

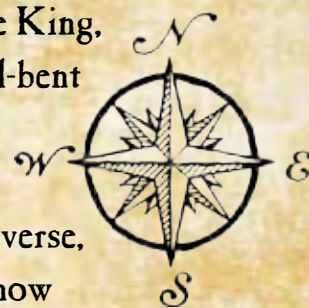
# BRUTAL JOURNEY



An Action/Adventure TV Series Written by Tom Freyer  
Based on the true story and book BRUTAL JOURNEY by Paul Schneider

## CONCEPT.

In 1526, Cabeza de Vaca, pampered Royal Treasurer to the King, is forced to accompany a sadistic, pig-headed explorer hell-bent on outdoing Cortez on the first European crossing of North America. Instead, de Vaca and three other survivors are transformed by the challenging conditions and diverse, sometimes clever, sometimes horrifically brutal (and all now extinct) native tribes of virtually uncharted North America.



## WORLD.

A first-hand look at North America through the eyes of three sixteenth century Spanish conquistadors and one black slave as they survive an untamed land, starvation, enslavement and cannibalism at the hands of the bizarre native tribes they were sent to conquer.

## SHOW SUMMARY.

In sixteenth century Spain, King Charles V orders de Vaca to keep a close eye on Narvaez, a sadistic and vengeful conquista-



dor. Narvaez leads an army of 400 men and women on the first cross-country exploration of North America, in search of gold and slaves. Eight years and five thousand miles later, only four survivors remain: De Vaca, a closet Jew, a woman disguised as a man, and her black slave.

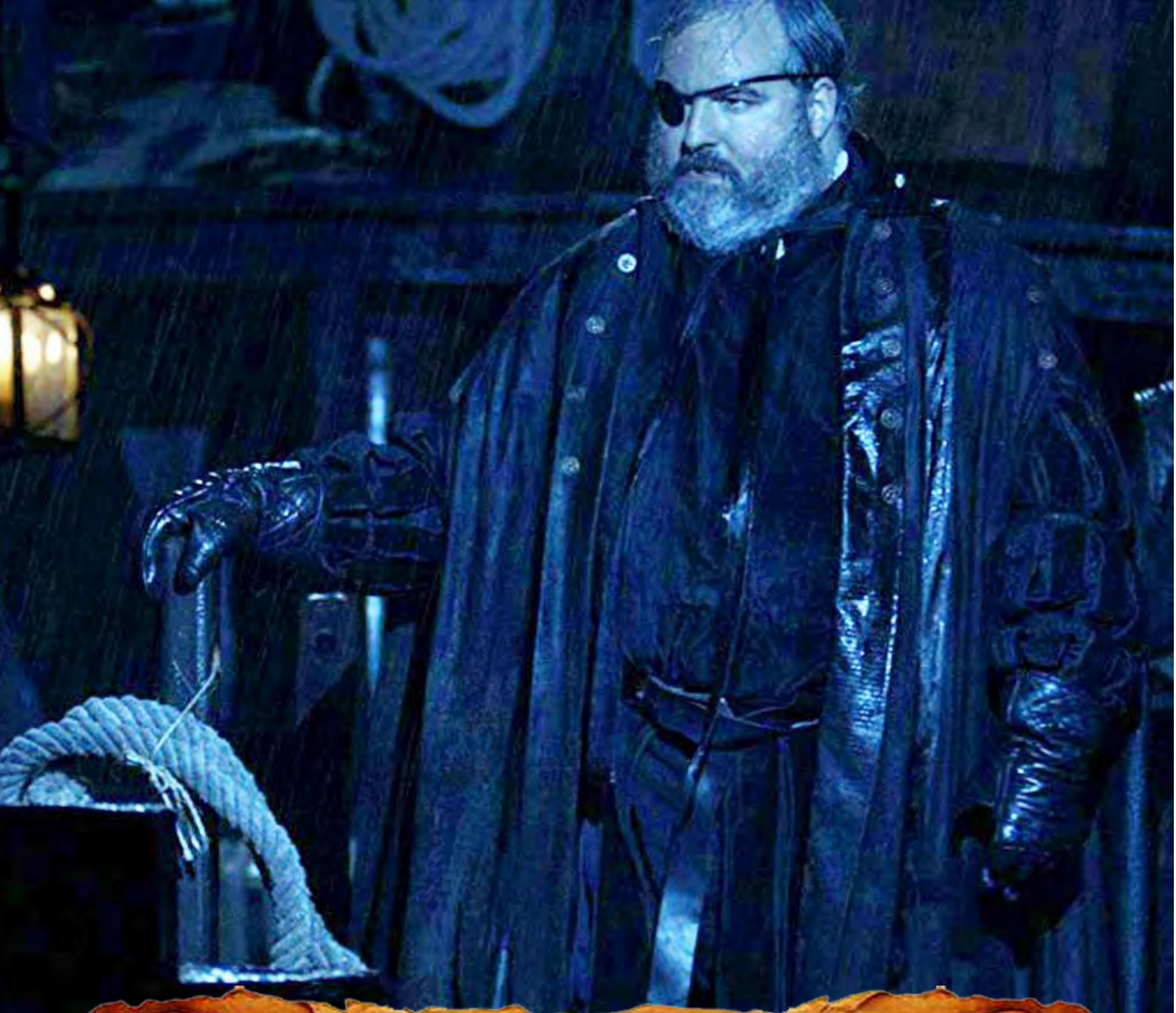
Unlike Cortez, they bring nothing back for the King except one hell of a story. The four had become killers and cannibals, torturers and torture victims, slavers and enslaved. They had become faith healers, arms dealers, spider eaters, and itinerant messiahs. They return to Spain with a radical message of divine providence and human equality that forever alters the course of the Holy Roman Catholic Church.





## Alvar Cabeza de Vaca.

Cabeza de Vaca, 40, was the King's trusted treasurer and watchdog. But he fears King Charles V has discovered he's been having sex with Maria, the King's mistress, when he's forced to accompany the madman Narvaez on his infernal exploration across North America. As his galleon departs, de Vaca sees Maria's naked body hanged from a yardarm in the harbor. On the voyage, de Vaca's pride, practicality and patience are challenged daily by expedition leader Narvaez's cruel, irrational and impulsive decisions, which will eventually force him into a leadership position and an unresolvable dilemma. When Narvaez divides the army, dismisses the fleet, and severs the nose of a Native American tribal chieftain, Cabeza de Vaca realizes he must wrest the leadership position from this unhinged madman before they all perish in this new and forbidding land we now call America.



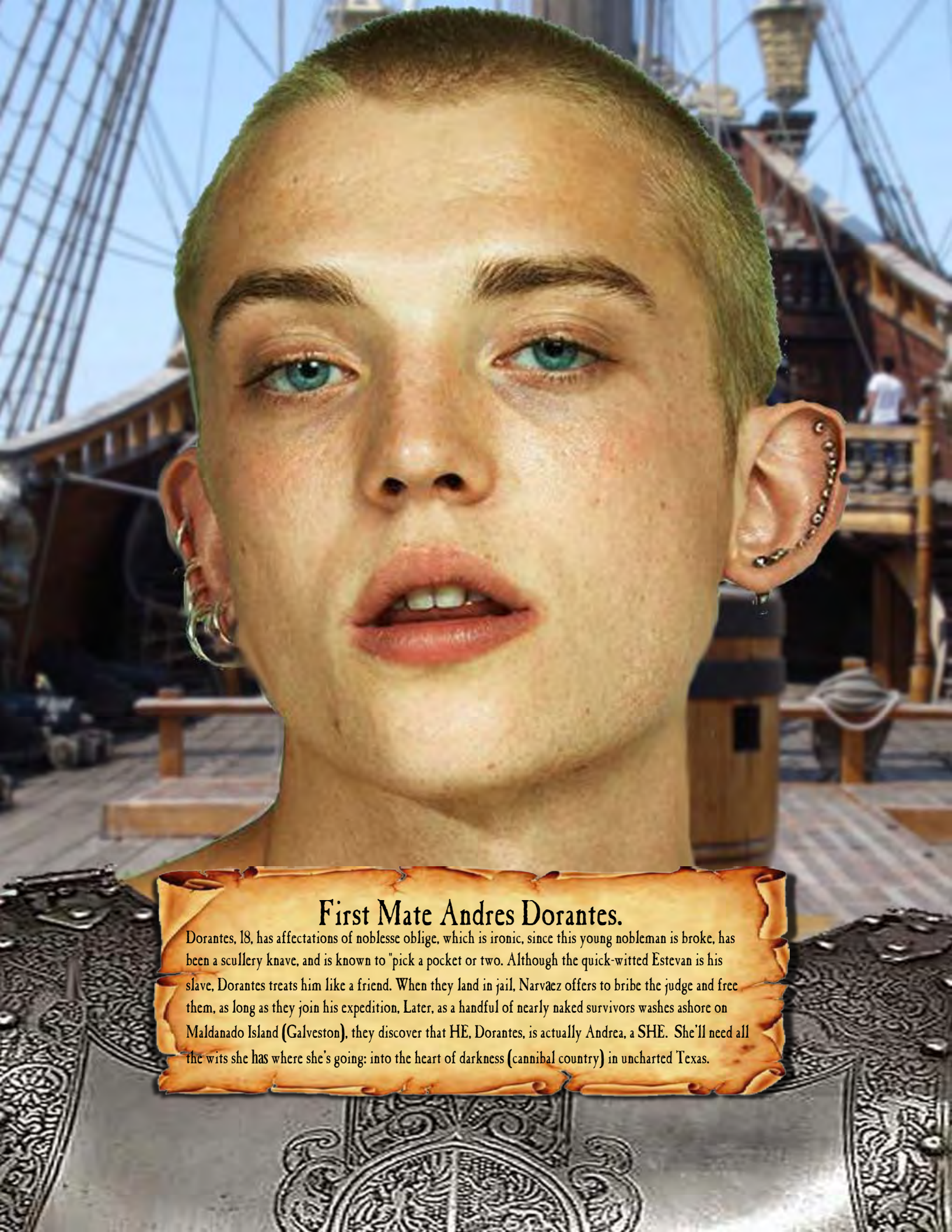
## Panfilo Narvaez.

Narvaez, 50, is the cruel and ruthless one-eyed expedition leader hell-bent on besting Cortez in the capture of gold, slaves and land in the New World. Sent to arrest Cortez by the governor of Cuba, Narvaez loses an eye after a battle, and is imprisoned by Cortez, who has pleased the King with ships full of Mayan gold and slaves. Freed after two years, the King grants Narvaez a commission to conquer North America. Once they arrive in La Florida, Narvaez repeatedly risks his army's safety with his hasty decisions, rabid cruelty and faulty sense of directions. His impulsiveness and violent outbursts create constant conflict with his second in command, Cabeza de Vaca, whom he loathes and labels "the King's watchdog." As the remainder of the explorers' allegiances shift to the more level-headed de Vaca, Narvaez becomes even more enraged. After Narvaez slices off the nose of a captured native chieftain, de Vaca decides it's time to plan for a regime change, even if it means death to one of them.



## Captain Alonso del Castillo.

High-strung like a Flamenco guitar, Castillo, 30s, piloted a ship for an earlier ill-fated exploration to North America with Lucas Vasquez de Ayllon. Only a handful of survivors returned to Hispanola. The cause of Ayllon's death is a mystery, except to Castillo, who won't discuss it. He vows never to return, claiming he's been traumatized by tattooed cannibals, the Karankawa. Narvaez finds out Castillo, a Sephardic Jew, keeps a Talmud. The Inquisition would find that quite interesting. So Narvaez uses that secret to blackmail Castillo into helming a ship to the New World. Will Castillo's prayers about avoiding the land of the man-eating giants be answered as the survivors are carried by rickety rafts deeper into the Gulf?



## First Mate Andres Dorantes.

Dorantes, 18, has affectations of noblesse oblige, which is ironic, since this young nobleman is broke, has been a scullery knave, and is known to "pick a pocket or two. Although the quick-witted Estevan is his slave, Dorantes treats him like a friend. When they land in jail, Narváez offers to bribe the judge and free them, as long as they join his expedition. Later, as a handful of nearly naked survivors washes ashore on Maldonado Island (Galveston), they discover that HE, Dorantes, is actually Andrea, a SHE. She'll need all the wits she has where she's going: into the heart of darkness (cannibal country) in uncharted Texas.



## Estevan the Moor.

Estevan, late 20s, a shrewd Black Moroccan Berber, was captured by the Portuguese and sold into slavery to now penniless Spanish noblewoman Andrea Dorantes. Patient, keenly observant and resourceful, he is able to communicate with many native tribes. To Father Suarez, he poses as a Catholic convert, but secretly he prays as a Muslim, which could get him burned at the stake. Naturally, Estevan hates Portuguese, missionaries and hypocrites -- Suarez is all three -- but being resourceful, he waits patiently for his opportunity for revenge. He is the secret lover of Andrea Dorantes,

## Season One: Hell, American Style.

In 1526, Cuban Governor Panfilo Narvaez and Royal Treasurer Alvar Cabeza de Vaca prepare for their journey to the New World from Cuba. It's a toss-up which will be the most destructive: the hurricanes, the hostile natives or hotheaded Narvaez. Season Arc: the conquistadors transform from entitled, greedy, nobles hopeful to seize slaves, glory and gold, into hungry, thirsty frightened interlopers trying to survive. The main conflict is between Narvaez and de Vaca about everything: where to land in Florida, how to lead the army, leaving the ships, splitting up into two groups, the direction of their destination, etc. Many of the prospective crew on Hispanola know there's no gold or fortunes to be had in the New World, after rumors about Ayllon's disastrous voyage. And what happened to Ayllon? What's going on between the Portuguese pilot and Estevan? Castillo and Father Suarez? Narvaez proves to be a sadistic brute. His jealous rage toward Cortez powers his every move: the slaughter of innocents when Spain claimed Cuba and elsewhere. He sends de Vaca to Cuba with two ships for more supplies, smack into a hurricane, killing nearly all. Did Narvaez set him up? In Florida, hunger, ignorance of the terrain, the heat, the constant harassment by the local tribes, internal dissent and an outbreak of malaria tears the expedition apart. Will they survive the journey? Arriving at the mouth of the Withlacoochie River, they spot beautiful Indian maidens who turn out to be men. It's an ambush, and many are killed. Preparing to ford the river, a well-loved conquistador is bucked by his horse and killed by a cottonmouth. Starving, they are forced to eat the horse.






# Episode 1: Safety Harbor?



**TEASER:** Several conquistadores run, chased by giant tattooed Indians. Castillo escapes, but the Indians capture Ayllon and drag him, screaming, by his ankle back up the beach to a waiting fire.




At the castle in Madrid, King Charles V almost catches de Vaca having sex with his consort Maria. The King has Maria arrested, orders de Vaca to accompany "the lunatic Narvaez," ensure he gets his cut of any treasure, and act as Provost Marshall on an expedition to the New World.

Narvaez tries to recruit Castillo. Castillo makes an excuse why he can't go. Narvaez breaks into his home, discovers Castillo's secret Torah, and forces Castillo to captain one of his ships or face the inquisition.

Dorantes and Esteban are jailed for pickpocketing. Narvaez offers to bribe the judge if they'll accompany him. With the only other choice rotting in jail, they agree to go.

Narvaez hears a hurricane is heading for Cuba. He orders de Vaca to sail there for supplies. As de Vaca sails off, he sees Maria, hanging from a yardarm. The hurricane hits. De Vaca's life is spared because he's ashore, but his ships, men and horses are lost. Narvaez, secretly disappointed he's alive, has another ship, collect de Vaca, and the fleet sets sail for Florida.

After losing his way, near starvation, they land in what is now Tampa Bay. They search for food. Instead they find a hut containing the bodies of several Spaniards. They burn the hut, which angers the elusive natives. After a short battle, Narvaez captures their Chief, and cuts off his nose to prove they mean business. De Vaca is horrified. The natives provide food and shelter for the starving Spaniards. But in the middle of the night, the natives begin bashing in the Spaniards' heads with stone axes.



## Episode 2: Say Your Prayers.

When de Vaca and the surviving explorers awaken to the brutality, they discover the Indians have killed nearly a hundred of their men. They kill as many Indians as they can, and await Narvaez's orders. The expedition prepares to depart Safety Harbor. They will rendezvous with the ships at the great bay to the north. Castillo asks Dorantes if he's sleeping with Esteban. Dorantes scoffs, teases Castillo but says nothing. Father Suarez leads them in a Catholic prayer. Esteban sneaks off. Suarez sees this, and orders an acolyte to follow Esteban. In the forest, Esteban pulls out a prayer rug and secretly prays to Allah in Arabic. The acolyte's eyes widen. He returns, whispers to Father Suarez, who stares long and hard at Esteban.



## Episode 3: Ship of Fools.

Narvaez's army of foot soldiers and cavalry begin the long arduous hike, slowed down by swamps, thickets and impassable forests. In the Gulf, the captains of the two remaining galleons sail fruitlessly up and down the coast, looking for the Bay rendezvous on the map. De Vaca learns from an Aztec slave why Narvaez hates Cortez. In flashback, Narvaez is ordered by the governor of Cuba to arrest Cortez. But instead, he is arrested by Cortez and blinded in one eye. Cortez is the King's darling, having sent two ships full of gold and slaves to His Majesty. Later, two Spanish galleons pull into Withlacoochee Bay. They are the ships Narvaez sent ahead. Before the explorers can reach the Bay, they are attacked by frightening, tall and muscular Timucua Indians. Several more conquistadors die before they scare them off with musket and cannon fire.



## Episode 4: Going in Circles.

Endless mosquito-infested swamps lead to endless forests. More men sicken and die. The remainder are near starvation. At one camp, Cabeza de Vaca reads Friar Bartolome De Las Casas' account of Narvaez's brutality in Cuba, which we see in flashback. De Vaca grows to loathe him. They discover palmetto plants, and survive on hearts of palm. Narvaez, feverish and delusional, leads them in a large circle through the forests and right back to Withlacoochee Bay. De Vaca assumes command of half the army, Narvaez the other half. De Vaca decides to wait for the ships with the cavalry while Narvaez and infantry look inland for food. The explorers are attacked by the Timucua again, who kill and wound many explorers before they are beaten back.



## Episode 5: Bad Air, Pretty Water.

The galleons sail away from Withacoochie Bay before Narvaez's army can even cross the Withlacoochee River. One conquistador's horse is spooked by a cottonmouth snake, throws the rider. The snake bites him. Later, as they trudge through endless mosquito-infested swamps, the snake-bitten soldier dies. Starving, they are forced to eat his horse. De Vaca refuses to take part. One night, Castillo spots Dorantes and Esteban laughing under the blankets together. He's disturbed. Later, Castillo finds himself on a familiar island, Giant tattooed Indians, fire arrows from enormous bows, and almost catch up to him. He awakens, sweating. It was a dream. Estevan plots to kill Father Suarez for threatening him with the inquisition. Narvaez and many of the men become ill from the mosquitoes. Perplexed, de Vaca queries the expedition physician, who calls it "bad air" and bleeds Narvaez with leeches. It's malaria.

## Episode 6: Which Way West?

Endless mosquito-infested swamps lead to endless forests. More men sicken and die. The remainder are near starvation. By firelight, Cabeza de Vaca reads Friar Bartolome Las Casas' account of Narvaez's brutal slaughter of 200 peaceful Natives in Cuba, which we see in flashback. They discover palmetto plants, and survive on hearts of palm. Narvaez, feverish and delusional, leads them in a large circle through the forests and right back to Withlacoochee Bay. Following a heated argument, de Vaca assumes command. He and cavalry will wait for the ships with the cavalry while Narvaez and the infantry look inland for food. The explorers are attacked by the Timucua again. This time, they capture and enslave them behind a walled-in concentric village with only one opening.



## Episode 7: The Slavers Enslaved.

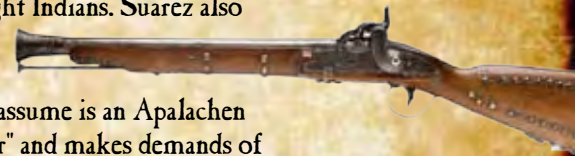
With Narvaez and half the army chained and penned up like animals, de Vaca and the rest must find a way to spring them. While Esteban prays to Allah, he spots a Florida panther. He sneaks back to warn the others. De Vaca gets an idea and shares it with Dorantes, Estevan, and Castillo. They build a large cage with a trap out of branches. They build a ramp large enough to scale the village wall. De Vaca puts the last of the horsemeat in the cage, waits, and captures the panther. Late at night, they haul the cage and ramp to the village wall, place the cannon at the top, and release the panther into the village. As the Indians awaken, panicked, de Vaca begins firing the cannon, the rest fire harquebuses, free the prisoners and make their escape. That night, Father Suarez stumbles upon Dorantes and Estevan making love.





## Episode 8: The Apalachen Trail.

Father Suarez tells de Vaca that Estevan is a Muslim and that he and Dorantes are homosexuals. He recommends they be put in irons until an inquisition can be convened. De Vaca tells the Father he needs every able-bodied man to fight Indians. Suarez also tells him Narvaez said Castillo might be a Jew. De Vaca promises Suarez that as soon as they get back to Spanish ground, he'll support a hearing. The army discovers what they assume is an Apalachen village of about forty huts. Narvaez captures the village "mayor" and makes demands of food. Some of the villagers dash off toward the forest. Before long, the village is crowded with a mighty force: the enraged main tribe of the entire inland region Apalachen warriors. De Vaca, Narvaez, the infantry and cavalry are chased down the mountain, and dive into a huge swamp to avoid the arrows. The Apalachee stop at the edge of the swamp. It is filled with alligators. A huge one seizes Father Suarez in its jaws and chows down. Several other men soon suffer the same fate.



## Episode 9: The Seashore and the Unsure.

Starving, thirsty and fed up with the endless swamps, the army begins making its way along the gulf shore. Since Narvaez is ill with malaria, the army looks more and more to de Vaca for leadership. They find a beach with oysters and gorge themselves. As they make their way west, many are sickened by the out of season oysters. On the beach, Dorantes finds a note staked to the ground addressed to Narvaez. It's from the captains of the two ships. They have abandoned the search and returned to Hispanola. De Vaca, on the pretense of relieving himself, heads to a nearby stand of trees. He hides behind them, falls to his knees, and weeps.





## Season One: Hell, American Style.

In 1526 Spain, Cabeza De Vaca, Royal Treasurer, is forced by King Charles V to accompany the unhinged Panfilo Narvaez on the first cross country exploration of North America. Before long, Narvaez orders him into an oncoming hurricane to kill him, loses half the fleet, half the army and most of the horses, misdirects the survivors into marching north across inhospitable terrain with no food and little water. He wars on every native tribe he encounters until the one in Florida lulls him into a false sense of security, and murders nearly a hundred men in their sleep.

## Season Two: The Savages of Florida. And Spain.

Narvaez searches for a tribe near the coast, the Aute, After Father Suarez threatens to hold an inquisition and burn Castillo, Dorantes and Estevan at the stake as heretics, De Vaca finds Suarez sleeping with his acolyte! After finding only dried corn, and repeated battles with the Aute, the dwindling army makes its way through a half dozen alligator-infested swamps, and finally to the sea. Narvaez and about a third of the remaining army becomes ill with a mysterious disease. Starving, they're forced to kill their horses, build a forge to melt their armor, sew their shirts into sails and fell trees to make several rickety rafts. The hundred or so desperate explorers set sail into stormy seas.



## Season Three: Engulfed by the Gulf.

Having found the gulf coastal lands impassable by foot, the remaining explorers depart in five rafts, each capable of holding forty men, and set sail for Mexico. But each time they find an inlet and attempt to disembark for food or water, they are set upon by hostile natives. Meantime, death from exposure, hunger, illness and drowning takes more explorers. Castillo tells de Vaca about Ayllon's fate at the hands of the tribe of giants, the Karankawa. How they bury their enemies in sand waist-deep, builds a fire around them, and roast and eat them as their captives watch. They arrive at the Mississippi river, which threatens to push them out to sea. Narvaez tells de Vaca it's every man for himself. De Vaca cuts his rope, sending Narvaez out to sea. Finally, a handful of half-naked survivors crash-land on Malhado Island (Galveston). Castillo thinks he recognizes the island: home of his worst nightmare: the Karankawa.





## Season Four: The Weeping Cannibals of Texas.

A tribe of tall, muscular, tattooed Indians surround the gulf raft survivors, bows and arrows drawn. De Vaca gives the chief a sack of trinkets. Delighted, the Indians hand de Vaca an arrow, which he takes as a sign of peace. To the survivors' relief, the Indians do not respond to the name 'Karankawa.' They call themselves the Capoques, and more appear with fish and roots. That night, de Vaca asks to stay with the Indians in their huts. Some rafters fear being sacrificed, but due to the cold, de Vaca tells them they'll die one way or another. The Capoques lead them to a large hut and campfire .

Next day, de Vaca inquires about a Spanish item an Indian wears. The Indians indicate other Spaniards have arrived further down the beach. Soon, they are reunited with Dorantes, Estevan and a few other half-naked survivors. Shirtless, it's clear Dorantes is a woman.

The four survivors work as slaves, gathering roots and nuts for the tribe. At sunset, the Capoques gather at the tide's edge to weep. Through sign language, Estevan learns that the Indians fear each sunset will be their last. One night, another raft washes up in the surf.

It's Narvaez. As he tumbles out, he sees the armed Capoques, and raises his sword . A brave quickly shoots it out of his hand with an arrow. The Capoques seize him, bury him hip-deep in the sand, and build a fire around him. He screams as they roast him and eat him. A few miles down the beach, de Vaca and the others hear his screams and run toward the sound. By the time they arrive, little remains of Narvaez but a charred skull, a few scattered bones, and his sword. The four make a pact to escape as soon as possible.





## Season Five: Four Faith-healers.

The four survivors, reunited, escape captivity, become shamen and healers to survive the random tribes, and miraculously make it back to a Spanish settlement with no treasure except their powerful message of human equality. The three former Spanish noblemen and former slave are transformed by faith healing and come to believe God created all men to be equal. What is this mysterious power they've been given that really heals patients? What if it fails them?

Eventually, they reach the Spanish settlement Cuilican, in Baja, California. What will the slavers do? Will the Christians protect the Indians as de Vaca has promised? What happened to the High Sierra village dwellers? The village is empty of people. Cabeza de Vaca, Castillo and Estaven catch the next ship galleon sailing for Spain. He has no treasure but a manuscript, and wonders what the King will think. Meanwhile, back at Cuilican, the slavers have rounded up the High Sierra Indians and put them in chains, despite Dorantes' insistence they've become Christians. So she steals a key and gives it to the first Indian in line, who unlocks his chain and passes it back. The freed Indians surprise the slavers, yank them off their horses with the chains, and kill them. Back in Madrid, Cabeza de Vaca walks, smiling, into the King's castle.

