the drum, has followed COLUMBUS and now stands close to him. He is the cause of their interest. COLUMBUS puts his arm around the BOY, and this gesture of affection seems to put the INDIANS at their ease. They start talking and pointing. They come forward slowly, start to tentatively touch the BOY'S jacket. Then, now laughing, they touch COLUMBUS, pulling at his beard. COLUMBUS laughs too.

Sensing their innocence, the rest of the MEN lower their weapons. Some of them laugh.

An apparition: a beautiful young INDIAN GIRL, totally naked, walks out of the jungle.

She is pregnant and holds a child. We begin to hear Indian music, played on a flute.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

A large post is lifted from the ground by two SPANIARDS pulling on ropes. The post is fixed into position -- and then we see that it is a large wooden cross... The INDIAN VILLAGERS watch the ceremony with some interest and amusement.

COLUMBUS looks over at the men and gestures at the **INDIANS**.

COLUMBUS

We have come here in peace, and we will behave with honor. They are not savages and neither will you be. Treat these people as you would your own wives and your own children. Neither are you free to take what you will; for a seashell you give a bandana. You will respect their beliefs. Pillage will be punished by the whip. Rape by the sword.

EXT. VILLAGE - SUNSET

The smoke from fires. Laughter. Music playing. The INDIANS have prepared food for the SPANIARDS, who are drinking and enjoying themselves in this strange world.

COLUMBUS sits with MENDEZ, PINZON, the INDIAN CHIEF, ELDERS OF THE VILLAGE. Other INDIANS stand around, smiling, curious.

The INDIANS talk among themselves. The ELDERS smoke primitive cigars -- and offer them, with good humor, to their guests. The SPANIARDS cough and choke at first... and laugh. In return, they offer the INDIANS wine...

Dogs roam around the campfires. The WOMEN openly suckle their babies. The MEN are entranced.

PINZON draws out attention, for the first time, to a small gold ornament on the nose of one of the INDIANS. He points to it, indicates his interest in it.

PINZON

Gold...! Gold!

The INDIANS says the word in his own language, laughing. We see that some of the other INDIANS also have small gold ornaments.

PINZON repeats the INDIAN word for gold. The INDIAN removes the ornament from his nose, gives it to PINZON, who indicates that he wants to have it. The INDIAN nods

-- but points to PINZON'S dagger, indicating that he wants it in return. PINZON shakes his head, stops the INDIAN from taking it.

COLUMBUS

(to Pinzon)

Give it to him!

PINZON looks at him, about to argue -- but COLUMBUS insists. PINZON takes out the dagger and offers it to the **INDIAN**.

PINZON

(irritated)

By God! That's the worst trade of my life!

His friends laugh. Innocently, the INDIAN has taken it by the blade. He yelps, looks down at the blood welling up... A moment of tension... Then MENDEZ laughs at his clumsiness, and the ELDERS laugh too... and the INDIAN laughs.

Just outside this circle, we see the first INDIAN we saw, squatting on his haunches, watching. This is UTAPAN.

INT. TENT - DAWN

The first light outside -- the strange, wonderful sounds of the jungle all around. COLUMBUS writes in his journal.

COLUMBUS (V.O.)

October 21st, 1492. I think we have returned to Eden. Surely this is how the world once was, before the beginning of time. I believe no man will ever see this land again as we do, for the first time...

He looks up. UTAPAN is squatting in the doorway of the hut. He's been there all night. COLUMBUS takes more ink on his quill and begins to sketch UTAPAN'S face in the margin of his log-book. He draws well.

He gets up and walks over to UTAPAN and shows him the drawing. It's an electrifying moment. UTAPAN is shocked and amazed. At first he is rather frightened of his own image... Then he is happy, and laughs... and COLUMBUS laughs with him and puts a hand on his shoulder in a gesture of friendship.

UTAPAN gets up, and indicates that he too has something he wishes to offer.

EXT. JUNGLE - MORNING

UTAPAN expertly scampering through the jungle. COLUMBUS follows him.

UTAPAN orders COLUMBUS to sit. COLUMBUS obeys. UTAPAN looks up at the tops of the trees. The sun is rising, and filters through the foliage. As if the time had come, UTAPAN stands up, and COLUMBUS does the same.

A gap in the dense vegetation. Something is glittering. Gold. A mass of gold. As they approach, COLUMBUS discovers --

A large pool of fresh water. The morning sunlight has turned the water into liquid gold. The surface ripples with the breeze. UTAPAN smiles. Is the stranger satisfied? Isn't this what he came for?

COLUMBUS plunges into the pool. As he emerges, he fills his palms with liquid gold.

DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Wide shot -- A flotilla of canoes are going upstream.

INDIANS AND SPANIARDS are traveling together in the canoes. UTAPAN leads the expedition in COLUMBUS' craft. THE SHIP BOY'S cranium is shaved like UTAPAN'S, and we notice that some other crew members are beardless, some even wearing tribal patterns.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

INDIAN VILLAGERS confronting the SPANIARDS, UTAPAN talks to an ELDER MAN, watched by COLUMBUS, MENDEZ and PINZON.

UTAPAN repeats several times the word for GOLD, showing some artifacts. The OLD INDIAN shakes his head no, indicating another distant place.

OLD INDIAN

Cuba! Cuba!

THE OLD MAN nods, points into the distance, chatters away to UTAPAN.

UTAPAN

Say not here! Cuba!

COLUMBUS

What is it? A tribe? An island?

UTAPAN

Island. Far.

EXT. SANTA MARIA - DECK - DAY

Standing at the prow of the ship, his long dark hair floating in the wind, UTAPAN rejoicing at the speed.

EXT. THICK JUNGLE - CUBA - DAY

Led by UTAPAN, the SPANIARDS hack their way through thick jungle. It's hard work. The MEN sweat. This is inhospitable terrain. Even the noises of the jungle seem somehow more sinister...

CUT TO:

RESTING PLACE - ALONSO is seated under a tree. He takes off his boot, and grabs his foot, examining the blisters on his toes. As he puts his foot back into the boot, he jumps screaming in pain.

ALONSO yelps, grasping his ankle.

CLOSE ON a snake sliding out of the empty boot.

While his COMPANIONS rush to him, a SAILOR spots the snake, and decapitates it with his sword. UTAPAN glances at the dead snake. He then goes and kneels -- he sees the bite on ALONSO'S ankle.

COLUMBUS

Help him!

ALONSO is quiet and silent. His eyes are looking around at his companions. UTAPAN shakes his head. There is nothing he can do.

ALONSO is now leaning back, supported by one of his friends. He has grabbed the forearm of a SAILOR. His look is already far away. His companion shouts at UTAPAN.

SAILOR

Do something! Help him!

UTAPAN

He dead.

ALONSO starts convulsing. HIS FRIENDS hold him, desperate in their helplessness. Others simply move away, horrified. One of them cries.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Standing in the stream up to his thighs, A SPANIARD (a

gold expert) examines some stones. He then looks up at COLUMBUS and PINZON and just throws the stones back into the water without a word.

The group of SPANIARDS are resting, exhausted by the humidity. Some are drinking from the river, others soak bandanas, and tie them around their necks...

One after another, they stand up slowly -- they look discouraged, tired, and beaten.

EXT. MOUNTAINOUS JUNGLE - DAY

UTAPAN and the SPANIARDS are trekking in the hills. Fully armed, they are now suffering intensely from the heat and the vicious insect bites.

COLUMBUS doggedly keeps up with UTAPAN, who tirelessly trots forward.

Finally, COLUMBUS turns around and sees... nobody. He calls out to UTAPAN.

COLUMBUS

Utapan! Wait!

UTAPAN stops obediently, and rushes back to COLUMBUS with comical energy.

On their way back, they find one SOLDIER sitting, leaning against a tree. He has removed his helmet. His hair sticking to his forehead.

As COLUMBUS and UTAPAN walk back, they find another SAILOR, then another, then the whole group gathered around PINZON. Ashen, he burns with fever. He attempts a smile.

PINZON

Well... You'll have to continue without me...

COLUMBUS looks around him -- what he sees: exhausted men and jungle, as far as one can see.

COLUMBUS

No. It's enough. What would you say to a drop of Jerez, Pinzon?

PINZON grins.

PINZON

And a nice slice of Santa Fe lamb!
I'd sell my soul for it.
(to his officer)
Help me up. I've got to piss, gold.

They all laugh as the OFFICER helps PINZON to his feet.

PINZON walks a few yards into the jungle -- starts to urinate. It is red. Suddenly dizzy, he reels and collapses.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

A line of SPANIARDS and INDIANS threading their way down a mountainside. PINZON is being carried on a makeshift stretcher. His eyes are closed, his face thick with sweat.

They enter a village, to the surprise of the INDIANS. UTAPAN once again at the front as the ambassador.

INT. HUT - NIGHT

A INDIAN SHAMAN is forcing a milky fluid into PINZON'S mouth. COLUMBUS attempts a gesture to prevent him. But UTAPAN stops him.

UTAPAN

He cures.

COLUMBUS nods -- he obviously trusts UTAPAN.

INT. CHIEF GUARIONEX'S HUT - NIGHT

In the half-light, figures wreathed in smoke -- COLUMBUS, MENDEZ and UTAPAN watch the CHIEF GUARIONEX putting a Spanish helmet on his head. The helmet is too big, almost covering his eyes. The ELDERS appraise the gift with solemn wonder.

In return, GUARIONEX hands COLUMBUS a parcel made of leaves. COLUMBUS unwraps them. Inside: a GOLD grimacing mask. The first real piece of gold. COLUMBUS is unable to conceal his excitement at this first real evidence of the metal.

He waits for the CHIEF to speak, but the CHIEF only looks at him. On the ground, we see other presents offered by the SPANIARDS -- trinkets, and necklaces...

UTAPAN

(to Columbus)

You come! You speak first!

COLUMBUS

Tell the Chief we thank him.

UTAPAN

Chief knows.

COLUMBUS

Tell him his country is very
beautiful. Tell him we are leaving
men here -- to build a fort.

UTAPAN translates.

COLUMBUS

Tell him we will return very soon.
Many of us.

UTAPAN translates. The CHIEF GUARIONEX asks a simple
question.

UTAPAN

Chief says -- how many?

COLUMBUS

Thousands.

UTAPAN

Why?

COLUMBUS doesn't seem to understand the question. For the
first time he seems to be caught short.

COLUMBUS

To bring the word of God.

UTAPAN

Chief says -- he has a God.

COLUMBUS

(pursuing)
... and also to bring medicine.

UTAPAN

Chief says...

COLUMBUS

(interrupting)
He has medicine.
(pause)
Tell him we admire his people.

UTAPAN translates.

UTAPAN

Chief says he knows you like his...
(searches for the
word)
Women...

And the CHIEF gets up, awards COLUMBUS with a smile, and
walks out of the hut, the ELDERS following, leaving
COLUMBUS alone.

COLUMBUS

(with a little
smile)

That's a beginning...

EXT. SHORE - DAY

Watched from the shore by the INDIANS and by about forty of the SPANIARDS, who are staying behind, the boats pull out towards the two remaining ships.

PINZON is laid out in the bottom of the boat. COLUMBUS, UTAPAN, and four other INDIANS are in the same boat.

COLUMBUS (V.O.)

March 1493... Thirty nine of my men volunteered to stay behind. God willing we will be back in less than a year...

The boats continue to pull away, the figures on the shore growing smaller.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLUMBUS' CABIN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: a golden mask... the lamp in the cabin swings violently back and forth, creating strange shadows, as if the mask was alive... COLUMBUS is writing with difficulty in his log-book.

COLUMBUS (V.O.)

... Several men are ill. We did not find signs of civilization. No cities, no temples... Nothing that resembles Marco Polo's descriptions. My ships are not filled with the spices and the gold that Spain was hoping for. But this land intoxicates the senses like the strongest of perfumes... And all I can think of, is to return to these untamed lands...

Suddenly the cabin seems to lurch over. Things fall from the table, smashing on the floor... COLUMBUS nearly falls.

EXT. SEA - NIGHT

We are in the middle of a violent storm -- of terrifying proportions. The thunder is deafening. Light irradiates the darkness. We see the two caravels, dwarfed by the massive seas.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

Five MEN are struggling to lash down the tiller. The deck jumps and rolls. It rises five meters into the air then falls into space and hits the water with a terrible crack. Waves sweep over the decks. We hear desperate cries for mercy from the terrified crew, loud enough to be heard above the storm.

COLUMBUS and MENDEZ are crawling towards the mast, along a lifeline.

COLUMBUS

(screaming to the
sailors)

Get below! All of you! Go!

The MEN start to scramble below decks.

COLUMBUS

(to Mendez)

Stay with me!

The ship rolls again. COLUMBUS and MENDEZ crawl towards the mast. Another gigantic wave crashes over them, tons of water falling like cement. They reach the mast. The wood groans.

COLUMBUS

We may have to cut it!

MENDEZ nods... COLUMBUS grabs some rope. The ship rises into the air again, crashes down, the deck disappearing beneath them for a moment.

COLUMBUS

(screaming out)

I'll stay here -- to decide if we
cut it. Help me!

With MENDEZ'S help, COLUMBUS is tied to the mast: one rope under his arms, the other around his waist. MENDEZ hands him a horn.

COLUMBUS

(screaming)

Now go!

MENDEZ seems to hesitate. COLUMBUS screams at him again.

COLUMBUS

I said -- below deck, Mendez!

MENDEZ crawls away.

Another huge wave washes over COLUMBUS. He emerges, almost suffocated. The storm rages, its eerie light making it seem at times like bright daylight. But as the lightning flashes, COLUMBUS begins to count:

COLUMBUS

One... two... three... four...

There's an enormous thunderclap on "four" -- it indicates how close they are to the eye of the storm.

The ship keels over again, dropping down and down, seeming never to rise... COLUMBUS lifts his head to the heavens, screams out:

COLUMBUS

Damn you!

As if in answer, another flash of lightning that illuminates the sky and the sea. COLUMBUS starts counting again.

COLUMBUS

One... two... three... four...
five...

Another terrible clap of thunder on "five" -- COLUMBUS starts laughing, knowing the storm is moving on.

Then, in the strange light, something seems to move through the air towards him; it looks like some kind of projectile, a craft, with a trail of vapor.

COLUMBUS stares up at it... amazed. We start to hear the "Te Deum", majestic and heavenly.

CUT TO:

INT. CATHEDRAL OF CORDOBA - SPAIN - DAY

COLUMBUS looks up at the vast roof, to see an incense burner, swinging, gliding swiftly across the ceiling, trailing a thick vapor of incense.

A magnificent "Te Deum" is being sung -- in honor of COLUMBUS' achievements and return. The whole cathedral is packed with nobles and dignitaries in their gorgeous robes.

BEATRIX, FERNANDO and DIEGO are staring in fascination at COLUMBUS' triumph -- somewhat separated by the grandeur of this occasion. COLUMBUS passes by, walking proudly down the long central alley, beside KING FERDINAND and QUEEN ISABEL and other GRANDEES. He turns to his family, keeping his eyes on BEATRIX until she is out of his vision.

The procession is followed by UTAPAN, and other INDIANS in tribal regalia...

As they move through the crowds, all eyes are upon **COLUMBUS**.

CUT TO:

INT. ROOM - SEVILLE (PINZON'S DEATH) - DAY

In a simple room, a PRIEST finishes giving the Last Rites and a sheet is pulled over the head of MARTIN PINZON. His WIFE and CHILDREN weep at the bedside.

CUT TO:

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

A stool passes from hands to hands. It is placed at the Queen and King's side. COLUMBUS sits on it -- a supreme privilege.

To one side sit AROJAZ and SANCHEZ. AROJAZ leans over to whisper to him.

AROJAZ

It won't be easy to get rid of your prophet now, Don Sanchez.

SANCHEZ

(whispering)

On the contrary, Your Eminence. It seems to me the man is preparing his own cross.

INT. ALCAZAR'S PALACE IN SEVILLE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: the face of a young, SPANISH NOBLEMAN, ADRIAN DE MOXICA. Hesitantly, he brings a lighted cigar to his lips -- then pauses.

We discover other people around the magnificent candle-lit table. NOBLE MEN and NOBLE WOMEN. SANCHEZ. COLUMBUS. **QUEEN ISABEL**.

COLUMBUS takes the cigar from MOXICA. The rest watch him with rapt curiosity. COLUMBUS inhales deeply then, to their astonishment, blows out the smoke through his nose.

COLUMBUS

You must not inhale, but simply allow the palate to enjoy the flavor of the Tobacco...

He hands the cigar back to MOXICA. With a casual air, MOXICA himself inhales deeply -- almost chokes to death.

He gulps down a glass of wine... much to the amusement of the others.

MOXICA

(deeply embarrassed)
And you say this is an Indian vice?
By God! I don't see any kind of
pleasure that would make this a sin.

COLUMBUS

The Indians have no such word, Don
Moxica.

ISABEL

Do they have such thoughts?

COLUMBUS

They come and go as naked as the day
God created them...

ISABEL blushes slightly.

COLUMBUS

They don't see sin in their
nakedness. They live according to
nature, in a never ending summer.
The islands are covered with trees,
filled with blossoms and fruits.
And...

SANCHEZ

(interrupting)
Forgive me, Don Colon. But what
about gold?

COLUMBUS nods, turns and whispers something to a SERVANT standing just behind his chair. The SERVANT goes to open the door -- and in comes UTAPAN, dressed as a tribesman, carrying a casket. The WOMEN around the table fan themselves furiously at the sight. UTAPAN puts the casket down in front of the QUEEN, and steps back.

COLUMBUS

These are gifts for Your Majesty.

ISABEL opens the casket, revealing the gleam of gold inside. She takes out some of the little golden ornaments... a bracelet and then the mask.

She holds it, somehow moved by its crude beauty.

ISABEL raises the mask to her face, looking across at
COLUMBUS.

The image is somehow powerful enough to reduce even the ARISTOCRATS to silence. She speaks from behind the mask.

ISABEL

We are more than gratified.

The guests laugh obsequiously. COLUMBUS bows a little -- looks up and meets the eyes of SANCHEZ, who is staring at him, coldly.

INT. ROTUNDA - DAY

A SWORD MASTER advances towards us with determination, his sword flashing. He is fighting an adversary we do not see, and comments his movements.

MASTER

Si! Si! Muy bien! Excelente!
(Yes! Yes! Good! Excellent!)

We discover the SWORD MASTER is fencing with COLUMBUS. A dozen duellists are practicing in the magnificent rotunda, surrounded with a two-tiered colonnade.

Out of breath, COLUMBUS stops the exercise, and removes his protective canvas padding. He bows at his teacher, who salutes him in return.

COLUMBUS walks to a tressel laden with food and beverages. SANCHEZ, in a fencing outfit and boots, is having a glass of wine. Upon seeing COLUMBUS approaching, he hands him a glass.

SANCHEZ

You defend yourself admirably...

COLUMBUS

... for a commoner?

SANCHEZ laughs and raises his glass.

SANCHEZ

To your second expedition.

They drink. A short, somewhat ugly man, with some kind of imposing energy, approach them.

SANCHEZ

Don Colon -- Don Alonso de Bobadilla. A man who knows our laws.

BOBADILLA bows.

BOBADILLA

I understand that you will soon be appointing Governors for the islands? Is it not so?

COLUMBUS

Forgive me, Don Bobadilla -- those positions have already been taken.

BOBADILLA

(disappointed)
May I ask by whom?

COLUMBUS

Bartolome and Giacomo Colon.

SANCHEZ looks at him in surprise. BOBADILLA reddens.

BOBADILLA

I trust they are men of quality.

BOBADILLA glances at SANCHEZ.

COLUMBUS

But we do have a lack of notaries.
You should contact my
administration.

SANCHEZ

(amused)
Don Bobadilla is already a judge, my
Dear Don Cristobal.

COLUMBUS

Good! We are also in need of
judges. Except there are no
thieves!

A grin disfigures the face of BOBADILLA.

BOBADILLA

(to Sanchez)
I see I was mistaken. Don Colon
has no need for my services...

And he walks off. SANCHEZ fills his mouth with a slice of ham.

SANCHEZ

(amused)
You seem to have a special talent
for making friends.

COLUMBUS

What...? Do I have so many already?

SANCHEZ

(seriously)
To rise so high, in so short a time,
is a dangerous occupation.
(kindly)
A little hypocrisy goes a long way.

INT. ROOM - ADMINISTRATION - DAY

COLUMBUS with two MEN: the oldest, around thirty, is a strong-looking man. The youngest, no more than twenty five, is thin and fit. There is obvious tension in the room. These are BARTOLOME and GIACOMO COLON, COLUMBUS' brothers. BARTOLOME is angry, and GIACOMO thoughtful.

BARTOLOME

You might have given us a choice!

GIACOMO

Bartolome is stronger, more capable than I will ever be...

COLUMBUS

I need both of you. What are you afraid of? We are living what we always dreamt of.

GIACOMO

You know I never shared those dreams with you.

COLUMBUS

Are you saying you refuse to help?

COLUMBUS looks at them with such pained surprise...

BARTOLOME

(amused)

You bastard... you always had your own way...

COLUMBUS

Let me show you something.

He opens the door to a terrace.

CUT TO:

EXT. GALLERY - DAY

The large gallery courtyard is crowded with PEOPLE -- applicants for the voyage. As COLUMBUS appears, they all press forward, calling out his name, trying to get his attention, touching his sleeves as if he were a saint. They crowd around COLUMBUS and his BROTHERS. COLUMBUS nods, murmurs vaguely, here and there...

COLUMBUS

Of course... Of course... We'll see to it... Yes... Thank you... Soon... Soon...

Fighting their way through, the BOTHERS press their way, reaching the other side of the gallery. We get glimpses of the incredible activity down below. ADMINISTRATORS, MILITARIES, MERCHANTS are busy around tressels covered with documents, plans, maps... preparing the second expedition.

COLUMBUS puts his arms around them.

COLUMBUS

(indicating the applicants)

Now -- you tell me. Who can I trust?

(almost amused)

We're brothers! We must be a House. A bloodline! In this country one can't exist alone! I need you...! Both of you!

He walks then to the balustrade. The cries from the courtyard down below subside... some of the applicants begin to look up, aware of his presence.

SOLDIER

Where is the Admiral? Has anyone seen the Admiral?

Everybody laughs.

COLUMBUS

He is here! What is it?

He leans over the balcony. In the middle of the overcrowded courtyard, the SOLDIER who was shouting is brandishing a document.

MAN

Admiral! The horses have arrived.

COLUMBUS

I know. I saw them! Who did we hire today?

ANOTHER ASSISTANT raises his eyes.

ASSISTANT

Thirty blacksmiths, twenty eight halberdiers, twenty carpenters, a hundred farmers, twenty miners... and Doctor Chanca, the royal surgeon.

COLUMBUS

The royal surgeon? Then we can count on royal health!

The whole courtyard bursts out laughing.

EXT. ORANGERY - VICEROY'S HOUSE - DAY

UTAPAN is lying in his hammock. FERNANDO turns him over.
UTAPAN falls to the ground.

COLUMBUS walks beside BEATRIX.

COLUMBUS

(looking at his son)
He's growing up!

BEATRIX smiles, nods. They walk on.

COLUMBUS

Beatrice, I want to ask you
something.

BEATRIX

(with a smile)
You don't usually ask.

COLUMBUS

(after a pause)
I can arrange for the Queen to take
Fernando and Diego into her service.

BEATRIX stops in her tracks, looks at him.

COLUMBUS

It is a great honor. We could not
hope for anything better.

BEATRIX nods, but bites her lip, and looks back at
FERNANDO.

BEATRIX

For once I wish you weren't right.

COLUMBUS puts his arm around her waist, pulling her
closer, they move away.

EXT. FAR END OF THE ORANGERY - DAY

FERNANDO is now swinging expertly in the hammock. UTAPAN
is pushing him gently. He slowly straightens up to watch
COLUMBUS and BEATRIX disappear, somehow sensing there is a
dilemma. FERNANDO noticing UTAPAN'S reaction, turns to
his parents. The arbor is empty. FERNANDO becomes
pensive.

We become aware of the rustling of the jungle.

SLOW

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BEACH AND EDGE OF JUNGLE - DAY

FIFTEEN HUNDRED MEN spread along the beach, looking towards the jungle. COLUMBUS stands beside his BROTHERS, and MENDEZ, and UTAPAN.

MOXICA, astride a magnificent black horse, prances back and forth across the sand. All are waiting.

A signal cannon is fired from one of the ships. Birds scatter into the air from the jungle -- but then silence, complete and ominous. COLUMBUS stares into the jungle. Nothing. No one to greet them -- no welcoming party from the MEN they left behind.

COLUMBUS glances at MENDEZ.

MENDEZ looks at him, but can't answer.

MOXICA suddenly spurs on his horse, and guides it into the trees. The order is given for the rest to follow, fanning out as they do so, weapons at the ready.

EXT. CLEARING - JUNGLE - DAY

Ruins. The camp has been burned to ashes. A strange sight: arrows are stuck vertically into the ground, each with a moldering tuft of human hair attached to the flight.

In silence the SOLDIERS pick their way through the devastation.

The ground is littered with coconuts. Kicking one over with his shoe, a SOLDIER discovers that his coconut is actually a human skull. The gaping mouth has been filled to the brim with gold.

But of the living, there is no sign.

MOXICA

Is this your new world, Don Colon?

COLUMBUS looks around in dismay. A YOUNG NOBLEMAN, HERNANDO DE GUEVARA, takes out his sword.

GUEVARA

These animals should be shown what savagery can be!

Other SPANIARDS join in, repeating this last word.

NOBLEMAN

Three heads for every life taken.
No mercy before God!

GUEVARA

No mercy! Let's find them.

COLUMBUS

No Guevara. There will be no
revenge.

Silence. Everyone looks at COLUMBUS.

MOXICA

We lost cousins, friends. We will
wash this in blood.

COLUMBUS

If you want to keep your head on
your shoulders, you'll do as I say.

They are all listening.

COLUMBUS

Moxica, I lost friends too... Thirty
nine brave men who trusted me.

He walks among them.

COLUMBUS

You want a war? Fine. We are a
thousand. They outnumber us by ten!
Who will you kill? Which tribe?

MOXICA

We don't need to know.

COLUMBUS

We came here to stay! To build!
Not to start a crusade. In this
forest, there is enough danger to
sweep us away in days! So we will
be brave and swallow our grief. And
in the name of those who died, we
will accomplish what we came for.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

MOXICA mounted on his magnificent BLACK STALLION canters
to the edge of the deserted village and enters the
village. UTAPAN is terrorized by the absence of anything
living.

All we can hear is the breathing of the horse. The
animal, an impressive mass of muscle, prances nervously.

UTAPAN calls out in dialect.

UTAPAN

They here.

Slowly, they begin to appear, one after the other -- materializing from the jungle. Shy and scared.

They stare at this "Centaur" (the HORSE and the HORSEMAN seem to be one -- a God).

To impress them even more, MOXICA makes the beast move sideways and backwards, rearing, its front hoofs pawing the air. THE INDIANS retreat in terror, except for one, who stands his ground, brandishing his lance.

UTAPAN encourages the YOUNG WARRIOR to approach the centaur. He places his hand onto the shoulder of the animal. The muscles shudder. THE INDIAN jumps back comically, accompanied by the rest of the tribe.

Without warning, MOXICA climbs down from the saddle. More INDIANS step back in fear and absolute astonishment. Now more have ventured from the jungle. The bravest of them approach MOXICA, daring to touch him, and the horse, retreating then touching until they fill the compound.

At this moment, COLUMBUS and his SOLDIERS appear all around them, pointing their muskets, and their crossbows. A moment of tension.

COLUMBUS walks forward, towards the CHIEF (GUARIONEX) we meet before.

COLUMBUS

Ask the Chief what happened to my men?

The CHIEF answers.

UTAPAN

Another tribe made war on them... came by sea... took them away...

BROTHER BUYL

God have mercy on their souls...

MOXICA

The monkey is lying.

A pause. The SPANIARDS shifting, eager for blood.

MOXICA

We should kill them, Don Colon.

UTAPAN looks anxiously at COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS

No...! you'll do it my way.
(to Utapan)

Tell the Chief we will not harm his
people, even though we have the
power to do it.

UTAPAN translates. The CHIEF listens in silence.

COLUMBUS

We will work with his people. We
want peace. Ask the Chief if he
understands?

UTAPAN

He understands.

COLUMBUS

Ask him if he will help.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERMILL AND DAM UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

It is raining hard. COLUMBUS is floundering in the mud,
supervising a mixed work-force of SPANISH and INDIANS.
They are attempting to raise the huge wheel of a
watermill.

Despite COLUMBUS' shouts of encouragement, it's clear the
wheel is far too heavy and the mud too deep.

Close by, on horseback, MOXICA watches the scene.
COLUMBUS, plastered with wet mud, clambers out of the pit
and approaches him.

COLUMBUS

Don Moxica -- we need your horse.

MOXICA looks down at the sodden, dirty figure.

COLUMBUS

We can't raise the wheel without it.

MOXICA

My horse doesn't work.

A beat. COLUMBUS wipes some mud from his eyes.

COLUMBUS

Don Moxica -- we all have to work.

MOXICA

You did not hear me, Don Colon. Not
my horse.

He starts to turn away; COLUMBUS grabs hold of the reins.

COLUMBUS

Forgive me, Don Moxica. But it was your horse I was talking about.

A beat. MOXICA stares down at an equally determined COLUMBUS. Then, in front of everyone, MOXICA has to dismount, and suffer the disgrace of it.

COLUMBUS

Thank you, Don Moxica.

COLUMBUS leads the horse away.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERMILL AND DAM UNDER CONSTRUCTION - DAY

Harnessed, the horse pulls, with COLUMBUS and the MEN. The wheel is raised into position.

CUT TO:

EXT. WATERMILL AND DAM - DAY

Water thundering into the new canal. The huge wheel begins to turn. The MEN cheer and congratulate each other. MOXICA looks at his mud-splattered and foaming horse, his eyes full of hatred.

EXT. CITY OF ISABEL - TWILIGHT

A wide, high shot of the new "City", dominated by a huge wooden cross -- no more than a muddy main street bordered by a hundred bamboo and stone shanties, with candles burning in the doorways. A main square with the Governor's Mansion, and the foundations of a church.

In the twilight, COLUMBUS and the other WORKERS returning, dirty and tired.

EXT. VERANDA OF MOXICA'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT

MOXICA and GUEVARA sit out on the "veranda", watching the MEN return. MOXICA raises his glass in an ironic salute.

MOXICA

To the Governor of the Mosquitoes!

They laugh. We see the smoke and flames from a fire. Four or five INDIANS are squatting on the earth nearby, cooking for them, talking quietly in their own language.

MOXICA calls out something in their language, and a naked YOUNG INDIAN GIRL comes out of the house, bringing more wine. GUEVARA stares at her lasciviously. MOXICA,

letting his hand casually brush against her flank, smiles at him.

MOXICA

Do you want her?

He turns the GIRL round so that GUEVARA can admire her properly. GUEVARA nods. MOXICA lets the GIRL go with a peremptory order, and she disappears back inside.

GUEVARA suddenly stands up -- unsteadily -- and sweeping his arm round in a broad gesture, says ironically:

GUEVARA

To the new world, my friend! To the new world!

INT. DINING ROOM - GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

In an already Spanish-colonel dining room, COLUMBUS is having dinner with his brothers, BARTOLOME and GIACOMO, served by an INDIAN WOMAN -- NIMA. GIACOMO eats with gusto.

GIACOMO

(as Nima pours the wine)

Nima's a good cook!

BARTOLOME

She's more than that!

Seeing GIACOMO'S sudden blush and discomfort, as NIMA smiles at him, the other BROTHERS laugh.

To cover his embarrassment, GIACOMO returns to the topic of the food.

GIACOMO

What is it?

COLUMBUS

Eat! I'll tell you later.

As he sees BARTOLOME stifling a laugh, GIACOMO pauses.

GIACOMO

I'd like to know what I'm eating.

COLUMBUS eats a mouthful, glances at BARTOLOME.

COLUMBUS

Iguana.

A look of horror crosses GIACOMO'S face; he wretches slightly, puts down his fork, and gulps down some wine.

The BROTHERS laugh again.

COLUMBUS

What wrong with it? The Indians eat it!

GIACOMO

I'm not an Indian.

BARTOLOME

He wishes he were back in the seminary. Priests always eat well.

(tasting his wine,
grimacing)

And they have very good cellars.

GIACOMO

Nothing grows here! Everything rots in the ground. The wheat and vines wither before we can harvest them.

COLUMBUS

We've got to learn to live like the Indians.

(pause)

Eat your Iguana!

Reluctantly this time, GIACOMO goes back to his dinner.

EXT. BALCONY - GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

They are drinking and smoking cigars. From the balcony they can see the dark mass of the jungle stretching away. GIACOMO is already dozing in his chair. BARTOLOME sees it, and elbows COLUMBUS. They both smile at their younger brother's exhaustion. Then COLUMBUS gets up and leans on the balustrade, looking down at the city, the jungle beyond.

COLUMBUS

How much gold have we found?

BARTOLOME

Not enough to justify a single shipment.

COLUMBUS

Perhaps it doesn't exist anywhere but in my imagination.

BARTOLOME

Then let's hope not...

(pause)

What will happen if we can't find enough gold?

They begin to hear the sound of a flute -- a melancholy sound. COLUMBUS looks out over the jungle, and kills a mosquito by slapping his arm.

COLUMBUS

(jokingly)

Then I'm Governor of the Mosquitoes.

CUT TO:

INT. INFIRMARY - CITY OF ISABEL - NIGHT

An INDIAN is playing the flute.

In the gloomy interior of the long hut, in the most primitive conditions, DOZENS OF SPANIARDS lie sick. On a segregated part of the room are the INDIANS, several coughing.

They are attended by a doctor, DOCTOR CHANCA, BROTHER BUYL, and other NOVICES.

A NOVICE attends to an INDIAN, gently lifting his head, helping him to drink -- there is so little they can do.

BROTHER BUYL looks down at the body of a SPANIARD, covered in open sores. The NOVICE joins him.

BROTHER BUYL

What kind of disease is this?

DOCTOR CHANCA

I don't know. It seems almost as if we have exchanged diseases with the Indians. They die of our most common cold, and we of their plague.

BROTHER BUYL

God forgive us!

CUT TO:

EXT. ROYAL HOSPITAL - COURTYARD - SPAIN - DAY

A MAN covered with sores is screaming, thrashing in his agony. He is held down, his voice muffled. ISABEL turns away, shocked.

She is in a ward full of patients, attended by a DOCTOR, SANCHEZ and other members of her court.

The patients are emaciated, their faces and bodies covered with virulent sores. NUNS move between the beds.

DOCTOR

It seems to be caused by intimacy with the native women, Your Majesty.

ISABEL

Will he survive?

DOCTOR

No, Your Majesty. They go mad -- then they die. There is nothing we can do.

ISABEL looks around at SANCHEZ, appalled.

SANCHEZ

Every ship returns with a cargo of sick and dying. But with no gold! The new world proves expensive, Your Majesty.

ISABEL

We weren't expecting immediate profits, were we? We must have faith. We must give time for time.

SANCHEZ bows in acknowledgement. But ISABEL, despite her words, looks distressed.

EXT. MINE - NEW WORLD - DAY

Excavations carved into a hillside.

It is a blisteringly hot day. At the foot of the hill, GIACOMO sits at a table beneath an awning, with MOXICA and several CLERKS. ONE HUNDRED FIFTY INDIANS standing in line at the table.

In turn, they hand over a small quantity of gold. The CLERK weighs it on a scale, and notes down each contribution.

MOXICA impatiently gestures the INDIANS to move faster with a thonged crop. An INDIAN approaches the table. He is nervous. He doesn't produce anything. The INDIAN shakes his head, gesticulates, starts to speak rapidly.

TRANSLATOR

He says he has not found any!

MOXICA

He's lying!

Again the INDIAN pleads and gesticulates. MOXICA hits him across the face with the thonged crop. The INDIAN tries to run away -- but is held by a SPANISH SOLDIER.

MOXICA

Bring him here!

The frightened INDIAN is brought back to the table. One of the CLERKS slips away.

MOXICA

Tell him to put his hands on the table. Like this!

CUT TO:

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF THE SITE - DAY

At the other end of the site, the CLERK sprinting to GIACOMO, who was talking to a FOREMASTER.

CLERK

Don Giacomo, you'd better come at once!

EXT. MINE - DAY

MOXICA turns, looks back at the long line of INDIANS, still passively waiting.

MOXICA

Tell them I want them to watch this!

The terrified TRANSLATOR speaks to the INDIANS.

CLERK

Don't Moxica! You can't...

CUT TO:

GIACOMO and the CLERK running to the scene.

CUT TO:

MOXICA

(to the clerk)

I can't? I can't?

With a single swift action, MOXICA draws his sword and cuts off the INDIAN'S hands.

ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE. The INDIANS flee, disappearing into the jungle. GIACOMO arrives at this moment. He stares at the dismembered hands in horror.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - EVENING

A tribunal. Sitting behind a table with his brothers, and flanked by his council, COLUMBUS presides. MOXICA stands before them.

COLUMBUS

In one act of brutality, you have created chaos. Tribes who were fighting each other are now joining forces against us! All that because of your criminal savagery!

MOXICA

(casually)

Savagery is what monkeys understand.

COLUMBUS

You'll be held in detention, deprived of your privileges and possessions. Until you are returned to Spain where you will be judged. Have you anything to say?

MOXICA

(with exquisite insolence)

You will regret this.

He strolls to the GUARDS at the back of the room.

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Everything is quiet on the mine site.

On the terrace, TWO SOLDIERS are drinking in turn, and cracking jokes. One of them leans against the wooden wall. He laughs as he hears repeated banging behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

A THIRD SOLDIER is fucking an INDIAN WOMAN against the wall.

CUT TO:

EXT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

On the terrace, his two COMPANIONS laugh and encourage his efforts.

A whooshing sound. An arrow embeds itself in the chest of the SOLDIER who was leaning against the wall. He is nailed to the wood behind him.

THE OTHER SOLDIER stares at him, transfixed, until an arrow pierces his throat. He collapses, unable to cry out for help.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

FOUR INDIANS in full warrior outfit, their faces painted, burst into the room. Still busy with the WOMAN, his eyes facing the wall, the SOLDIER believes the intruders to be his friends.

SOLDIER

(without stopping)

You animals! Can't you wait!

Discovering the FOUR TERRIFYING FIGURES staring at her, the INDIAN WOMAN starts screaming and pushes back the SOLDIER. He turns around, jumps off the WOMAN, and starts to scramble to the front door, trying to put on his trousers.

THE FOUR INDIANS catch him, and force him to lay on the ground. THE MAN struggles, his eyes rolling in terror. TWO INDIANS force his mouth open. A THIRD ONE kneels and starts stuffing it with gold dust. THE SOLDIER chokes and suffocates.

THE WOMAN still stands half naked against the wall, terrified. AN INDIAN takes his knife from his leggings, slowly. She starts sobbing and imploring in her language. THE INDIAN slowly walks to her, and plants the knife in the lower part of her belly.

EXT. MINE - DAY

PAIRS of bloody red legs hanging still, high in the air.

Pulling back, we discover:

A DOZEN SPANIARDS have been crucified on the scaffolding of the excavations. Some hands and noses have been removed.

UTAPAN is standing, uncomfortable among the SPANIARDS.

A SOLDIER removes a huge iron nail from a wrist. One of the CRUCIFIED BODIES is gently laid on the ground. He is still alive -- not for long.

COLUMBUS and BARTOLOME are silent with rage.

BARTOLOME

(aggressively)

Moxica is right. Our ways don't work!

BARTOLOME turns to UTAPAN.

BARTOLOME

(aggressively)

Can you find them?

UTAPAN looks distraught -- this is the first time he is being asked to do something against his own people. He looks up at COLUMBUS for help in confusion.

COLUMBUS

You have to find them, Utapan. Look what they did!

UTAPAN

You did the same to your God!

COLUMBUS is caught short.

COLUMBUS

We have to stop this war.

UTAPAN nods. He walks and takes an arrow. He examines it.

COLUMBUS

Do you know them?

UTAPAN nods, uncomfortable.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILL AND VALLEY - DAY

Around a campfire, two dozen INDIANS are squatting. They are arguing over a musket and some woolen hats they stole from the mine. CLICK! CLICK! The INDIANS raise their heads. All around them, crossbows and muskets are pointed at them. Two INDIANS try to run away. They are shot.

This sound triggers the SPANIARDS' response. They start shooting at random. UTAPAN is horrified. COLUMBUS stands up shouting.

COLUMBUS

Stop! Stop this!

CUT TO:

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

MOXICA and a group of rebels (GUEVARA among them), silently approach the entrance of the mansion.

A GUARD is stabbed and falls on his knees with a cry.

INT. COLUMBUS' STUDY - GOVERNOR'S MANSION - NIGHT

MOXICA tears COLUMBUS' plans of the city from the wall. On the table, the model of the future city.

Watched by the other ARISTOCRATS, MOXICA sets fire to the parchment he has rolled up. He blows the flames from the torch onto the model. Fire races up and down the streets of the miniature, as if burning the city of Isabel.

A mad gleam in MOXICA'S eyes...

EXT. SQUARE OF ISABEL - NIGHT

The half-burnt remains of the Mansion. COLUMBUS stands in the square, looking up at it. Behind him, his SOLDIERS, his BROTHERS and about thirty captured INDIANS.

GIACOMO walks slowly across the square. COLUMBUS looks at him in disbelief.

GIACOMO

(through cracked
lips)

Moxica...

EXT. RIVER BANK - JUNGLE - DAWN

COLUMBUS leads his party of SOLDIERS through the jungle, looking for the MUTINEERS.

They reach the river -- scan the far bank. Nothing. COLUMBUS nods. His MEN start to enter the river, led by a **HALBERDIER**.

Others follow, wading across, their weapons held above their heads.

A crossbow arrow pierces the HALBERDIER. Without a cry he falls forward into the water, and is carried away by the current.

Two more MEN are hit. One cries out, thrashes around in the water, an arrow protruding from his side. The river stained with blood.

Still no sign of the enemy. COLUMBUS' MEN nevertheless start to return fire from the bank, creating a shield... others continue to wade across the river. A MUTINEER is shot down from the branches of a tree...

The first MEN come ashore. Musket fire. An exchange of arrows. COLUMBUS is now wading across. The MAN next to him is killed, and carried away by the current.

Now, on the far shore, the enemy have shown themselves. There is hand to hand fighting, with swords and other weapons. MOXICA kills one of COLUMBUS' men -- but his own are outnumbered and outmatched. Already, some are beginning to surrender.

In the midst of the fighting, COLUMBUS, sword drawn, pulls himself out of the river: A MUTINEER lunges at him. COLUMBUS kills him with a thrust of his sword -- and walks forward into the jungle. He spots MOXICA at the foot of a cliff.

EXT. JUNGLE CLIMB TO CLIFF TOP - DAY

MOXICA starts scrambling up the rocks behind him, with COLUMBUS following. The climb through the dense undergrowth is so exhausting, they are now almost climbing in slow motion.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

MOXICA bursts out of the undergrowth. He is at the edge of emptiness, swept by a violent offshore wind. He turns frantically, to see COLUMBUS coming up behind him.

Knowing he is lost, MOXICA regains his natural arrogance. He steps backwards towards the edge.

MOXICA

You know what they will say in Spain
about my death -- don't you?

He takes another step backwards, as COLUMBUS moves towards him.

MOXICA

You are nothing! You bastards will
never inherit your titles. We are
everything. We are immortal!

He smiles, and steps back into space.

EXT. ROCKS BELOW CLIFF TOP - DAY

His body falls, bounces off the rocks below, crashes into the water.

EXT. TOP OF CLIFF - DAY

COLUMBUS stares down as his body is swept away.

CUT TO:

EXT. SQUARE OF ISABEL - DAY

CLOSE ON COLUMBUS' expressionless face.

CUT TO:

A MUTINEER -- his face is white, he is crying and trembling. His arms are tied behind his back. He is held fast, a rope is put around his neck.

COLUMBUS, sitting not far away beside his BROTHERS, gives a signal.

Drums begin to beat. BROTHER BUYL looks on impassive.

A grimace suddenly transform THE YOUNG MAN'S face. He is being garroted -- his throat crushed with a rope. The YOUNG MAN'S feet dance frenziedly. We hear the choking.

The drums cease. BROTHER BUYL crosses himself and murmurs a prayer, deeply distraught. GIACOMO has covered his eyes.

A wider view shows the bodies of three other ARISTOCRATS from the rebellion, attached to chairs affixed to a pole, their heads straight, the rope still tight around their necks.

Justice has been done. The members of the COUNCIL rise in silence, COLUMBUS stands up.

CUT TO:

EXT. ISABEL - QUAYSIDE - DAY

CLOSE ON several large wooden cages. Inside we see the INDIANS that COLUMBUS captured. They are packed together. They stare out with vacant eyes. SOLDIERS guard them. A ship against the pier. BUYL at his side, COLUMBUS stares at the INDIANS.

BROTHER BUYL

I wish to go back with them, Don
Colon. I have no desire to remain
in this godless place.

COLUMBUS

You may do as you please, Brother
Buyl -- though your departure will
not help me to make it more Godly.

BROTHER BUYL looks at him, almost with astonishment.

BROTHER BUYL

You treat Christians equally with
heathen savages. You execute
members of the nobility. And what
do you offer in return?

COLUMBUS

(quietly)
A new world, Brother Buyl.

BROTHER BUYL

Nobody wants one...! Only you!

And he walks away.

EXT. ISLAND - EVENING

Against the livid horizon, three black waterspouts join the sky to the sea. A gust of wind disturbs the roof of the jungle.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - EVENING

The wind grows stronger. Doors bang inside the building... a melancholy sound.

COLUMBUS sits on the balcony with his BROTHERS. They are silent. After a few moments, COLUMBUS begins to speak quietly, almost as if he were speaking to himself.

COLUMBUS

Perhaps hope only exists in the journey. When it begins, everything is still possible -- every expectation; every dream...

The BROTHERS do not answer.

COLUMBUS

This is not how I imagined it to be.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE - NEAR ISABEL - NIGHT

UTAPAN begins to shave his head...

EXT. BALCONY - GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAWN

The sky is dark and threatening, the wind even stronger. We find COLUMBUS where we left him, but now alone. He has sat here all night.

Shutters bang violently.

He looks up -- and sees a few yards from him: the naked FIGURE OF AN INDIAN, his face and body painted, staring at him. COLUMBUS realizes who it is...

COLUMBUS

Utapan!

UTAPAN is still and silent. A strange and mysterious

figure now.

COLUMBUS

Utapan, won't you speak to me? You used to know how to speak to me.

UTAPAN

(sadly, in his own language)

You never learned how to speak my language.

UTAPAN is gone.

EXT. SQUARE - DAWN

The wind is whipping the trees now, stronger and stronger. Groups of INDIANS look up at the sky. Then, above the sound of the wind, they hear another noise. Like a collective murmur, almost in one voice, the INDIANS repeat, over and over.

INDIANS

Urracan... Urracan... Urracan...
Urracan...

(the wrath of God)

With a loud thunderclap, the storm suddenly breaks. In a few seconds it has risen to violent proportions, and the landscape is drenched in torrential rain. The wind doubles its strength... and all hell breaks loose...

EXT. CITY OF ISABEL - DAY

The hurricane is full force. Trees are being ripped up by their roots. Rivers of mud are washed down from the hills, carrying everything away in their paths: houses, carts, equipment, horses...

EXT. MINE - ISABEL - DAY

The mine workings flooded with mud...

EXT. APPROACH TO DAM AND WATERFALL - DAY

COLUMBUS, BARTOLOME and MENDEZ struggle through the teeth of the hurricane towards the dam.

EXT. DAM - DAY

Timbers creak and strain. COLUMBUS, BARTOLOME, MENDEZ and a DOZEN other MEN are trying to save the dam.

Suddenly, frighteningly, the dam begins to crash.

COLUMBUS

(screaming)

Let it go! Let it go!

The MEN scramble away as the dam wall buckles, and burst open. Water floods over them; a roaring torrent. From the bank, MENDEZ, BARTOLOME and COLUMBUS survey the ruins of their dreams.

CUT TO:

INT. GOVERNOR'S PALACE - BEDROOM - DAY

COLUMBUS is stretched out on his bed, in his devastated bedroom. A column of ants is threading its way across the floor, each ant carrying a piece of leaf. Rain falls over a table covered with documents.

COLUMBUS' face is covered in dried mud.

SANCHEZ (V.O.)

He promised us gold but has failed to find it. He subjects the natives to violence, provocation and injustice. He sent them to Spain against the express wishes of Your Majesty...

INT. AUDIENCE ROOM - ALHAMBRA PALACE - DAY

We are back to the first scene. In the vast, opulent, glittering room, ISABEL listens impassively to the voice of SANCHEZ. Also present, other GRANDEES, representatives of the church and state.

SANCHEZ

... But there is worse. He ordered the execution of five members of the nobility...

ISABEL

Is this true, Brother Buyl?

BROTHER BUYL

Yes, Your Majesty. It is all true. I saw it with my own eyes.

A pause. ISABEL seems to struggle inwardly with her emotions. SANCHEZ waits, expressionless, but on the point of victory.

ISABEL

Then, what do you suggest, Don

Sanchez?

SANCHEZ

He must be replaced.

ISABEL

And who would you think of, for such a task?

CUT TO:

EXT. QUAYSIDE - ISABEL - DAY

We see a buckled shoe -- as it rises, it slips into a stirrup. The horse is mounted. The shoe digs into its flank. The sound of hoofbeats...

SANCHEZ (V.O.)

I am thinking of a man. A devotee to Your Majesties. A man extremely motivated...

DISSOLVE

TO:

EXT. STREETS OF ISABEL - DAY

FIVE MEN on HORSEBACK, dressed in fashionable clothes, canter down what used to be the main street of Isabel. Through some has been rebuilt, the effects of the hurricane are still visible...

People look at them curiously. We see them stop near the Governor's mansion. The MEN dismount and walk into the Palace.

INT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION - DAY

One of the MEN in black clothes removes his hat and steps forward. We recognize him as ALONSO DE BOBADILLA, the man COLUMBUS humiliated at the rotunda.

COLUMBUS is sitting at his desk, studying plans with GIACOMO. Some other MEMBERS of the COUNCIL are with them.

BOBADILLA

Don Alonso de Bobadilla.

COLUMBUS

Yes... I remember...

BOBADILLA turns, gestures to one of the other MEN, who comes forward and gives him a roll of parchment, bearing the royal seal.

BOBADILLA

My letters of appointment.

COLUMBUS

Appointment to what?

BOBADILLA

Viceroy of the West Indies.

COLUMBUS

Congratulations. Then I am free to search for the mainland.

BOBADILLA smiles wickedly, happy to give COLUMBUS a low blow.

BOBADILLA

Didn't you learn? The mainland was discovered. Weeks ago. By another Italian. I forgot his name.

A MAN IN BLACK

Amerigo Vespucci, Excellency.

COLUMBUS pales. Then...

COLUMBUS

How far from here?

BOBADILLA

I am not a seaman. But I heard it is no more than a week at sea. I hope you are not too disappointed.

COLUMBUS

How could I be? The mainland has been found. Exactly as I said it would.

BOBADILLA

I am afraid this is not the worst news.

CUT TO:

INT. CELL - SEVILLE PRISON - DAY

All is dark. We can just make out COLUMBUS' face as he lies on the hard bed. He is sweating heavily; his beard is filthy and matted, like his hair. He looks feverish.

A key turns in the lock.

The JAILER lets in two fashionably dressed YOUNG MEN. COLUMBUS, blinking in the light, turns his head to stare at them. His eyes are reddened with infection at the corners. The YOUNG MEN come forward into the light.

FERNANDO

(quietly)

Father?

Unable to believe it, COLUMBUS slowly sits up.

COLUMBUS

Fernando...! My God...!

He laughs, overcome with joy. Embraces DIEGO.

COLUMBUS

A man! Diego, how did this happen?

DIEGO

Santangel is going to see the Queen.
We are going to get you out of here.

COLUMBUS

Good! I have to go back!

DIEGO and FERNANDO look at one another, then back at COLUMBUS, incredulously, seeing his filthy clothes, his eyes rimmed with dried mucus.

DIEGO

Go back?

There's a new excitement in COLUMBUS' voice. He walks over to the table. The candlelight illuminates maps, charts, drawings, figures...

COLUMBUS

I have to explore the mainland.

FERNANDO

This time with me!

COLUMBUS laughs and DIEGO looks at them both in astonishment.

DIEGO

In your present state it is madness,
Father!

FERNANDO glances at DIEGO.

FERNANDO

Nobody is forcing you to come with
us.

DIEGO is hurt.

DIEGO

I can't go anyway.

A pause.

FERNANDO

She's very beautiful! The Queen has very good taste. Diego is getting married.

DIEGO seems saddened by his brother's attitude. Once again DIEGO feels like the outsider.

COLUMBUS hugs him.

COLUMBUS

I am happy for you, Diego.

INT. ALHAMBRA - AUDIENCE ROOM - DAY

Like Lucifer and Gabriel, SANTANGEL and SANCHEZ sit on either side of ISABEL.

SANTANGEL

Granted his faults. Yes, a hundred times! But the man is still remarkable.

ISABEL looks at him, then at SANCHEZ, MOVED BUT CLEARLY UNDECIDED. SANTANGEL presses his point.

SANTANGEL

All he asks is a chance to explore this... mainland.

SANCHEZ

It does not belong to him.

SANTANGEL

(quietly)

In a way, it does, Don Sanchez.

(to the Queen)

I beg Your Majesty to receive him. To hear him... He will make no more demands. He has changed. He is penitent.

SANCHEZ

Penitent...? He is suing us for breach of contract!

ISABEL

Is he?

She starts to laugh.

ISABEL

Really?

SANTANGEL tries to stop himself laughing.

INT. AUDIENCE ROOM - ALHAMBRA PALACE - DAY

COLUMBUS is shown into the room. ISABEL is waiting for him.

He drops to his knees before her. This time she walks towards him, clearly moved by his white-hair, and other signs of physical deterioration.

Her hand hovers over his head, as if it means to console him. Her hand is dying to comfort. But instead, she offers her hand for him to kiss.

ISABEL

Rise... Please...

COLUMBUS gets slowly to his feet -- but his eyes, as they meet hers, are as clear as before. ISABEL smiles with relief to see it. He looks back at her.

COLUMBUS

Now I do look older than you.

She smiles -- then again, tries to restrain it, and keeps her dignity.

ISABEL

We have decided to allow you to undertake another voyage to the new world...

COLUMBUS starts to interrupt; she stops him with a gesture.

ISABEL

But without your brothers. Nor are you to return to Santo Domingo or any of the other colonies. You may explore the continent.

COLUMBUS

Thank you.

ISABEL

There is one thing I'd like to understand... Why do you want to go back, after all this?

COLUMBUS

Your Majesty -- some men are content to read about things. I must see them with my own eyes. I cannot be other than I am.

She almost bursts out laughing -- only pauses, turns

slightly, then goes out.

INT. ALHAMBRA PALACE - ROOM NEXT TO THRONE ROOM - DAY

SANCHEZ is standing alone in the next room; he has obviously been listening. He looks at her.

ISABEL

I know, I should not tolerate his impertinence.

SANCHEZ

Then why?

ISABEL

Because he is not afraid of me.

INT. ALHAMBRA PALACE - CORRIDOR - DAY

SANCHEZ, in another direction, along a corridor, towards his office. As he reaches a corner with a wide window, a hand seizes him. COLUMBUS.

SANCHEZ

All I have to do is call the guards.

COLUMBUS

Call them.

SANCHEZ looks at him -- and doesn't call. COLUMBUS lets go of him.

SANCHEZ

I am not afraid of you. You are nothing but a dreamer.

COLUMBUS

Look out of that window.

Surprised, SANCHEZ nevertheless turns, looks out.

COLUMBUS

What do you see?

SANCHEZ

Roofs... towers, palaces... spires...

COLUMBUS

All of them created by people like me.

SANCHEZ turns round again to face him.

COLUMBUS

No matter how long you live,
Sanchez, there's something that will
never change between us. I did it!
You didn't!

COLUMBUS turns abruptly and walks away, vanishing down the
echoing corridor.

EXT. COLUMBUS' MANOR HOUSE - DAY

COLUMBUS dismounts in the courtyard. Everything seems
deserted. There's no one about, no sign of life...

INT. MANOR HOUSE - DAY

COLUMBUS walks slowly through the great rooms. There is
nothing left: no furniture, rugs, pictures... nothing.

He turns, sees BEATRIX standing in a doorway, looking back
at him. They are both moved.

COLUMBUS

God... you're so beautiful! I can't
believe no other man has ever taken
you away from me...

BEATRIX

They tried... but I didn't let them.

She smiles. They don't dare to touch. BEATRIX looks
round the empty room.

BEATRIX

They took everything...

COLUMBUS

(looking at her)

Not everything... Do you think I
care? I'm a free man again. Riches
don't make a man rich, they only
make him busier...

They laugh. There's a pause.

COLUMBUS

God, how much I've missed you!

And they throw themselves into each other's arms.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - MANOR HOUSE - EVENING

All that has been left is a simple table and one chair.
They are having supper by candlelight in the vast, empty

room, though the candles throw a warm, sensuous glow on the figs and hams and wine... and on their faces, as BEATRIX sits on his lap.

SANTANGEL (O.S.)

One chair. One table. What more can a man expect, when he tries to sue the Crown?

They laugh. With only a little embarrassment, BEATRIX gets off COLUMBUS' knee. SANTANGEL comes forward, and COLUMBUS embraces him like an old friend. BEATRIX goes to the kitchen.

COLUMBUS

I owe you everything, Santangel... but as you see, I can't repay you.

SANTANGEL

On the contrary. It is I who owe you everything. Through you, I have been an adventurer, an explorer! It's true I shall never see the new world... but it's here...

(he points to his head)

And here...

(pointing to his heart)

COLUMBUS smiles. BEATRIX returns with a plate and glass for SANTANGEL.

SANTANGEL

What you are, Colon, is a sailor, a discoverer, a man of imagination... not a politician. You weren't meant to govern -- You cannot be all things to all men.

He takes the wine BEATRIX offers, and raises his glass.

SANTANGEL

I wish you could have compromised. It would have made your life easier...

COLUMBUS

But as least we haven't been bored, have we?

They all laugh, and drink.

EXT. SHIP'S DECK - FERNANDO'S POV - NIGHT

Night on the open sea -- the moon shines on the waves and

we hear the creaking of ropes and timbers -- the loneliness and mystery of the night passage.

SAILOR'S VOICE

West... southwest, Captain Mendez...

MENDEZ (O.S.)

Steady as she goes...

COLUMBUS walks over to FERNANDO, who is leaning against the rail. He is smoking a cigar... as the smoke blows over FERNANDO'S face, FERNANDO wretches... It's clear he's feeling seasick, trying to control it.

COLUMBUS leans against the rail next to him, staring out at the darkness. Then looks at his SON again. FERNANDO won't give in to the sickness, but COLUMBUS knows he'd feel better if he did.

COLUMBUS

How are you feeling, Fernando?

FERNANDO

(in a strangled
voice)

Not bad.

COLUMBUS nods meditatively, puffs out some smoke. FERNANDO winces, gags slightly.

COLUMBUS

(almost casually)

You know what I always used to do?

FERNANDO shakes his head.

COLUMBUS

Swallow a piece of pork fat on a string. It always worked.

At the thought of the pork fat, FERNANDO jerks his head over the side, and vomits copiously. COLUMBUS smiles, pats him on the back.

EXT. SHIP'S DECK - DAY

As it plows through heavy seas. COLUMBUS, a coat wrapped around him, is sitting on a chair topside, directing operations despite an obvious fever.

Suddenly a cry from the mast head:

SAILOR (O.S.)

Tierra...! Tierra!

SAILORS and FERNANDO rush to the side of the ship, peering

through the spray. FERNANDO wipes his eyes, and then he sees it: there in the distance, a speck of land.

FERNANDO and his FATHER stand together, watching the low cloud formation sitting on the horizon.

COLUMBUS

The mainland...

FERNANDO looks excited. Discreetly, COLUMBUS watches his SON, enjoying his happiness.

EXT. PANAMA (SURREAL IMAGES) - DAY

A most wonderful and surreal image. A heavy mist lies over the forest. We move above it slowly.

A FIGURE emerges from the mist. At first only a silhouette -- then, slowly, a golden figure... an INDIAN, covered in gold... gold artifacts, golden paste on his body.

The GOLDEN FIGURE turns, and points, into an unknown distance.

EXT. TREEHOUSE - DAY

From the INDIAN treehouse, COLUMBUS, FERNANDO, MENDEZ and several INDIANS are gazing west over a necklace of magnificent lakes.

The INDIANS point and talk gently. FERNANDO has never seen anything so fresh, so beautiful.

EXT. CAMP - SUNSET

A magnificent sunset. A fire is burning, food cooking. COLUMBUS looks over his maps, trying to figure out where they are. We see the outline of the continent of Asia. An OLD INDIAN squats beside him, silent, also looking at the map. Then, slowly and very deliberately, he takes a piece of charcoal from the fire and begins to draw on the map. Ignoring the Asian continent, he sketches the Panamanian coastline -- an isthmus. MENDEZ and FERNANDO gather round. COLUMBUS watches the OLD INDIAN with initial puzzlement, then growing excitement.

MENDEZ

What's he doing?

COLUMBUS

He's drawing an isthmus... He's saying we're on an isthmus.

MENDEZ

We can't be.

FERNANDO is still confused. The OLD INDIAN continues to sketch, talking quietly all the time. An INDIAN TRANSLATOR listens.

COLUMBUS

Tell me what he's saying.

TRANSLATOR

He says -- water on the other side.

COLUMBUS

Ask him if he means a lake. A big lake.

The TRANSLATOR asks. The OLD INDIAN shakes his head, laughs, points to the west, way beyond the other lakes, emphatically.

TRANSLATOR

No. Says those are lakes. Water on other side big -- as wide as here. Above and below, much land.

COLUMBUS

(stunned)

An ocean...? He's says it's an ocean?

FERNANDO

I don't understand.

COLUMBUS is too stunned for a moment to explain. The INDIANS laugh.

Then COLUMBUS takes the charcoal, and begins to draw on the map, for his son.

COLUMBUS

Here is Europe... and over here, the continent of Asia. But there's something in between! Another continent! We've found... another continent!

FERNANDO stares west, then back at his FATHER. COLUMBUS looks very feverish, his face bathed with sweat.

FERNANDO

Father...

COLUMBUS

There must be a passage to that other ocean.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIP - COLUMBUS' CABIN - NIGHT

COLUMBUS, feverish, lies on the bunk. He shivers violently. FERNANDO anxiously watches over him, bathes his eyes.

Suddenly THE TRANSLATOR enters.

TRANSLATOR

I help.

A little reluctantly, FERNANDO lets him go to his FATHER. The INDIAN crouches over the bed, takes out a handful of leaves from a pouch. He chews the leaves himself for a moment, until they form a sticky pulp, then opens COLUMBUS' mouth and puts the pulp inside, encouraging COLUMBUS to chew with the motions of his hands.

COLUMBUS chews, quickly falling asleep.

EXT. MOONLIT VISION OF VAST LAND MASS - NIGHT

We see things from COLUMBUS' hallucination. We are plunging through layers of clouds, the speed accelerating, giving us a sickening sensation of falling to land, closer and closer...

COLUMBUS wakes up with a jolt. Everything is silent. COLUMBUS walks outside.

EXT. DECK - NIGHT

COLUMBUS' fever has subsided. He raises his head and stares at the mainland passing in the night. He smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. JUNGLE AND BAY - HIGH WIDE SHOT - DAY

The roof of the jungle, the bay beyond, the caravel at anchor.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Two canoes going upstream, deeper and deeper into the jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE AND VILLAGE - DAY

Smoke rises lazily above the trees.

CUT TO:

The boats reaching the bank. THE FIRST HUTS of a village. THE SOLDIERS spread out into the empty village.

FERNANDO, COLUMBUS and MENDEZ preceded by TWO ARMED SOLDIERS enter one of the huts. The remains of a meal is still warm in bowls on the matted floor.

A famished SOLDIER dips his hand in one of the bowls and devours its contents: some kind of stew. Stepping back accidentally, FERNANDO bumps into a large earthen jar behind him. It rolls and crashes, revealing the remains of meat marinating in liquid. There is something disturbing about the appearance of the content.

FERNANDO

Oh my God...

The remains of human beings.

COLUMBUS

(approaching)

What is...?

He stares at the remains, stunned. THE SOLDIER stops chewing. He drops the half-empty bowl he was still holding. He runs at the back door, rams his fingers deep in the back of his throat, and vomits.

SOLDIER

Oh Virgen Maria... Oh Madre de Dios...
(Oh Virgin Mary... Oh Mother of God...)

But as he vomits and cries, he notices:

A HEADLESS HUMAN TRUNK spread open, like a sheep carcass. Disturbed flies rise in clouds.

SOLDIER

Jesus, Maria, y todos los Santos...
(Jesus, Mary, and all the Saints...)

CUT TO:

COLUMBUS and the SPANIARDS meet in the center of the village. All have made the same horrific discovery.

COLUMBUS

(urgently)

Out! Get out!

THE SPANIARDS back out of the village, crossbows pointed at the invisible enemy hidden in the jungle.

They are running through the dense forest for the river bank.

The CANNIBALS materialize among the trees, running alongside. Bounding, skipping, frightening FIGURES, their brutal faces painted in black. They release arrows at the running SOLDIERS. A SOLDIER stops, kneels to the ground, fires his crossbow and kills one of the CANNIBALS... but he is pierced by a spear. TWO CANNIBALS drag him and cut his throat to finish him.

ELSEWHERE IN THE JUNGLE -- CRIES AND CONFUSION, SPANIARDS and CANNIBALS moving in hand to hand combat.

A CANNIBAL comes sprinting at FERNANDO, brandishing his lance.

COLUMBUS jumps on the man, and plants a knife in his abdomen. Blinded in sweat, he stabs the CANNIBAL, who collapses. Frenzied, COLUMBUS stabs over and over again.

He stops and looks at his forearm -- soaked in blood. Shocked by his own fury, he raises his hand and stares at it.

A GIANT BLACK BUTTERFLY alights gently on his bloody fingers, COLUMBUS staring fascinated at its palpitating wings. FERNANDO, screaming at his FATHER, drags him to his feet. They run...

CUT TO:

THE SPANIARDS, COLUMBUS, MENDEZ, FERNANDO... all running hard to the boat. ARROWS whistle around them as they leap into the canoes, nearly capsizing them, launching them into the current.

SOME CANNIBALS still follow them along the riverbank. But the canoes are faster, and soon, they are left behind.

EXT. SHIP AT SEA - DAY

Endless seascape, the caravel plowing.

EXT. SHIP'S DECK - DAY

FERNANDO is crouched on the poop deck, wrapped in a blanket. He seems in a state of shock: he is pale and shaking. As COLUMBUS goes and sits near his son, he hands him a flask of alcohol.

COLUMBUS

(kindly)

Take it. Come on. Drink.

As COLUMBUS insists, brandishing the flask, FERNANDO notices that his hands are shaking too. His FATHER'S forehead is dripping with sweat.

FERNANDO drinks a gulp and grimaces. He drinks again and hands the flask back to his FATHER, who does the same. FERNANDO notices dried blood on his FATHER'S fingers. COLUMBUS immediately hides his hand and stands.

COLUMBUS

I... I have to see Mendez.

Then, with sudden anger.

COLUMBUS

Your brother was right. I should have never taken you with me. I'll never forgive myself. Never!

He walks a few steps, lurches, and has to lean against the rail. He raises his hand to his eyes, grimacing in pain, as if they were burning. FERNANDO scrambles to his feet and rushes to him. COLUMBUS' eyes are already fixed somewhere -- fever is eating him up.

COLUMBUS

Will you ever forgive me?

FERNANDO turns around for help.

COLUMBUS

Captain Mendez!

INT. SHIP'S CABIN - DAY

COLUMBUS is lying on his couch. FERNANDO is bathing his eyes, sweeping off the pus that continuously forms in them. COLUMBUS is drenched in sweat.

CUT TO:

FERNANDO is writing under his FATHER'S dictation.

COLUMBUS

I came to Your Highness with honest purpose and sincere zeal. I did not undertake these voyages for honor or wealth -- that is certain. After years of service to the Crown, I do not have a roof to put over my head... Your Majesty allowed me to explore the continent, believed to be Asia. I now believe that it is an new Land, of unknown proportions and wealth... Life has more

imagination than we carry in our
dreams...

DISSOLVE

TO:

INT. ALCAZAR PALACE - GARDENS - DAY

The DUENA, sitting beside ISABEL, quietly continues to read COLUMBUS' letter aloud.

DUENA

"I should be judged as a Seaman who by Divine Will discovered a New World, and thereby placed it under the sovereignty of Your Majesties. I humbly beseech Your Majesties that if it pleases God to remove me hence, you will help the name of Columbus to be remembered with honor... Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth and justice."

She stops reading. ISABEL turns her face away.

INT. UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA - DAY

An ivory-sculptured hand -- the end of the back scratcher belonging to AROJAZ -- indicates a line across a large globe: the route between Europe and America.

AROJAZ (O.S.)

The sunset route to the new continent is now well-established...

We see a large amphitheater, filled with PEOPLE attending a lecture of "Nova Geographica" -- the new geography.

AROJAZ stands in front of the assembly. Facing him, enthroned, is KING FERDINAND, surrounded by COURTIERS, including SANCHEZ.

We slowly move across the arena, passing attentive faces.

AROJAZ

... West by south west for 750 leagues to Santo Domingo. From there, west north west, leaving San Juan to the north, reaching the island of Hispanola on the northern cape of San Raphael... Then onto the mainland, at the Cape called Gracias a Dios...

We continue to rise up the tiers of seats...

AROJAZ

Spain -- by Your Majesty's grace --
has confirmed for all humanity the
existence of an unknown continent...
Tierra Incognita...

On a highest tier, we stop on the face of CHRISTOPHER
COLUMBUS, listening impassively.

AROJAZ

... This continent was first
discovered by a sailor commissioned
by your Majesty...

CLOSE ON COLUMBUS' eyes.

AROJAZ

His name... Amerigo Vespucci...

On COLUMBUS.

EXT. UNIVERSITY OF SALAMANCA - DAY

Around the KING, on horseback, surrounded by the KNIGHTS,
a CROWD is kept back by SOLDIERS. AROJAZ is mounting his
horse. SANCHEZ is waiting for him.

COLUMBUS stands among the students at the back of the
CROWD.

CUT TO:

AROJAZ rides next to SANCHEZ. AROJAZ suddenly spots
COLUMBUS in the crowd, as they move off.

AROJAZ

My God...! I thought he was dead.

They pass close enough to touch COLUMBUS. But he does not
see them.

SANCHEZ

You can see for yourself.

AROJAZ

What a tragedy... what a waste of a
life...

SANCHEZ

A waste...? Let me tell you
something, Arojaz. If your name, or
mine, is ever remembered -- it will
only be because of his.

AROJAZ looks at SANCHEZ in surprise -- then cranes his
neck round, and looks back at COLUMBUS -- now a FACE IN

THE CROWD.

EXT. LA RABIDA MONASTERY - KITCHEN GARDEN - DAY

ANTONIO DE MARCHENA, a very old man now, is taking a siesta next to his grapes. He is sitting in a simple armchair, a rosary wrapped around his fingers.

The presence of someone wakes him. After a moment, he recognizes COLUMBUS and smiles. Both MEN are very moved.

MARCHENA

I suppose we're both old men now.

COLUMBUS

You'll always be older than me,
Father.

They laugh. COLUMBUS sits down. Bees drone lazily in the sunlight.

COLUMBUS

Have you ever forgiven me?

MARCHENA nods his head.

MARCHENA

Yes. I forgave you a long time ago. You see, I was proud of you. You were like a willful child. You wouldn't accept what others told you. You had to find things out for yourself, hurting yourself -- and others -- in the process.

MARCHENA looks at his plants, sighs contentedly.

MARCHENA

Do you remember when you said that people talk about the world, but never leave their gardens.

COLUMBUS nods.

MARCHENA

More than ever I wonder what it is we do achieve by leaving our gardens... The world changes -- and yet it seems the same. We find new worlds, but fill them with the same people...

He pauses, looks across at COLUMBUS, smiles again gently. MARCHENA, tiring, leans back in his chair, and looks up towards the sun.

COLUMBUS

I have to disagree.

MARCHENA

I knew you would.

COLUMBUS

New worlds create new people.

MARCHENA

Oh? So you are a new man?

COLUMBUS

I don't know... I have the impression that I didn't change that much. I still can't accept the world as it is!

MARCHENA starts laughing.

MARCHENA

God bless you, and those like you!

They both laugh.

EXT. BEATRIX'S HOUSE BALCONY - EVENING

FERNANDO is sitting in front of his FATHER, examining documents and letters. COLUMBUS has wrapped a shawl around his legs. He looks even older now, with his mass of pure white hair.

BEATRIX comes out with a tray, carrying grapes and a decanter of water. She places it on a small table near COLUMBUS and touches his shoulder.

As she is ready to return inside the house, he holds her back.

COLUMBUS

Can't you stay with us a little?

BEATRIX

I am busy inside.

He smiles. She looks at him smiling, intrigued.

BEATRIX

What is it, now? Tell me...

COLUMBUS

I can't keep my eyes off you. I would like to catch up with all the moments I didn't spend with you.

FERNANDO looks up at them above his letters, amused and

slightly embarrassed. COLUMBUS looks at him with a fake air of reproach.

COLUMBUS

What are you listening to?

FERNANDO

I am not listening, Father. But I can't help hearing.

FERNANDO opens a letter and reads it quickly.

FERNANDO

It's Diego... He is at the Court, with Santangel... He says they hope to get your privileges restored... And maybe the house.

COLUMBUS smiles and nods -- all this seems to be of very little importance to him now.

COLUMBUS

But how is he? And Dona Maria?

FERNANDO continues to read.

FERNANDO

Fine, it seems. Diego is thinking of starting a pearl trade, in Santo Domingo... He says he received many letters for you. Some of your men, mostly.

He opens one of them, glances at it.

FERNANDO

This one is from Mendez!

COLUMBUS' eyes brighten with joy.

COLUMBUS

What does he say?

FERNANDO

He asks when he can come to visit you. He left his address.

COLUMBUS

(smiling)

He never had one... except aboard my ships!

FERNANDO laughs -- then, suddenly serious.

FERNANDO

I want you to tell me everything you remember, Father. From the

beginning. Everything.

COLUMBUS

Really?

(pause)

God... I wouldn't know where to start... and yet...

FERNANDO

Tell me the first thing that comes to your mind.

COLUMBUS sighs, and leans back on his chair. His eyes are fixed somewhere, searching. Then, almost in a murmur.

COLUMBUS

I remember...

We see the page. FERNANDO writes: ... I REMEMBER...

A drop of ink falls from the quill onto the page and the words.

FERNANDO is waiting.

CUT TO:

COLUMBUS' eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH AND JUNGLE - FIRST LANDING - DAY

A MOVING IMAGE, as seen from the rolling deck of a ship.
We see:

A majestic forest, resting on a slash of white sand, and deep blue sea...

MUSIC

BEGINS:

THE LONE SILHOUETTE of an INDIAN emerges from the dense foliage. He runs down the beach towards the surf. He stops and seems to be staring at us.

These words appear on the screen:

THE BIOGRAPHY FERNANDO WROTE ABOUT HIS FATHER WAS FOUND BY CHANCE IN VENICE. ITS PUBLICATION IN 1571 CONTRIBUTED TO RESTORING THE NAME OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, WHICH HAD BEEN FORGOTTEN.

IN 1511 DIEGO COLUMBUS BECAME GOVERNOR OF SANTO DOMINGO.

COLUMBUS RESTS IN THE CATHEDRAL OF
SEVILLE, IN ANDALUSIA.

END AND CREDITS.