

Excerpt from

The Sun Maiden

By

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Cast of Characters

<u>Lucia</u>	A Gabrielino maiden living at the Mission San Gabriel, 13.
<u>Toypurina</u>	A Gabrielino medicine woman, 26.
<u>Padre Jose Zalvidea</u>	Chief friar, Mission San Gabriel, 50.
<u>Jose Olivera</u>	A sergeant attached to the mission, 29.
<u>Jose Verdugo</u>	A corporal attached to the mission, 25.
<u>Nicolas Jose</u>	A Gabrielino neophyte at the mission, 28.
<u>Manuel Montero</u>	A citizen of El Pueblo de Los Angeles, 25.
<u>Our Lady of Sorrows</u>	A portrait of the Virgin, 20s.

Scene

Mission San Gabriel Arcangel and its lands, Alta California.

Time

October, 1785.

Notes

The Sun Maiden is a work of historical fiction based on the 1785 Gabrielino attack against the San Gabriel Mission, led by the young Gabrielino medicine woman, Toypurina.

The part of Lucia should be played by an adult. She should be believable as a teen.

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: An arroyo near the San Gabriel Mission.

AT RISE: A sequence of SOUNDS that might be heard from the arroyo, travelling backward through time, each sound lingering the slightest moment to establish itself before fading. Perhaps it begins with cars racing and honking, then slowing, then a trolley, a railroad, a horse-drawn buggy, farm animal noises, a mission bell, ending finally in bird song and running water. Projections might accompany the sound. It is a beautiful morning. SOUND: a girl's laughter. Father ZALVIDEA enters.

ZALVIDEA

Lucia! Lucia! Where have you gone to? Answer me!

(beat)

You promised to show me the weed!

(SOUND of crunching leaves.

Giggles.)

ZALVIDEA

Where are you? You haven't taken your clothes off? I told you not to take your clothes off again.

LUCIA

(off)

Me am naked! Naked as a gutted fish!

(LUCIA appears behind HIM, giggling. SHE is not naked, but wears her mission shift.)

ZALVIDEA

You are not funny. I'm not looking at you. My eyes are closed.

(HE covers his eyes. SHE parades in front of him.)

LUCIA

Naked as a peeled chicken we are!

ZALVIDEA

Stop this at once! Do you want to go to Hell? Do you want the soldiers to see you? Oh, you are very wicked! When I catch you--

(HE lunges for her suddenly.
SHE shrieks. THEY go down in a
heap, laughing. THEY settle
easily.)

LUCIA

I amn't wicked.

ZALVIDEA

No. You are my sweet child of light, my sun maiden.

LUCIA

The man and the woman were naked in the garden.

ZALVIDEA

Yes. But that was before they ate the fruit of knowledge.

LUCIA

They should not have eat the fruit.

ZALVIDEA

That's right.

LUCIA

But then they would still be naked!

ZALVIDEA

Who has put the devil into you today? You will understand better when you are older.

LUCIA

I am your favorite of all the girls from the mission, amn't I?

ZALVIDEA

I'm not so sure.

LUCIA

I am making your chocolate drink every night.

ZALVIDEA

One must have chocolate at bedtime.

LUCIA

But I am making it just the way papa likes.

(pantomimes)

Grinding the beans, I am. Putting in molasses, not too much, and berries sometimes.

ZALVIDEA

That was a good idea, those berries.

LUCIA

So this is why I am papa's favorite, yes?

ZALVIDEA

No that isn't why you are my favorite.

LUCIA

Me am your favorite! You see!

ZALVIDEA

You are too clever!

LUCIA

I am speaking the best Spanish after all, and reading.

ZALVIDEA

Well, that's true. But then again you don't have much competition.

LUCIA

Papa, why don't the people learn Spanish?

ZALVIDEA

Because Indians are lazy, child. When you live in California you must learn to speak the language of California. It's sloth. A very deadly sin.

LUCIA

Then why amnn't you learning Tonga?

ZALVIDEA

Because it's harder than for you to learn Spanish.

LUCIA

There am six more deadly sins. I forget them. Lying?

ZALVIDEA

Oh, yes, lying. Never lie to me.

LUCIA

Nakedness?

ZALVIDEA

Nakedness. That's a bad one.

LUCIA

And gluttony.

LUCIA

I am not knowing, but I will go to a village and ask--

ZALVIDEA

No, that's all right.

(beat)

You like it at the mission with Papa Zalvidea, don't you?

LUCIA

(too quickly)

Oh, yes, Papa.

ZALVIDEA

You remember your village?

LUCIA

It was by the river and called Topagna. And we are all living together in the house, mama and papa and Lucia and the baby we am, until we came in and the milk tongue comes to us, and the sleeping sickness.

ZALVIDEA

That was a bad time.

LUCIA

But before then another Eden, sceptered isle, demi-paradise.

ZALVIDEA

You have been reading.

LUCIA

Yes, papa. There am six books papa has.

(beat)

Papa?

ZALVIDEA

Yes, child?

LUCIA

What am demi?

ZALVIDEA

It means "almost."

LUCIA

Demi-paradise is like hell then?

ZALVIDEA

No. Not like Hell.

(beat)

LUCIA

I love you, papa.

(beat)

Papa?

ZALVIDEA

What is it, child?

LUCIA

Will the Indian woman go to hell, who bit the sergeant?

ZALVIDEA

How do you know about that?

LUCIA

Her name is being Toypurnia. She is knowing all herbs and gives them to the people to make them well.

ZALVIDEA

The doctor is making them well now.

LUCIA

She's locked up in the storeroom, amn't she? All the people is talking about it. She were going to burn them mission down and the soldiers

(a little too enthusiastic for

ZALVIDEA)

catches her by the hair and drags her and she bites them--

ZALVIDEA

All right, all right.

LUCIA

They say she has cried for two days without stopping.

ZALVIDEA

She is a very wicked woman.

LUCIA

Nakedness and lying and gluttony--

ZALVIDEA

A witch is worse than that.

LUCIA

And witches are be going to hell?

ZALVIDEA

Oh, she is damned. And that's an end to it. Come, we need to get back.

LUCIA

Can we visit the Blessed Mother? I must be praying for something. Please?

ZALVIDEA

You are praying every day to the Blessed Mother, child?

LUCIA

Oh, yes.

ZALVIDEA

And why are you praying?

LUCIA

I want the Blessed Mother to know me.

ZALVIDEA

As well she does. She wants to know all the Indians, child.

LUCIA

Yes, papa.

ZALVIDEA

That's why she has come to California.

THEY exit. CROSSFADE to:

The Mission. SOUND: the softest suggestion of Church music. In one area, LIGHT illuminates a portrait of the VIRGIN, an actress posed in a wooden frame. Two men enter opposite, conversing. One, SGT. OLIVERA, has a bandaged hand. As the soldiers speak, ZALVIDEA and LUCIA enter before the Virgin, cross themselves, pray briefly, and exit. The VIRGIN is rolled off by unseen hands.

OLIVERA

This castle hath a pleasant seat. And nimbly recommends itself to our gentle senses.

MONTERO

What is that?

OLIVERA

From one of the padre's books. The padre has precisely five books. And a Bible. The Bible doesn't count.

MONTERO

Let me see it.

OLIVERA

Five books in all of Alta California and I've read them all twice.

MONTERO

Let me see.

(OLIVERA shows MONTERO his bound hand.)

OLIVERA

This country is a shit hole.

MONTERO

Will you be still?

OLIVERA

I am thinking, Manuel, that I never should have left Vera Cruz.

(MONTERO squeezes the hand.)

Ahhh! Christ!

MONTERO

Sorry! Sorry!

OLIVERA

Are you trying to finish me off?

MONTERO

I'm trying to help you.

OLIVERA

What kind of physician are you?

MONTERO

I'm not a physician.

OLIVERA

Of course not! I forgot. We have the miserable quack in San Diego. What would a real physician be doing in Alta California? I curse the day I set foot in this stinking swamp. And I curse the King in his bloody castle in Seville for good measure.

MONTERO

Sleep with it over your heart, like this.

OLIVERA

Give me my hand. If you were still in the army I'd have you flogged.

MONTERO

What for?

OLIVERA

Spite. Because you, Manuel Montero, may come and go as you please whereas I must remain here at the world's end hunting up souls for the Padres.

MONTERO

The mission has its compensations, no? Besides, you'll have plenty to flog soon.

OLIVERA

Six chiefs in on it. And the Governor says I can't whip any.

MONTERO

That's what he said: no chiefs. But you can whip whomever was along with them.

OLIVERA

By now they've moved the villages half way to Topanga. No matter. I've got Nicolas. When I think of the money I've wasted on him! I'm going to flay him within an inch of his life. And his stinking whore too.

MONTERO

A sorceress, they say. I didn't know she was his woman.

OLIVERA

Three men it took to pull her off me. I tell you, Manuel, this colony is a joke. A perfect fit for Spain, the joke of empires. We should just let the British have it, or the Russians. Pack up every hide and go back to Vera Cruz. These savages can't work. They just sit jabbering all day about God knows what. Well, now we do know. They jabber about burning down the fucking mission. That's gratitude.

MONTERO

I think you are not cut out for the mission.

OLIVERA

I was cut out for war, the same as you.

MONTERO

When in Rome--

OLIVERA

A good war, between Christians. At least I know what I am; your problem is you're a soldier who thinks he's a philosopher. They don't mix, my friend. What did the Governor say to Verdugo's petition?

MONTERO

It's granted.

OLIVERA

How does it happen? To that buffoon of a corporal!

MONTERO

From here to the Porciuncula. He's already got a hundred head. He just has to build a house.

OLIVERA

And what are you going to do? Is your friend the governor going to give you a few villages?

MONTERO

I need a wife.

OLIVERA

Then you'll be returning to Vera Cruz as any sane man would. You must excuse my rudeness. You see what life here has done to me. I am a gentle man at heart.

(VERDUGO enters leading
NICOLAS JOSE. NICOLAS' arms
are bound. HE runs to OLIVERA
and grovels at his feet.)

NICOLAS JOSE

Mercy! Mercy, sergeant! Mercy of Christ! Aaii! Aaii!

(VERDUGO kicks NICOLAS JOSE
savagely.)

VERDUGO

Traitor! Keep away from the sergeant! Do not defile him with your filthy touch.

(to MONTERO)

Senor Montero, thank you. A thousand thank yous for my petition.

MONTERO

I had nothing to do with it.

VERDUGO

You carried it to Governor Fages, and brought it back with his stamp.

NICOLAS JOSE

I am innocent, Christ is my witness!

VERDUGO

Blasphemer!

(HE kicks NICOLAS JOSE again.

To MONTERO:)

My family and I are forever in--

NICOLAS JOSE

Girls! I have more girls, Sgt. Olivera. Ripe as berries. Never touched. How you like. Please! Please!

OLIVERA

Shut up.

(HE kicks NICOLAS JOSE. To
VERDUGO:)

Did you get any names?

VERDUGO

Sir, did you know this man was procuring Indian girls for some of the soldiers at the mission? Manuel Vargas, Jose Pico, and others. It was when I put a stop to his heathen abuses that he decided to come and kill us.

OLIVERA

I meant the names of the conspirators. The ones who ran off.

NICOLAS JOSE

It was Toypurina, them witch, her made me do this.

OLIVERA

I thought she was your woman. Is that what you call her in your own tongue?

NICOLAS JOSE

No woman! I not speak Tonga. I am Christian now.

OLIVERA

You're as Christian as my horse.

NICOLAS JOSE

Nicolas Jose. My name! Good Spanish! Father Zalvidea baptised. Blood of Christ! Flesh of Christ!

OLIVERA

Nonsense. You're a useless parasite. I'm going to skin you alive.

(to VERDUGO)

Get him out of here.

(to MONTERO)

I have to interrogate the woman. I have no translator.

NICOLAS JOSE

I am translate! I am speaking Tonga and Spanish!

VERDUGO

That's right, sir! He's a savage, just like her.

OLIVERA

Thank you corporal. You're an idiot.