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## The Archaeologist at Palenque

Wilda Morris  
*College of DuPage*

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# The Archaeologist at Palenque

Wilda Morris

Ah, look, Jean Frederic Maximillien Waldeck is at work. While *campesinos* swing machetes, clearing jungle, Waldeck scratches his bites, curses the heat, wipes sweat from his face, records and embellishes what he finds. Positive the Maya derived their culture from ancient Chaldeans and Hindus, he adds elephants as he sketches hieroglyphs and copies reliefs. He loathes the climate, the insects, every Mexican he has met, even the lovely *mestiza* he shacks up with in his hut by the ruins. He calls himself a Count, brags of friendship with Lord Byron and his visit to Queen Marie Antoinette. He complains there is no culture in Mexico City where he painted portraits of the local gentry, went night after night to opera, ballet, theater, until he found someone to sponsor his dream. He is obsessed with a civilization long gone, even more with a culture which never existed except in his mind.

## Rubicon

Noah Mann-Engel

**D**rown me in the Rubicon, and scale the wall above me. Can you see the edge over the edge of the edge? All I see when I look around are false prophets. Do you see them over there? How about right here? You must see the multitude of hooded bodies hanging from the trees? Am I wrong in assuming that you have never taken the ferry down the dark river. The boatman knows your name but has not seen you. The shore is so very far, and the dawn is further still, over the hill and hidden in a hole. He smiles like Alice's mad cat, and riddles me with cold questions of memories. The river overflows with multitudes of corpses floating to the ocean beneath the seas. I hear him there preparing me for the life I have been wandering towards. He has a home for me, a personal Rome for me, a thorny throne for me from which I can survey the scene. Vinni Vidi Vici, you may try to reach me, but I am far away. I hear you yelling, but I will not respond. My lungs are filled with water from the Rubicon.