

A Maya Trilogy

Three Plays About Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon

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THE THREAD OF ARIADNE

Characters:

Augustus Le Plongeon, archaeologist

Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, archaeologist, wife of Augustus

Desiderio Kansal, loyal Maya worker

Chan, Maya Chief of the Chan Santa Cruz guerrillas

Time: Early evening and the following morning, December, 1875.

Place: A room in the remains of a church in Piste, a deserted village near the ancient city of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán Peninsula, Mexico.

Scene:

A room the Le Plongeon's are occupying in the remains of a church in the deserted Mayan village of Piste. Entrances and exits are at right and left, with their sleeping quarters off-stage left. At upstage left, a window with a Gothic arch reveals the jungle landscape outside, and at the top of the window and through crevices in the wall masonry, vines and foliage penetrate the fortress. Left of the window, poster boards lean against the wall.

Left of center is a large wooden crate, a chest and a box, with which Augustus has fashioned a desk area. Atop the crate is an oil lamp, photographs, drawings, notes, etc. At upstage right, stone blocks and boards serve as shelves which contain a water barrel and ladle, goblets, utensils, books, Alice's straw hat, etc. A Remington rifle leans against the wall. On the wall above the shelves hangs an oil lamp and large maps of Central America and the North and South American continents. Right of center is a trunk, which, like the box, serves as a bench.

Large pieces of oil cloth cover the floor where can also be seen dirt and stone slabs (flat tombstones).

At Rise:

Augustus, sitting sideways at his desk, with legs crossed, is writing field notes in a book. In his late forties, he is lean and strong, with thinning auburn hair, a long, greying beard and intense blue eyes. He wears a cotton shirt and pants. His wife, Alice, sits on the trunk and is playing her guitar. She is twenty-two years old and wears her dark hair in ringlets. She wears a cotton dress rolled

up under her belt so that it resembles a large shirt, and cotton pants. Though very young, she has obvious charisma and unfailing poise. She is playing a composition by Fernando Sor. When the piece is finished, she appears to be listening silently, and Augustus looks up from his notes.

AUGUSTUS

I was so enjoying the music, which eased the work of my notes, and even transported me momentarily from this land of Mayach.

ALICE

Music accomplishes so much! For me, it brings respite from the constant buzzing of insects—garapatas, mosquitos—and from the ceaseless noise of the jungle. But I thought I heard . . .

AUGUSTUS

Yes?

ALICE

The cry of the cat, perhaps the jaguar.

AUGUSTUS

I heard it also. Well, we have little to fear, the cat flees from the unknown scent of the white man.

ALICE

Strange . . . to hear the jaguar this evening, when we worked all day in the Temple of the Jaguars.

AUGUSTUS

The beast knows its temple has led us to our most important discovery, the statue of Prince *Chaacmol*.

ALICE

Perhaps the manes of Prince Chaacmol is communicating with us.

AUGUSTUS

Are you quite serious? If so, I have requested he hand me, from his very powerful paws, a delicate item, the thread of Ariadne.

ALICE

The thread of Ariadne?

AUGUSTUS

Yes, the only possible guide through the labyrinthian history of the ancient

Maya and their travels: the Maya language. Even now, we have enough knowledge of the language and cosmogony to trace the Maya influence on archaic Asian, African and European cultures, evidence which will serve to indicate that the origin of civilization is to be found in the Lands of the West, whence colonists journeyed outwards to all parts of the world. This colonization occurred both before and after the destruction of *Mu*. (*He finds a photograph from under notes on the crate*) As well, look at this . . .

Alice rises and crosses to study the photograph.

AUGUSTUS

Clearly seen in the hieroglyphs carved above the door of the *Akab-dzib* is not only prophecy, but an account of the destruction of *Mu*, or Atlantis.

ALICE

Akab-dzib . . . the awful or dark record; the dark building described by the old Maya teacher.

AUGUSTUS

A remarkable man. Of course, the scientific community will not wish to hear anything about Atlantis, which they regard as fantasy. But can the very evidence be denied, carved in the language of the Maya, a language still spoken by thousands today? The Maya even began a new calendar from the date of the submergence of *Mu*; they began a new era. Likewise, they arranged all other computations on the base of 13, in memory of the thirteenth *Chuen*, the day of the month in which the cataclysm occurred. Well, we shall have to present the facts as we find them. However, for the initial correspondence to the Antiquarian Society, I shall emphasize the minor prophetic character of the hieroglyphs. Which reminds me! . . . The mail courier arrives late tomorrow. Alice, my dear, would you agree to draw the hieroglyphs for the article first thing in the morning?

ALICE

I'll be happy to draw them. A break from the work at the site will be a welcome relief. As well, I can also practice my reading.

AUGUSTUS

Splendid.

ALICE

(*Studying the photograph*) The submergence of *Mu* . . . it chills me to think how real it has become for us, surrounded as we are by memorials. Could this cataclysm have led to the tragedies described in the life of the greatest ruler, or warrior? Tell me again, what does *Chaacmol* mean?

AUGUSTUS

Ah yes, *mol*, the paw of any carnivorous animal, such as the jaguar, and *Chaac*, meaning thunder or tempest. Hence, he is named "the paw swift like thunder,"

just as the French designate a noted general on the battlefield as “un aigle dans le combat,” an eagle in the battle. But returning to your first remark, the cataclysm certainly led to what might be regarded as the first great downfall of the Maya peoples.

ALICE

Nothing could be quite the same as it had been.

AUGUSTUS

And this was surely God's intent. In time, we will understand more and more (*patting a nearby book*) with the help of a good dictionary.

ALICE

And the friendship and trust of the Indians.

AUGUSTUS

Which we seem to have earned from some. Others . . . I'm not certain about the Chan Santa Cruz, or the Cruzob. . . .

He crosses to the water barrel and ladles water into two goblets, handing one to Alice. She plucks something from the water and discards it.

AUGUSTUS

What was that?

ALICE

That was a brightly colored insect, species unknown. I wonder how long it's been in the water? Insects throw themselves into the scarce water, which they must value above life.

AUGUSTUS

A scarcity of water in overgrown terrain can lead to little else but the pre-eminence of death, and in many other respects, death is, one might say, none too subtly present here, as are dangers.

ALICE

I've composed a verse about the dangers thus far. Would you like to hear it?

AUGUSTUS

I should be delighted! Not one muse, but two, music and poetry.

He sits on the chest and Alice again on the trunk. Her recital is accompanied with simple strumming on the guitar.

ALICE

Seven days upon arrival
In the heart of Maya land,
Came a challenge for survival,
Yellow fever showed its hand.
Alice lay upon the sick bed,
She was nursed both day and night,
Till her youth the fev'rish skein shed;
She recovered from the blight.

'Twas said a priestess could foretell
Through power of a small cross.
She urged the Maya to rebel,
Regain the lands so long lost.
A Christian she had ordered killed;
Mestizos she detested,
The Cruzob rebels, they were skilled;
The revolution crested.

The government advised we halt,
Le Plongeon would not hear.
By a wise Maya he'd been taught
And discoveries lay near.
In due time we were given guard;
To Piste we did travel.
But Piste now resembles shard,
Lays ruined, filled with gravel.

With terrible machete blow
The Santa Cruz killed its own.
Maya who side with Mexico
Can expect no mercy shown.
A ruined, forlorn church our home;
We camp upon a grave site.
Remains lay under slabs of stone;
Maya souls have taken flight.

AUGUSTUS

Your wonderful gifts lighten our hardships and strengthen our resolve. Death and violence . . . not only under our very feet, but as we've noted, ever present in the midst of over-abundant life; the dense foliage, the orchids, the rainbow-hued birds, the brilliant midday sun, beaming down upon us for hours, almost vertically, then rain—hopefully—and a spring-like early evening . . .

He rises and crosses to the window.

AUGUSTUS

In this country, twilight is a serene realm suddenly eclipsed by the total darkness of night, with fear becoming almost visible. Yet in this fearful

darkness, high above the foliage, the rainbow-hued macaw can be seen in the moonlight, striking even against the countless, glimmering stars.

ALICE

The macaw . . . the bird which is the emblem for the beloved of Prince Chaacmol.

AUGUSTUS

Yes, Princess *Móo*. Nothing could designate the character of this divine yet human personage so well as this parrot with its rainbow feathers. Wherever we find evidence of Prince Chaacmol, there also we find the memory, the story of his sister, Princess *Móo*. The two are entwined.

ALICE

Someday I may be able to write down their story in verse.

AUGUSTUS

I believe you will.

ALICE

Certain kinds of verse can attain lofty heights, allowing the spirit to soar, whereas science tends to chain us to the tedious recording of minuscule facts.

AUGUSTUS

But consider how our photography has eased this tedious work; it even approaches the high spheres of art and imagination. I shall never regret having learned photography, difficult as it is at times to develop our pictures on the site.

ALICE

The stereo panoramas are marvelous! —

There is a snapping noise in the brush outside and the two look towards the right.

There's someone outside.

Quickly, she picks up the rifle.

Where is your revolver?

AUGUSTUS

In the chest. We might leave it there for now.

Augustus crosses to the right and Alice follows him. He stops and listens.

AUGUSTUS

Someone is approaching.

He looks to the right, trying to see in the darkness.

Desiderio!

They both relax and Alice places the rifle back against the wall. Desiderio Kansal enters. The Maya native wears a cotton shirt, cotton pants rolled up above the knees, and sandals. He carries a straw hat. In his belt is a revolver. He is lean, dark-complexioned and has short black hair. He appears upset.

AUGUSTUS

What brings you here this evening?

DESIDERIO

We were at camp when several guerrillas surrounded us! . . . However, we could see at once their intentions were friendly. The chief himself approached us! . . . He has heard of you; he calls you *Ahmeexnal*, "he of the long beard." He has also heard of the excavation of Chaacmol. He wants to meet you and to pay homage to Chaacmol.

AUGUSTUS

Where is he now?

DESIDERIO

Waiting in the brush.

AUGUSTUS

How many are with him?

DESIDERIO

We have seen only a few, but suspect many are hiding.

AUGUSTUS

Are they armed?

DESIDERIO

Machetes.

AUGUSTUS

Where is our guard?

DESIDERIO

(Shrugs) In the church, probably at supper.

AUGUSTUS

If the Cruzob are friendly, we should not alert the guard. Besides, machetes are nothing against rifles. We want no trouble. You have done well, Desiderio, thank you. Please, tell the chief we welcome his visit.

Desiderio exits. Augustus picks up one of the poster boards. Tacked to the board is a large drawing of Chaacmol, with notations written on the sides.

We must put this drawing up next to the maps, quickly.

They hang the poster on the wall.

I have anticipated this event and have plans . . . you'll see.

They stand to the left, awaiting the entrance of the Chief.

The Chief enters, followed by Desiderio. He also carries a hat and is dressed in a similar way to Desiderio except that a type of short sarong covers the lower part of his body. He carries a machete in his belt. He is very old but strong and agile. Upon entering, he looks first at the stone slabs, notices the rifle, then the drawing.

AUGUSTUS

Good evening. I am Dr. Le Plongeon and this is Madame Le Plongeon. May I ask your name?

CHAN

You can call me Chan. Where are you from?

AUGUSTUS

From North America, New York.

CHAN

(To Desiderio) Yet he has found the statue of the great one. How did he find this?

DESIDERIO

The stones speak to those who understand them. After he saw the murals, he

led us to a small mound where we began digging. We uncovered Chaacmol and in a few days, using vines and ropes, we raised him to the surface. Ahmeexnal looked thoughtfully at Chaacmol for a long time, and he seemed to be speaking. We said, 'He is speaking to the stone and the stone is speaking back to him.' Later, he asked us to dig at another mound and up rose the four *Bacabe*, the gods of the East, West, North and South.

CHAN

If the great one and the four Bacabe rise up to greet and speak to you, then you cannot be the enemy of our people.

AUGUSTUS

I wish only to learn from your people, to understand and help preserve the monuments of antiquity.

CHAN

I have heard you treated the sick at no cost during the smallpox epidemic last year.

AUGUSTUS

The War of the Castes has depleted the Yucatán treasury, but I was glad to be of help. Madame Le Plongeon and I were able to travel extensively.

CHAN

(Looking around uneasily) Why do you have a Mexican guard, here in Pisté, and with the statue?

AUGUSTUS

I also have a Maya guard; they are pleased with their salary. The Mexicans believe this is their territory, and we had to cooperate with them. You must agree we need protection from plunderers and from a country at war.

CHAN

Be aware, this is our territory, and we are here; we are everywhere; we are the soul of the land . . . However, I may allow you to pass.

He crosses to the drawing and gazing at it, he places his left arm across his chest, resting the left hand on the right shoulder—a Maya gesture of veneration. Desiderio does likewise. After a few moments, Chan points to the margins.

CHAN

What do these writings mean?

AUGUSTUS

Those are my notes. I have observed, you see, that the reclining posture of the statue bears a resemblance to the geographic outline of Central America.

He crosses to the map.

The head is the peninsula of Yucatán, also anciently the locale of the government. The knees correspond to Cape Gracias á Dios in Nicaragua; the feet to the Isthmus of Darién, the southern boundary of the empire. The shallow basin on the belly probably stands for the Bay of Honduras, but as well, it's a receptacle for offerings.

DESIDERIO

(To Chan, indicating places on the map) Head . . . belly . . . knees . . . feet.

AUGUSTUS

In a far wider sense, if the map of the North and South American continents is turned sideways, the outline of the eastern coasts also resemble the reclining statue, with the head at Newfoundland, the knees at Cape St. Roque, the feet at Cape Horn, and the basin symbolizing the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea.

DESIDERIO

Head, North America; knee, South America; feet, Cape Horn.

CHAN

And the bowl held by the great man refers to the surrounding waters and receives offerings. He holds all in his hands.

AUGUSTUS

So the ancients were very familiar with the contours of both continents.

CHAN

You are an unusual man. You know our language; you have understanding. *(To Desiderio)* Who is he?

Desiderio can only shrug.

Who are you?

AUGUSTUS

Father, how may I answer your question? By asking you one in return: have you ever been to the top of the great pyramid of Chichén Itzá? It is called El Castillo by the Spanish, but Desiderio calls it the temple of *Kukulcan*.

CHAN

I have not been there for many years.

AUGUSTUS

At the summit of El Castillo, on the north side, is a room with a stone carving. This carving is of another Ahmeexnal, "he of the long beard." He bears a remarkable resemblance to myself.

CHAN

Ahhh! . . . What does he say? (*To Desiderio*) Have you seen this carving?

DESIDERIO

Yes. One day I climbed the pyramid and entered the temple, and there was the bearded white one standing in front of an earthen vessel, the kind the ancient ones used in burning incense before their gods. After a few moments of silence, he noticed me. Then he showed me the carving. You must see it for yourself.

AUGUSTUS

If you'll agree to meet me at the site tomorrow morning, we can climb to the top of the pyramid.

CHAN

I will agree to meet you. We can pay homage to the great man, then climb up to look at this other Ahmeexnal.

Both Chan and Desiderio again use the gesture of veneration before the drawing, then cross right to exit, when Chan turns, gazing at the floor.

CHAN

These tombstones also speak . . . They speak of the power of the Cruzob!

Chan and Desiderio exit. Augustus and Alice visibly relax, Alice breathing a sigh of relief.

AUGUSTUS

Madame Le Plongeon, you were not very worried, were you?

ALICE

Monsieur, I was! . . . Especially when he asked you about our Mexican guards.

AUGUSTUS

Recall he said he *may* allow us to pass, this wise yet brutal Chief. Does he not seem like the figure of a guardian before a gateway?

ALICE

The Minotaur of the labyrinth!

AUGUSTUS

Exactly! But we have the thread of Ariadne. He said so himself in so many words.

ALICE

I'm sorry I have to miss what may be a true adventure tomorrow.

AUGUSTUS

Which serves to remind me of how much remains to be done!

ALICE

Truly, I am looking forward to copying the hieroglyphs. But we had best retire early. I am suddenly very weary.

AUGUSTUS

So am I.

*Alice puts out the lamp on the wall;
Augustus gathers some books and
papers and picks up the lamp from the
crate.*

This experience tomorrow will answer a certain question I've entertained for a long time, whether or not the Maya still believe in reincarnation, as did their ancestors.

They exit left. Lights fade out.

*As the lights fade up, Alice is seen
sitting on the chest, playing the guitar.
When the piece is completed, she again
recites with simple strumming.*

ALICE

The stones of sacred myst'ries tell,
The high pontiff presiding;
Egyptians knew the symbols well,
The cosmic laws abiding.
Eleven thousand years ago
The lands were in communion.
Alike could sep'rate cultures grow,
When Atlantis brought union.

Freemasons built the temples here;
A triangle represents
The territories of their sphere
In the three great continents.
A knotted ribbon served to show
The mason's binding knowledge.

India's sages were to know
The wisdom of this college.

In Europe and on Asian shores
Ere Solomon's temple rose,
Maya seafarers opened doors,
A fact ancient language shows.
The alphabet of Greek reveals,
When to Maya it's compared,
An epic Le Plongeon feels
The seeker should not be spared.

Alpha, heavy breaks the sea wells;
Gamma, the seas cover land.
Mu, of Mu the alphabet tells;
Omikron, the whirling sand.
Sigma, and the last warmth tapers;
Upsilon, abysmal snow.
Chi and Psi, a mouth forms vapors;
Omega, the volcano.

*She rises and examines her drawings of
the hieroglyphs, then sits down at the
crate, studying the photograph, and
reading.*

Luumilob . . . fertile lands . . . the fertile lands of Mu, with mountains, volcanos
and waters; with flower, fish and fruit . . . East of the land of Mayach . . . a land
shaped like a deer. . . .

She examines other notes.

Ezanab, earthquake . . . *kak-mul*, volcano . . . *Can*, the master of the basin of
water, who was dead, forcing his way by means of the earthquake, has risen.
Can's foot sank, the air having filled up the crater of the volcano. Six fertile
lands have appeared in *Umakan*—Cuba—and four volcanos in *Timanik*, in the
Antilles. . . .

*She crosses to study the drawing of
Chaacmol.*

Though the lands were submerged, the purest and highest offerings of the
priests of Mu were retained and given to Mayach, received into the bowl of the
great spirit, hence into the will of the people.

She crosses back to center.

But what did we find in the bowl of the statue? The story of a spirit and a will
broken. Pieces of flint blade, jade beads and fragments, organic material which
may be the cremated heart of the warrior. Not the high and pure offerings of

old, which fired the will, but remnants of betrayal: brother against brother, just as in our time Chan does not hesitate to kill his own people. . . .

Augustus enters. He is wearing a helmet, which he shortly removes, wiping perspiration from his brow and thinning hair. He crosses to the water barrel, fills a goblet and drinks. Alice fixes a questioning look upon him and he breaks into laughter.

AUGUSTUS

Chan is convinced! . . . He arrived early, causing quite a stir among the workers, for they recognized him. He first removed his hat and kissed the feet of the statue. Then, with great mystery and ceremony we climbed to the top of El Castillo. Inside the temple, he was amazed to see the stone profile of the ancient ruler, with long beard and features which to us resemble those of a Phoenician. Naturally, I pointed out my resemblance to the carving, then was somewhat embarrassed, for he fell to his knees and kissed my hand. After we descended the steps, he asked me if I remembered my existence between lives, which proves that the Maya still believe in reincarnation.

ALICE

What did you answer?

AUGUSTUS

I answered, "Father, we are enchanted when we come into this world and lose all memory of our cosmic origins. With me, it is no different." He was satisfied and departed. I pray we shall have no further trouble from the Cruzob, but it would be unwise to relax our vigilance. We are at least free to continue our work. By the way . . .

He examines Alice's drawings.

These are excellent! You see, despite our loss of time, a full morning's task is completed.

ALICE

While afternoon's tasks lay awaiting.

She picks up her hat and Augustus's helmet and they put these on. Augustus puts the drawings into a large envelope.

ALICE

Have you ever entertained the notion of being the reincarnated Ahmeexnal, or some similar figure?

AUGUSTUS

There are certain places which seem familiar to me, especially here in Chichén Itzá. Yet this is only a feeling; far from a memory.

Alice picks up the rifle.

ALICE

As I was reading the hieroglyphs, I seemed to emerge briefly from enchantment and a very dim light of cosmic memory broke through . . . This glimpse has left me with a hundred painful questions: why did this cataclysm occur? Were the priestly teachings betrayed, renewed and then betrayed again? Why? Who killed Prince Chaacmol? A brother? What became of Princess Mío?

AUGUSTUS

How can we answer these questions? We must try to achieve the ideal Desiderio believes he has witnessed in us: we must speak to the stones and the stones must speak back.

ALICE

They speak Maya.

AUGUSTUS

Yes, and we have the thread of Ariadne!

They exit, Augustus carrying the envelope and Alice the rifle.

End of first drama

PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

Characters:

Alice Dixon Le Plongeon

Mrs. Maude Blackwell, trusted friend of the Le Plongeon's

Augustus Le Plongeon

Prince Coh, a spiritual figure

Time: Autumn, 1895; and sometime after the publication of *Queen Mío and the Egyptian Sphinx*.

Place: Living room of the Le Plongeon's home, Brooklyn, New York.

Scene:

*The structure of the set for *The Thread of Ariadne* can provide the foundation for the living room of this Brooklyn home, or this play can be produced independently. Up-left is a window covered with drapes. Left of center is a small table with two chairs; on the back of one is Alice's shawl. On the table are writing materials, a manuscript, books, etc. Up-right is a Victorian couch on which can be seen Alice's leather-bound diary. Above the couch on the wall are framed photographs. At right can be seen a crate and trunk. On top of the crate is a model plaster sphinx—the dying jaguar with the head of Prince Coh (Chaacmol)—painted red, brown and black. On the floor are oriental rugs. Entrances and exits are at right and left.*

At Rise:

Alice enters from the left carrying papier-mâché molds. She is forty-two years old and has almost regal poise. She wears her dark, wavy hair pinned up in the back. She wears a long, attractive Victorian gown, at the collar of which is a brooch, a jadeite tube set in gold. She counts the molds, partially separating them, then sets them on the trunk. She crosses to the table, sits down and writes marginal notes.

ALICE

Three molds from the Governor's Palace in Uxmal are available. . . .

She reads from the article she is writing.

The royal family resided in Uxmal, and this city was inherited by Prince *Aac*. But this evil brother of Prince *Coh* was not content with Uxmal alone, he wanted Chichén Itzá as well, which had been given to Princess *Móo*. His smoldering envy of *Coh* erupted into a fire of hatred when the princess married *Coh* and became Queen *Móo*. Thus it was he killed Prince *Coh*, not honorably as in battle, but by stabbing him in the back with a spear. Dr. Le Plongeon has in his possession fragments of the flint blade with which the murder was committed.

She ceases reading and rises, lost in thought.

Queen M'oo spurned the advances of Prince Aac and civil war commenced in Mayach. Eventually, the Queen lost the war and was forced to flee to Egypt. But before her epoch-making journey she arranged for a mausoleum to be built in memory of her beloved, Prince Coh.

She crosses to the model sphinx and gazes at it.

The mausoleum was crowned by a most interesting statue . . . that of a dying jaguar with a human head, a veritable sphinx, perhaps the prototype of the mysterious Egyptian sphinx, the most ancient monument in the valley of the Nile . . . The flight of Queen M'oo to Egypt occurred sometime after the destruction and submergence of the vast island in the Atlantic Ocean . . . the Atlantis of Plato, called by the Mayas "the Land of *Mu*," the life of the basin. . . .

And we have certainly had our own set of troubles on behalf of the worthy Maya! . . . When did they begin? When we lost the *Chaacmol* statue? Perhaps, yet, wasn't there a specific time or incident? I was dreaming about it last night . . . the locusts!

She crosses to the couch and picks up the diary, leafing through it.

It was during the second visit to Chichén Itzá, in 1883 . . . Here it is . . . (*she reads*) "Yesterday while we were tracing the murals in the temple there came a sudden darkness. We went outside and saw in the sky millions of locusts descending upon us. They at once began consuming everything in their path, the rich plant life of the jungle, the crops of the haciendas. We were driven back to our camp. Today the water barrels are full of dead locusts. Our guards have gone to start fires which may stop the spread of this plague . . ." But all efforts proved futile, and finally, after a week, they left as mysteriously as they had appeared.

The voice of Mrs. Maude Blackwell is heard off-stage right.

MAUDE

Hello!

ALICE

Maude, come in!

Mrs. Maude Blackwell enters. She is a pleasant lady in her thirties. She wears a

long skirt with jacket and a small hat pinned atop her head. Small, round-rimmed glasses bespeak of her studious nature.

MAUDE

Alice, my dear, how are you? Busy as usual I see. (*Noticing the sphinx*) What is this exquisite piece?

ALICE

A small model of the sphinx Augustus discovered in Chichén Itzá.

MAUDE

The ancient Mayas were great artists. Compare this powerful simplicity with the annoying realism of our day. And these molds?

ALICE

Bas-reliefs from the exterior of the palace at Uxmal.

MAUDE

A cosmic architecture. It devolves upon us to inform our contemporaries of the ancient wisdom.

ALICE

Speaking of which . . .

She picks up the manuscript from the table and gives it to Maude.

Your manuscript is ready.

MAUDE

(*She reads*) "On the History of the Mayas." Another wonderful contribution for our Theosophical quarterly.

ALICE

I was just working on another similar, though shorter, article for Augustus.

MAUDE

Is he here?

ALICE

He's gone to post a special delivery letter to the University of Pennsylvania.

MAUDE

Daniel Brinton?

ALICE

Yes . . . But he'll be back soon. Would you like some tea?

MAUDE

Oh, no thank you. But do let us visit for a time. I've so many questions, so many concerns.

They sit on the couch.

MAUDE

Why a letter to Daniel Brinton?

ALICE

Oh, why indeed! . . . As you know, Dr. Brinton has attempted to discredit Augustus, even in print, and Augustus has asked Dr. Brinton to meet him for a public debate. The challenge has gone unanswered, so Augustus is warning him he will counter the affronts in other ways.

MAUDE

Here is a man who sits behind his university desk and writes essays on the Maya, who has never even been to Mexico! And he presumes to be an authority!

ALICE

The academic archaeologists have been against our work for years, but Brinton has taken matters to the limit, accusing Dr. Le Plongeon of eccentricity.

MAUDE

So! . . . it's eccentric to have genuine knowledge of Maya geography, language and cosmogony! What did Madame Blavatsky say to us: these men are afraid of the truth. They are comfortable only with scientific materialism, with what can be seen and measured by the narrow standards of the day. Theosophists have a sacred duty: we must carry the lamp of truth in these dark times. But tell me, have you had any success in selling the molds? What about the necessary funds for the publication of *Queen M'oo and the Egyptian Sphinx*?

ALICE

My fund-raising efforts are at a standstill, and there is nothing I haven't tried, no appeal I haven't made. At this point, everything depends upon Mrs. William Randolph Hearst.

MAUDE

Phoebe Hearst . . .

ALICE

Everyone else has turned us down.

MAUDE

She is acquainted with Theosophy, as is her husband, though neither of them want it known.

ALICE

Every day we look for her response. If we don't hear from her soon we shall have to abandon what seems to me our last hope. What shall we do? *Queen M6o and the Egyptian Sphinx* is Augustus's lifework.

Alice rises, crossing to the chair, putting the shawl around her shoulder.

ALICE

As for the molds, I've written Phoebe Hearst of our experience with the Museum of Natural History, how they are holding our molds and tracings, but have not exhibited them; nor have we received any money. I wrote her of how I went out last winter, barely recovered from the grippe, and gave a private lecture to the wife and friends of the museum's president. Even though a prominent archaeologist stood up and praised my talk, no funds were offered. I was very ill for sometime afterwards, aggravated by my extreme disappointment. Lastly, I informed Mrs. Hearst of the museum's purchase of some inferior casts, precluding any further consideration of ours. My litany of grievances must seem endless to her.

MAUDE

There is almost a conspiracy against you.

ALICE

Of course, we've had our share of troubles with officials before, beginning in Mexico, when the government refused to let us take the Chaacmol statue out of the country. They are currently exhibiting Chaacmol—or Prince Coh as we now call him—giving no credit to the statue's discoverer, Dr. Le Plongeon, and you may be sure he has never been compensated for the cost of the excavation. We intend to make known all these injustices. Augustus likewise intends to expose Dr. Brinton's incompetence in an appendix of *Queen M6o*, that is, if he receives no reply to the letter he is posting today.

MAUDE

My dear friend, how much you are enduring. Where do you find your strength?

ALICE

My own articles have been well-received, though I've focused on such topics as current social conditions and prevailing customs of the Indians, nothing so broadly sweeping as Augustus's historical panoramas. I derive some happiness from this, yet even more so does verse sustain me; I can write without restraint and let my imagination heal the many wounding questions for which history provides no answers. (*She touches the brooch*) Ever since Augustus fashioned a talisman from this lovely jadeite found near Chaacmol, Prince Coh and Queen M'oo have become real for me, and warm, too, like this jadeite. I dream of them frequently, and they speak to me in my dreams.

MAUDE

How extraordinary.

ALICE

(*Laughing*) Dearest Maude, you make that remark as though they were standing in the room.

MAUDE

Well, perhaps they are.

ALICE

I can recall nothing more at the moment than a piece of advice I could as easily give myself: ideas will soar on the wings of art.

MAUDE

(*Rising and crossing to Alice*) This means you are on the right path and no matter how bleak things appear now, the world will be far more light-filled for your contribution. Do not be discouraged; do not lose hope.

ALICE

We so love our work, and the Maya! And Augustus is compiling materials for another book, *The Origins of the Egyptians*. But I believe I hear him. . . .

Augustus enters, carrying several letters. Now in his late sixties; he has a long flowing snow-white beard. He is wearing the typical three-piece suit of the day. When he removes his hat, thin snow-white hair is evident. Although aged, he still has vigor and intense, blue eyes.

AUGUSTUS

Ah, Mrs. Blackwell.

MAUDE

Good morning, Dr. Le Plongeon.

AUGUSTUS

How very kind of you to stop by for the manuscript.

He places his hat on the crate next to the sphinx.

MAUDE

I'm happy to provide some small service for such an important contribution.

AUGUSTUS

We have many devoted readers among the theosophists. (*Giving the letters to Alice*) The postman was just now outside and handed me the mail . . . I'm afraid there is still no reply from Phoebe Hearst.

ALICE

We should have heard from her by now.

She glances at the letters and puts them on the table.

AUGUSTUS

There is a positive side to this delay. I am considering some changes in the last chapter of the book.

ALICE

Oh, but it's perfect!

AUGUSTUS

As perfect as possible, I suppose. However, I have so many detractors claiming my work is speculative theory, it will be necessary to proceed with extreme caution, especially in the last chapter. Perhaps Mrs. Blackwell is aware of my interpretation of the hieroglyph representing the name of the Egyptian sphinx.

MAUDE

I did not know the sphinx was named.

AUGUSTUS

This hieroglyph is carefully interpreted in the last chapter of *Queen Mío*. It consists of three pictures. Here, I'll show you. . . .

Augustus and Maude cross to the table and sit down. Augustus finds an illustration and a photograph among the papers.

Here we have three symbols: a bird, a sign representing a country, and a setting sun. The Egyptian name of the sphinx is *Hormakhu*, or “Horus on the horizon.” The name *Hormakhu*, with slight spelling and phonetic variation, has the same meaning in the Maya language, “the God chief in Mayach.” Why in Mayach? Well, the second symbol represents the Yucatán peninsula, and of course the setting sun refers to the West. In other words, the name of the sphinx reveals that its origins lie in the Lands of the West. The sphinx also faces east and has its back to the west. Now to me these are facts, yet I've decided to phrase many of these facts as questions. The last chapter—and the book—will end in a series of questions; the reader is advised to answer them for himself.

ALICE

He tips his hat in passing to his critics, most generous on his part.

AUGUSTUS

Far too polite. . . . Another change, or addition rather, is not a scant nod to pretenders like Brinton, but answers to two questions constantly put to Alice and myself. Alice can tell you what these questions are . . .

ALICE

“What about the human sacrifices?” and “Why did the Maya have oddly-shaped heads?” Despite being frequent, they are sincere, intelligent questions.

AUGUSTUS

Deserving of the best answers we can give.

He shows Maude the photograph.

This photograph, which I took in the city of Izamal, will be included in the book. Unpleasant, yes? The carving depicted has since been destroyed, and this is a shame. The figure shown has *Nahuatl* features; it was the Nahuatls or Aztecs who practiced these sanguinary rites. The Mayas observed certain ceremonies, but nothing like this. The inscription reads, “The thrice-bent man . . . the altar welcomes the crushed body, lying face downward, of the man from Uxmal.” Alice believes that what we see here is an attempt by an evil priesthood to break the will of man, and I agree.

ALICE

Not only the will of one man, but of humanity.

AUGUSTUS

Clearly this carving shows the seat of the will crushed, together with two other vital areas. As for the distorted heads . . . (*he rises and crosses to the sphinx*) The head of this sphinx has noble features, and the rows of human skulls which adorned the mausoleum beneath this statue were not deformed. The custom of deforming the head was evidently practiced by the inhabitants of the cities of Copan and Palenque, perhaps so they would appear formidable to their enemies. These inhabitants were not Mayas, as the majority of Americanists assert without proof. In fact, the Mayas and the peoples who so deformed their heads were inimical to each other. This is merely one area in which the so-called authorities are impeding true progress in the understanding of the Maya, and be assured I will assert as much, and a great deal more, in my book.

ALICE

The Antiquarian Society, from which Augustus resigned some years ago, fully supports such irresponsible men as Louis Aymé, who was an American consul in Yucatán.

AUGUSTUS

While we have been unable to remove our most significant discoveries from Mexico, Aymé misused his authority to smuggle out artifacts and art objects, that is, whatever was left after his horrendous methods of excavation.

ALICE

We tried to expose him, merely for the sake of preserving the antiquities.

AUGUSTUS

For this he made an attempt on our lives, in Uxmal.

MAUDE

Unbelievable!

AUGUSTUS

We will spare you the other items on our personal list of revelations, all calculated to stultify any true understanding of the archaic cultures.

MAUDE

Just before you returned, Alice and I were speaking about the darkness of these times. The purely materialistic thinkers are proliferating everywhere, rejecting even so much as a hint of spirituality.

ALICE

Plague of locusts! . . .

Augustus and Maude look questioningly at Alice.

(*To Augustus*) Your remark about our personal list of revelations reminds me of a reference to a plague of locusts.

AUGUSTUS

Oh, yes . . . A star fell from heaven and opened the shaft of the bottomless pit. From the pit rose smoke, and from the smoke came locusts who were given power over the earth.

MAUDE

The materialists! . . . Denying all spirituality.

ALICE

Consuming everything living in their path. Recall our experience in 1883. Every effort to rid ourselves of the plague proved futile, they vanished only when their time had expired.

AUGUSTUS

The locusts in the New Testament were armed. We too are armed, and we will fight.

ALICE

Armed with ideas, yes, but we need money to publish your book.

MAUDE

(*Rising*) Which reminds me, the sooner I deliver your manuscript to our publisher, the sooner you may expect to be paid. So, notwithstanding our absorbing conversation, I shall be on my way. . . .

She picks up the manuscript from the couch.

ALICE

Thank you again for your encouragement and your support.

MAUDE

You can count on me.

Maude exits. Alice picks up the letters on the table and looks through them again.

ALICE

Bills. . . .

AUGUSTUS

My charming wife must not allow notes of despair to intrude upon the harmony of the inner music . . . no matter the world! Were you not working on a verse? I should be most pleased to hear your recital.

ALICE

I know the verse by heart . . . it is my heart.

AUGUSTUS

Then fill this room with your heart's warmth.

Maude re-enters.

MAUDE

I found this letter on the step outside! (*To Augustus*) You must have dropped it.

AUGUSTUS

Oh, did I?

MAUDE

(*Giving the letter to Alice*) It's from Phoebe Hearst.

ALICE

So it is . . . (*She quickly opens the letter and reads it*) She's granted us the funds! They will be sent by her agency in a few days . . . This means your book—your lifework—will be published.

MAUDE

I've been the bearer of wonderful news!

AUGUSTUS

This is a most welcome relief.

ALICE

Oh, thank you, Maude!

MAUDE

My dear, it is you who have done all the work.

AUGUSTUS

Indeed she has.

ALICE

Now we are truly armed! Brinton and his like had better beware!

AUGUSTUS

Of course he won't answer today's letter either. The theater of battle is ready.

MAUDE

I hope everything goes well for you. (*Taking each of their hands*) Warmest congratulations!

Maude exits.

ALICE

This means we can barely breathe for all the work that now awaits.

AUGUSTUS

No, no, we must have a breathing space. You were about to recite your verse.

ALICE

You'll need to let the publisher know—we'll need to—

AUGUSTUS

Well yes, but the day is still young.

ALICE

You insist?

AUGUSTUS

I insist.

ALICE

Can I concentrate?

AUGUSTUS

No need if your heart speaks.

ALICE

Buoyed up again with joy and hope. Very well . . . This verse has been inspired by your new book:

Now Aac has slain his brother Coh;
His totem is a winding snake.
Queen Móo, a sorrowing widow,
Her province Aac will swiftly take.
A servant bears fruit to the Queen.
Will she not marry his master?
Not far behind Prince Aac is seen,
Foreshadowing new disaster.

A macaw in her stately tree,
And nearby sacred monkey, stir,
The Queen's protectors they will be,
When civil war and flight occur.
Queen Móo rejects the evil hand;
Prince Aac by hatred is consumed.
The noble Queen must flee her land,
Which, led by tyranny, is doomed.

She flees eastward, the isles her goal,
Hoping to find remnants of Mu,
Yet all is lost to sight but shoal
And muddy waters to eschew.
Still she's inspired to find a way
To Egypt, nestling on the Nile.
The people bid the dear Queen stay;
Thus, she is victor in her trial.

She is called "little sister" fair,
Isis in her rainbow feathers.
A crown of stars adorns her hair;
Tears her heart no longer tethers.
Like a goddess she is adored,
Taught by the monkey-visage Thoth.
Thus Egypt-land is firmly moored,
To valiant Osiris betroth.

AUGUSTUS

Your verse so captures the story depicted in the murals of the Temple of the
Jaguars!

ALICE

A story so similar to *Genesis*: the woman, the serpent, the offering of fruit.

AUGUSTUS

And she refuses the fruit. As well as with *Genesis*, who could fail to see the similarities between this story and the legends of the Egyptian Isis and Osiris and their evil brother, Set? And yes, Thoth, represented as a sacred monkey, was said to be the teacher of Isis, and her protector.

ALICE

How often we found the image of the monkey in the palaces, and at *Cay's* mausoleum, on its knees in an act of adoration.

AUGUSTUS

It is written in the *Popul-Vuh* how the Creator failed in several attempts to produce a perfect man and so filled the animal kingdom with the delightful monkeys. Also, it tells of a certain primitive race of men who grew proud and wicked, forgetful of their Creator to whom they ceased to pay homage. The majority were destroyed by floods and earthquakes, and the few who managed to escape and find refuge in the mountains were turned into monkeys.

ALICE

Isn't the same belief held in Hindustan?

AUGUSTUS

Yes, and the ape-god of the island of Ceylon was named Thoth, most likely a teacher of letters. Then, there is the word *Thoth* in Maya, which means to scatter flowers or grain. To scatter knowledge? How are the university pedants to explain away all these similarities?

ALICE

How sad your profound wisdom must so often be phrased as a question, or end on a note of dismay or defense—you who will let no tone of despair interrupt the harmony of my inner music. I fear this is becoming almost physical in you; you'll become ill.

AUGUSTUS

I may have to sacrifice my health. However, I shall ever draw strength and comfort from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark: "And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them."

There is a pause, then Alice picks up the Hearst letter from the table and gives it to Augustus.

ALICE

At least today there has come a bit of sunshine, like Thoth, scattering flowers of light midst all the shadow. I believe you had best take this letter to your publisher at once.

AUGUSTUS

He may be about to give up on us, yes . . . and there will still be time for the changes.

ALICE

More than enough time for the reply that will never come from Brinton.

AUGUSTUS

We'll soon shake his dust off our feet, and leave a physical record of his pretensions and arrogance as well.

He picks up his hat and exits.

Alice draws her shawl around her, touches the jadeite brooch, then sits down at the table. She commences writing, but stops, weary, and places her head upon the table to rest, closing her eyes and falling off to sleep momentarily.

The lights dim, then fade up at right with the entrance of the spiritual figure, Prince Coh. Alice awakens and gazes at him. Prince Coh is a vibrant, majestic, beautiful youth with Mayan features and long, black hair. He wears a white sarong over which is a jaguar skin, and a white headdress similar in shape to a small miter, from the back of which flow long, elegant rainbow-colored feathers. He carries a spear.

PRINCE COH

I was Prince Coh
Of the true Great Spirit.
My father was the sovereign *Canchi*
Of Mayach, in *U-luumil ceh*,
The land of the deer;
The land of the *Beb*,
The mulberry tree;
The country of the King,
Surrounded by water.

My brother *Cay* was the high priest,
Who led the people in worship
Of the sun, moon and stars;
Of *Ku*, the divine essence,
The uncreated soul of the world.
Our astronomers gave us knowledge
Of the heavenly bodies,
Whose movements guided our lives.
They knew of the continents;
They calculated the longitudes
And latitudes of earth,
And epochs of solstices and equinoxes.

I am the inspirer
Of you who seek truths
Of U-luumil ceh,
Country of the Great *Can*,
And the *Cat-ayo*—
The cucumber tree.
Listen to the Prince:
When, at the beginning
Of the month of May,
The constellation of the Southern Cross
Appears on the horizon,
Then the season of rain is near.
The cross heralds
Renewal of nature,
And is the sign of spring
And life to come.

Thus may I signify

Renewed life to you,
The higher life that is to be.
Yet when the Master rises in the East,
The four parts of heaven,
The four corners of the earth
Are shattered. . . .
My spear remains a token
Of a tragic past
And presages momentous events
Still to be lived.

Friend of U-luumil ceh,
The spirit of my Queen
Is reflected in your eye.
May you bring a memory
Of the warmth and light;
Of the majesty of our era
Into the coldness of your world,
Where each man is but a withered branch
Of the tree of paradise we knew,
In the emerald forests
And the azure waters
Of the land of Beb.

*He exits and Alice rises and crosses to
where he had stood.*

ALICE

Prince Coh! Have I known you before? I have no memory, but how I have come to love your land, how I long to stand on the shores of your ocean once again! . . . To feel the equatorial sun on my head and the cooling waves of the sea lapping about my ankles; to sense the abundant life of the deep forest, full of works of art, yet hidden, lying in ruins. I fear we will never go back, neither to Yucatán nor to the once-known joy and richness of tranquil existence. Prince Coh, you enlighten and encourage, but you also warn. . . .

*After a pause, she returns to the table
and commences writing with intense
concentration. The lights fade out.*

*As the lights fade up, it is sometime later;
Queen Mío and the Egyptian Sphinx has
been published. Augustus, who has been*

ill, is lying on the couch, propped up with pillows and covered with an afghan.

His brief nap is a restless one. He cries out suddenly.

AUGUSTUS

Strike, but hear me!

He sits up and looks wildly about the room, then slowly relaxes and lays back down.

Alice enters from left with a small tray-table on which is a mug of soup and tea. She places the tray-table by the couch and moves a chair over from the table, sitting down. Augustus sits up.

ALICE

Did you cry out in your sleep?

AUGUSTUS

I was dreaming of a conversation described in *Queen M6o* . . . you recall the conversation I had with the antiquary, defending my ideas and those of others I admire?

ALICE

Oh, yes.

AUGUSTUS

I could hear him say, "Authorized Americanists have condemned the works you describe, and your own works as well!" "But," I argued, "these authorized Americanists have not made an impartial study of my work; they have not even made a prejudiced study! Before they pronounce their sentence, let them remember the words of Themistocles to the over-hasty Eurybiades: 'Strike, but hear me!'" I rose up, half asleep, and the room was filled with flaming knives, all aimed towards me. Mercifully, I woke.

ALICE

This must be a result of your chest pains.

AUGUSTUS

Or my chest pains a result of this hatred. Which?

ALICE

Take courage, you're getting better, and though your book is condemned, someday, I feel certain, it will be understood and praised. Now please, you must have something to eat. Here is a good, nourishing soup, and hot tea.

He sips from the mug Alice gives him.

AUGUSTUS

The London review was only half bad . . . A New England journal seemed willing to concede I was merely crazed from overwork . . . a local newspaper anticipates increased opposition . . . they will destroy us!

ALICE

Only if we let them! . . . Don't fret over these unfair criticisms, think only of gaining back your strength, your *joie de vivre*.

AUGUSTUS

Ahhh! . . . What we need is an ocean voyage. We need to stand on the deck of a ship, feel the biting, salty wind; feel the living ocean pulsing beneath our feet.

ALICE

Perhaps we can again visit my family in London.

AUGUSTUS

Have we the money to visit London?

ALICE

There are some savings.

AUGUSTUS

For sustenance, not *joie de vivre*.

ALICE

And which is the more important?

AUGUSTUS

To have little is a challenge for joy. Recall how joyous the Mayas are around this time of year, after the first showers of the rainy season and before the sowing of the seeds. They visit their caverns and implore their gods to grant them a plentiful harvest. After the harvest, they bring their finest ears of corn and the ripest squashes, laying these before the statues.

ALICE

I recall the smoke, a mixture of incense and copal gathered from the trees; the smell of ground roasted corn; the devotees with their musical instruments chanting the ancient prayers.

AUGUSTUS

Together with the prayers of the Catholic Church. A strange medley of the old and new. But did it matter, as it made them happy? They had so few joys in life, far less than we have always known . . . (*he takes Alice's hand*) Has it been a good life, Alice?

ALICE

Why, yes. And still is. . . .

AUGUSTUS

When we were in the caverns, learning all the natives were imparting to us, never did we imagine the world would reject the special knowledge we had won in trust and friendship. Gradually we realized, fought . . . now we are as though abandoned; they will forget us.

ALICE

Truth by nature rises, it is never lost.

AUGUSTUS

The world must first turn cold.

ALICE

Consider all the hardships we have known, physical hardships earlier, scholarly battles later. What has happened inwardly? The spiritual world has become the greater reality. I have glimpsed this world, most often through a spiritual presence, and you . . .

AUGUSTUS

I?

ALICE

On no other subject do the critics clamor so loudly as on your linguistic analysis of the last words of Christ on the cross.

AUGUSTUS

Jesus spoke pure Maya. "*Hele, Hele, lamah zabac ta ni,*" means "Now, now, I am fainting, darkness covers my face."

ALICE

He certainly spoke pure Maya to you as you stood in spirit before this ancient God of Spring come down to earth to bring renewal, the God whom natives cherish in the constellation of the Southern Cross. Oh, no, the glorious past could never be the same, the past which still so enchants us, still lives so brilliantly for us in this day of the locusts. To stand before this God . . . what higher or greater good could a life accomplish?

There is a pause.

AUGUSTUS

During my illness, many times I observed our inscrutable sphinx. One day—was I half asleep?—I saw him floating in the watery world of the past. He weakened and fell into his dying posture, but from his heart there emerged a man; the man stood upright and walked towards me and I could retain his sunlit radiance but momentarily in my consciousness. He passed through me and into the future...

His hand His hand goes to his heart.

ALICE

Please, rest now. You've taken a bit of soup; you're looking better, but you'll still need to rest.

AUGUSTUS

My dear, there is work remaining to be done.

He lays back down on the couch and Alice covers him with the afghan. She picks up the tray-table and exits. He falls asleep, but soon cries out.

AUGUSTUS

Hele, Hele, lamah zabac ta ni!

He sits up and gazes at the sphinx with bright, intense eyes.

Fade out.

End of second drama

A DREAM OF ATLANTIS

Characters:

Mrs. Maude Blackwell

Andrew Miles, young explorer

Helen Miles, explorer, wife of Andrew

Alice Dixon Le Plongeon

A Spiritual Figure

Time: Spring, 1910, afternoon; evening of the same day.

Place: Living room of Alice Le Plongeon's home, Brooklyn, New York.

Note: The verse in this play is by Alice Dixon Le Plongeon, from *A Dream of Atlantis*, published serially in *The Word Magazine* (Theosophical Society) from 1909 to 1911. However, the last verse, recited by the Spiritual Figure, is by the author.

Scene:

The structure of the set is the same as for the first two plays. The living room is rearranged: the couch is placed left by the window, which is still draped. At right are two chairs. Upstage center is a table, next to which are two small tray-tables. Up-right can be seen boxes, the crate and trunk, a hatbox and Alice's old guitar. The crate is a catchall for hats, etc. The floor is still covered with oriental rugs.

At Rise:

Maude Blackwell enters from the left with a tray of cups, a teapot and a plate of cakes. Now in her forties, she has the same gentle, intelligent features and the same round-rimmed glasses. She is wearing a light-colored spring dress. She places the tray on the table, then looks around to be sure all is in order. She adjusts the distance between the two chairs, then crosses to the couch and fluffs up a pillow. Shortly, Andrew Miles and his wife Helen enter from the right. They are dressed as modern Maya natives, Helen in a long, white cotton dress with a bright, multi-colored shawl and Andrew in a straw hat and large cotton shirt. Helen carries a small harp (or lyre). Andrew carries a package wrapped in paper. Andrew is thirty years old; Helen is twenty-one. Both are vibrant with good health and Andrew especially gives the impression of having hidden reserves of great strength. He places his hat and package on the crate.

MAUDE

Oh, you both look wonderful! How thoughtful of you to wear Maya clothing. Alice will be delighted!

HELEN

I made my gown and Andrew's shirt. And this shawl—Andrew brought it back

from Mexico last year.

ANDREW

I bought it on the west coast, in good faith it was Mayan.

MAUDE

It looks so to me. They do a most distinct and remarkable weaving.

HELEN

Is Mrs. Le Plongeon here?

MAUDE

You both may call her Alice. Yes, she's here. She's resting and I'll call her in as soon as we're ready. Will these chairs be all right?

ANDREW

Fine for me. What about your harp, my dear?

HELEN

My harp is very pleased with straight-back chairs.

MAUDE

Good!

ANDREW

(Glancing at the trunk and boxes) So, Alice is leaving for London tomorrow?

MAUDE

Against the advice of her physician, yes. But she wishes to see her brothers and sisters for . . . and draw up her will.

HELEN

Her will?

MAUDE

Not that she is so serious . . . she merely wants to be prepared. A respiratory problem can be, as you know, alarming.

ANDREW

When she gave her lecture at the Explorer's Club, she told us her system had been weakened by yellow fever.

MAUDE

I'm afraid so. You both must be aware of the pestilential hazards of the tropics.

ANDREW

All too aware. For myself, I have no concerns. Helen—

HELEN

I have great admiration for Alice. She has endured, and she still battles her husband's opponents. She has made valuable contributions towards understanding of Mayan culture. In addition, she writes wonderful poetry! I hope I can be for Andrew all that Alice has been for Dr. Le Plongeon.

Andrew takes Helen's hand.

How she must be suffering the loss of her husband.

MAUDE

She does stay busy, almost too busy. It's been over a year since he passed away. I worry about her...

HELEN

Let us hope our little fiesta cheers her.

ANDREW

And the ocean voyage restores her health.

MAUDE

Oh, yes, let us hope! . . . Now, are we ready?

HELEN

(Glancing at Andrew) Yes . . .

Maude exits left.

You're not nervous, are you, Andrew?

ANDREW

Certainly not! How am I to brave the jungles of Yucatán, if I cannot manage a poetry recital in Brooklyn?

HELEN

You are nervous. You're made for adventure, not poetry.

ANDREW

Do be sure to prompt me, will you?

HELEN

You know I will.

Alice enters, followed by Maude. Now

fifty-six years old, she wears her wavy grey hair in a twist atop her head. She appears tired, like one who has been ill, but she has not lost her regal bearing, and her eyes shine intensely, as though with an inner, spiritual fire. She is wearing a spring dress of a pastel hue, similar to Maude's. At the collar of her dress is the jadeite brooch.

ALICE

Andrew and Helen Miles! What a surprise! And look what they are wearing! They look lovely, don't they, Maude? It's so good of you both to visit and cheer me on the eve of my departure.

ANDREW

We thought a fiesta appropriate.

ALICE

A fiesta?

HELEN

Yes. I've brought my harp; we're to have music.

ANDREW

And poetry.

HELEN

Your very own.

ALICE

Mine? . . . What is this, Maude?

MAUDE

They have prepared a presentation and recital from *A Dream of Atlantis*.

ALICE

A Dream of Atlantis . . . I'm truly astonished!

MAUDE

Afterwards, we shall all have tea and cakes.

ALICE

(Laughing) Well, well, Atlantis, tea and cakes!

MAUDE

Only in Alice's home!

ANDREW

Helen and I would then appreciate your advice for our trip to Yucatán this fall.

ALICE

So you will journey to Yucatán?

HELEN

We've decided, yes.

MAUDE

Now, we, the audience, shall seat ourselves comfortably on the couch. Here is a pillow for your back, Alice.

They both sit down.

ALICE

You are too solicitous, Maude. I feel quite well.

Andrew sits in one chair, Helen places her harp carefully on the other, then stands center.

HELEN

First, a few words to introduce and clarify the passages we have chosen to present, then . . .

ANDREW

(Rising and reciting nervously)

If inspiration lend her beam
Upon this most alluring theme,
Imagination's loom may give
The thread to weave a narrative . . .
A Dream of Atlantis.

He sits back down.

HELEN

In this work we accept the story of Atlantis as bequeathed by Plato, and also the evidence offered by the discoveries of Dr. and Mrs. Le Plongeon. Atlantis is considered at the time when it reached the zenith of its power but was degenerate in its morals. Atlas, suzerain of nine other princes, each ruling a province, endeavored to be faithful to the high ideals of his forefathers, and consider the

welfare of the people. His daughter is named *Nalah*. His cousin is the wise *Can*. Prince Gadeirus, who will inherit the high place of Atlas in the event of his death, has plotted against him, and Can warns Atlas. Still, the deed occurs: Gadeirus poisons the goblet of Atlas and begins a corrupt reign in the palace and temple of Poseidon.

Helen sits down and Andrew rises.

ANDREW

Poseidon was the last great continent of the Atlantean civilization, which existed long before recorded history. It was foretold that Poseidon, too, would meet its destruction in terrible earthquakes and floods. Nalah flees the corruption of the palace and joins Can, who leads an emigration out of Atlantis and finds a new empire of the Maya people on the distant strand of Mayach, the Yucatán of today. The passages we have chosen to recite describe their journey.

HELEN

(Rising and strumming her harp) The morning of their journey begins like any other.

ANDREW

The watchman chants.

HELEN

Awake! Awake! the mighty one
Triumphant hath his course begun;
Arise! receive the life that he
Bestows upon the land and sea.

ANDREW

The watchman chants and homeward hies,
Light-hearted 'neath the azure skies.

HELEN

Atlantis! Who thy praise would breathe,
Surpassing beauty must inweave
With glories never dreamed before,
Or only dreamed on heavenly shore—
Of valor which the sun-god loved
To watch, where his devout ones roved,
E'er guarding them within his ray,
To vanquish foes day after day—
Of riches never seen on earth
Till Atlas' sons were brought to birth.

ANDREW

And they by magic arts despoiled
Those treasures where the gnomes had toiled—
Of wisdom wrested from the soul
Of all that is—mighty scroll
That future ages may unroll!

HELEN

Can, Nalah and their followers—including Lord *Itzat*, who had been Nalah's betrothed—escape from Poseidon and begin their long voyage westward. Storms lash the sea for many hours—Could Poseidon be angry? But at last calm is restored, and . . .

Fair winds now filled the sails and sped
The ship, while ancient tales were read
By Can, from out a treasured tome,
Of *Mu*, the lost but well-loved home.
These records told how long ago
Had been submerged by ocean's flow
A goodly portion of that land,
Waves rolling high above the strand
Where hills of mud and mounts of fire
Had spouted forth disaster dire;
And from that time beneath the main
Grand cities lost to view had lain.

ANDREW

While each his thoughts expression gave
The vessel safely plowed the wave,
Till *Zinaan's* lovely isles were neared,
Upon whose verdant shores appeared
Men, women, children, everywhere
On land, amid the meadows fair;
While vessels gaily came and went
For profit, or on pleasure bent.
Here water sweet the voyagers found,
And wholesome products of the ground,
Then journeyed on apace
To reach the very ancient strand
Called Mayach, the fatherland
Of Atlas' noble race.

HELEN

The land of beauty far behind
Awaits its doom. No ties now bind
These venturers unto what they've left—
For here, of luxury bereft—
They'll fashion from their brain and brawn
A kingdom where new hopes shall dawn.

ANDREW

The people with acclaim desired
That Can, who had the state inspired
As monarch there should reign;
For none his goodness could assail,
And none appeal without avail
Who justice would obtain.

HELEN

To tranquil days and joyous thought
Dear Nalah once again is brought.
Lord Itzat on his conquest bent
Pleads well, and not in vain,
With Nalah who erstwhile had lent
A hearing to that strain
In days of blissful promise; now
The winsome maid renewed her vow,
Disdaining other suits to heed—
Of noble chieftains come to plead.

ANDREW

Thus began the dynasty of Can, in the land of Mayach, a dynasty which generations later devolved to Prince *Coh* and Queen *Móo*. They too woke each morn to the watchman's chant . . .

HELEN

Awake! Awake! the mighty one
Triumphant hath his course begun;
Arise! receive the life that he
Bestows upon the land and sea.

ANDREW

The watchman chants and homeward hies,
Light-hearted 'neath the azure skies.

*Andrew and Helen take a small bow and
Alice and Maude applaud.*

ALICE

A charming and inspiring presentation! And a very good selection from what is quite a long piece.

MAUDE

The narratives were so helpful!

HELEN

We're glad you're pleased. Andrew was a bit nervous, but I think he did very well.

MAUDE

He did indeed.

ALICE

This is so thoughtful of all of you; this certainly took time and planning.

ANDREW

Only consider how much we've learned. There are subtle gems in this verse that only begin to be revealed with careful study.

ALICE

Such is the magic of poetry.

MAUDE

(Rising) We must now reward our performers—and the audience—with refreshment.

*Helen rises to help Maude. Cups of tea
and plates of cakes are placed on the
tray-tables and the tables set between the
chairs and by the couch.*

ALICE

How perfectly warming and sustaining. Thank you . . . Andrew, are you seeking advise for a trip to Yucatán?

ANDREW

Yes, our ship will take us to the port of Progreso, where, after resting and adjusting to the climate, we plan to explore some of the ancient cities. But the goal of our journey really begins further south, in British Honduras, for we plan

to venture into some of the unexplored jungles near the border of Guatemala.

ALICE

I see . . . for what purpose?

ANDREW

I have a Spanish account dated 1847—the author is not named—which describes the discovery of a lost city, and more importantly, in an underground recess, a golden library.

ALICE

What kind of account is this?

ANDREW

A reproduction of a fragment from a diary.

ALICE

I wish I had time to examine this . . . perhaps when I return from London. What sort of golden library?

ANDREW

Large, flat golden plates with intaglio carvings on a kind of spindle, able to be turned like the pages of a book. The discoverer was unable to wrest the plates from their base, and planned to come back later but apparently was unable to . . . he gives many clues as to the buildings in the city, overgrown with vegetation, even huge trees.

ALICE

Were the carvings Maya hieroglyphs?

ANDREW

The diary doesn't say. But of great interest—the plates describe the civilization of Atlantis.

ALICE

Most exciting!—if genuine.

ANDREW

Helen and I both feel this is worth a search.

HELEN

Would you agree?

ALICE

As I've mentioned, I will need to see this fragment.

ANDREW

I have it locked away, but I can assure you, it is absolutely authentic.

MAUDE

Madame Blavatsky wrote of similar things, such as a brilliant disk of the sun situated atop a pyramid, so radiant one would be blinded to gaze at it too long. The natives are said to have hidden these things away when their lands were overrun by the Spanish.

ALICE

I don't doubt wonders exist which we can only dream of! . . . But to venture into unexplored Guatemalan jungles . . . Dr. Le Plongeon and I were never far from towns or villages. Are you aware of the unbelievable hardships of such an undertaking?

ANDREW

Yes, as I learned from my journey to Mexico last year.

ALICE

Helen?

HELEN

To me it's a challenge I can't resist.

ALICE

I would in no way discourage two such strong, dedicated adventurers as yourselves, yet I wonder if the aim of your journey could not be altered somewhat?

ANDREW

How so?

ALICE

Even if you found a golden library not yet pillaged, and succeeded in bringing the plates back to this country, setting them before the eyes of officials everywhere, they would still not be accepted as proof of Atlantis. You are bound to be frustrated and disappointed.

ANDREW

Could this be Alice Le Plongeon giving advice?

ALICE

How long it took me, how devastating it was for me to accept the fact that the evidence Dr. Le Plongeon and I have promulgated will not at this time be accepted . . . the world is not ready.

She rises.

By all means try, for I still expend every last measure of my strength trying, yet, this should not be your primary goal... To find a new city or site, uncover splendid works of art, learn more about the terrain, establish paths—these would be worthy enough goals. Atlantis? Rather let it be a dream which lives in your heart, and then, my friends, let the dream awaken within you! For this is where the lost paradise of old is to be found—the paradise betrayed by a misuse of natural forces and denied a morally blemished humanity. Though you search till the end of your days and fill museums with evidence, Atlantis will still elude this corrupt world. Indeed, there is already more than sufficient evidence abounding in museums today, but few recognize it! The pyramid, the golden disk and the golden library are hidden within the soul and spirit of each man. They must be awakened anew! This is what my poem is about—

For they by magic arts despoiled
Those treasures where the gnomes had toiled—
Of wisdom wrested from the soul
Of all that is—mighty scroll
That future ages may unroll!

There is a pause.

ANDREW

You are saying, there is only a spiritual path to Atlantis?

ALICE

Yes, and it leads to the future. If you journey upon the road to the past, fine!—the past must be understood. Only be aware of its limitations.

ANDREW

I believe I understand what you are saying.

ALICE

If so, then I am permitted to be a beneficial influence in your life, for which we can both thank providence. Now . . . I should like to propose we again attempt to lighten our day; to lift for a moment these heavy burdens from our shoulders.

After all, we sought to establish the mood of a fiesta. About three blocks away, there is a wonderful Italian restaurant, and the proprietor knows me well. Why don't we walk there for an early supper, if we have not spoiled our appetites with cakes? It shall be my treat. The weather is balmy; the walk will do me good, and over supper, we can talk further about your plans.

All rise.

MAUDE

A wonderful idea—we must insist on helping with the cost—

ALICE

Oh, no! When I return from London, you can treat me then.

MAUDE

Very well. I'll get our jackets—

She starts to exit left.

ANDREW

Just a moment—I have something for you both.

MAUDE

Oh? . . .

Andrew picks up the package from the crate, and his hat. He unwraps the package, which contains two colorful shawls similar to Helen's.

ANDREW

Two more shawls! Bought from a Mexican who swore he had purchased them from an elderly Maya weaver. Of course I paid twice the money. Authentic?

ALICE

Yes, and beautiful! This bodes well for you, Andrew, except for the price.

They put them on.

MAUDE

Aren't we a cheerful, colorful group! Thank you, Andrew.

ALICE

My guitar! . . .

She picks up the guitar.

Old and rather out of tune, but suitable for the street.

HELEN

Your neighbors will be surprised and entertained.

ALICE

Entertained, yes. Surprised, no. One sees everything in Brooklyn!

All exit right. Fade out.

As the lights fade up, dimmer than previously, it is a few hours later. Alice, deep in thought, enters from the right. She stands center and gazes slowly around the room, at length towards the right.

ALICE

Augustus! Nevermore will I hear your foot upon the step, see your eyes alight with ideas, hear your resonant voice, full of fervent enthusiasm for your beloved Mayach. Many hardships I have endured in my life, but none have been so painful as your loss. Friends are kind, and I am busy; still, I miss you!

She sits down on the front chair, strums and tunes the guitar, then begins playing the composition by Fernando Sor, the same piece she played at the beginning of The Thread of Ariadne. At the end of this piece she is again momentarily lost in thought, then frowns deeply, strums and recites.

The mountains from their flanks belched out
Red blasts, while from their cones would spout
Black boiling mud and sand that poured
On all below. The thunder roared,
Earth quaked, and forked lightning flashed,
As rocky fragments downward crashed.
Like rivers now the lava came;
And everywhere the thirsty flame
Lapped all the hissing water up
For *Homen's* sacrificial cup.

The ocean, earth, and sky, intoned

Destruction's dirge, while tempest moaned,
Their tones reverberating through
Broad plains where palms and vineyards grew,
In vales remote and heights sublime,
Where never foot of man could climb:
So mighty soon became the roar
It reached where sound ne'er rose before—
Above the plains where fierce winds blow
O'er mountains helmeted with snow . . .

From reeking clouds the fire now came
Descending in a crimson flame—
Death-sheets, that wrapped all things around,
Till naught remained but smoking ground . . .
The sacred heights of Poseidon
Whose belts of water round it shone
More slowly yielded to the throes,
And stood above the lava flows.

Gadeirus cursed, defied his fate,
And rushed to seek the temple gate—
Believing yet escape might wait;
A'down the slope he fled.
But suddenly below his feet
A seething chasm dread
His frenzied vision yawned to greet—
With terror howling, in he fell,
Sucked deep within a flaming hell . . .

O'erhung, rimmed with a golden beam
Upon the west—a farewell gleam
From that vast orb which nevermore
Would send its rays upon that shore.

In Maya woods trooped lads and maids
To gather from the forest shades
The brightest flowers and clinging vine
That slender fingers might entwine,
To deck with garlands hall and fane,
While joy in every heart must reign;
Sweet copal too its fragrance there
Is wafting on the balmy air. . . .

Dear old guitar, you don't sound too bad, though you endured many humid Yucatán months, and have glided o'er the ocean many times, in cargo freighters, queen's ships and trawlers.

She places the guitar gently on the nearby chair.

I suppose we had both better get our rest for tomorrow's journey.

She rises, removes the shawl and places it on the guitar. She looks over the boxes, crate and trunk.

I hope I remembered to pack everything . . . Did I pack those photographs for my family to see?

She crosses to the trunk, pulls it out, opens it and removes a small portfolio; then crosses back to the front chair and sits down. She looks through the photographs.

Dancers and musicians at a fiesta in Izamal! . . . Portal of the east facade of the palace at Chichén, showing the Creator in the cosmic egg . . . West wing of King *Canchi's* palace at Uxmal, with cosmic diagram . . . Augustus and Alice in the Governor's Palace . . . Atlantes supporting the altar in Prince Coh's memorial hall . . . Augustus reclining on the *Chaacmol* statue . . . Alice wearing Queen Mío's talisman. . . .

Alice touches the brooch at the collar of her dress. The lights dim.

Dear Augustus, I feel the warmth in this jadeite and imagine it is your warmth. . .

Lights fade up at right as a Spiritual Figure enters. The Figure has long, light hair and beard, blue eyes and a radiant countenance. He wears a long, white gown at the breast of which is a golden sun with beams pointing East, West, North and South.

FIGURE

I speak from a sphere
Where speech would be muted
Yet tones sound forth
Vibrant with meaning.

Here Maya is heard—
A resounding echo
From the great avenue
Of living monuments.
Here the most perfect buildings
Of every civilization
Are embedded like gems
In the heavens.
The great sphinx turns his head
And follows with his eyes
The wayfaring soul.
Few may pass this way.
The sun beams upon the buildings,
The moon, cooling, glistens;
The planets moving, sing,
Embracing the megaliths.
The quiet stars, distant,
Hold every thought
That built these temples.

In joy and pain
Our feet tread
Weary miles on earth
To bring the ancient sites
Before our eyes and hearts.
Here cosmic thoughts and music
Ease the path through monuments
Scarce imagined on earth!—
Yet earth we serve; we need
For aeons yet to come.

From Maya land, south,
I gaze upon two pyramids,
Mightier than ever we knew!
The one is older,
And from the apex,
Where the priests guide—
As once I guided—
Sunbeams descend
To the firmament below.
At the second, more recent,
Souls are ascending,

Climbing the high, steep steps,
Not easily!

Alice, beloved,
My soul yearns
To explore these vivid details
Of light and shadow;
To listen to the tones
Of the ages;
Walk the broad avenue
Of living monuments;
Assist the souls
In their ascent . . .
Yet I am held back.
Where is my helper,
Who was always by my side
On that distant strand?
Will she place her hand
Again in my own?
Know this, my angel:
There is no monument
Greater than love!

ALICE

Augustus!

Lights fade out slowly.

End of Trilogy