

This Little Town

A play by Susan C. Hunter

© 2012 by Susan C. Hunter

This play is for perusal only. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. All productions, public or private, professional or amateur, must first obtain a license to perform the play. Upon receiving a license to perform the play, an unlocked PDF will be emailed to you for distribution to your players. Licensing information is available on the web site largecastplays.com.

This Little Town

A play by Susan C. Hunter

© 2012 by Susan C. Hunter

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RAYMONDO - A vagabond. Friendly and helpful to all.

SENORA MORENO - A selfish and disagreeable old woman

ANNA - One of the village children

LUPE - Another child of the village

FRANCISCA - Child

PACO - The youngest child, a bit lazy

COYOTE BLANCO - A mysterious stranger, sometimes good, sometimes bad

MAYOR AGUILAR - A foolish father who cannot distinguish between flattery and love

RAFAELA - A very spoiled young lady

CONSUELO - Rafaela's very spoiled sister

JOVITA - Sister to Consuelo and Rafaela, but strong, courageous, and generous

GARCIA - Sweet-natured villager who is very gullible and trusts everyone

GONZALEZ - Garcia's friend, willing to cheat his pal if it will benefit himself

EL VIEJO - A wise old man, very fond of proverbs and clever sayings

JESUSITA - Garcia's wife and servant to Senora Moreno, a happy-go-lucky sort of woman

SETTING: A village square in Mexico of another time.

AT RISE: *RAYMONDO* enters as others pass by intent on their daily business.

RAYMONDO

This little town. It is really very ordinary. Like many others, it is filled with people of all sorts. Some are wise.

EL VIEJO

(Entering, leaning on a cane)

An old man's words are like little gospels, for the wisest thoughts are born of experience.

RAYMONDO

Some are fools.

GARCIA

Buenas Dias, Viejo.

EL VIEJO

(As he exits)

Buenas dias, Senor Garcia.

(GARCIA bumps into MAYOR AGUILAR, who is carrying a proclamation, that he drops.)

Your pardon, el Mayor.

(He exits.)

MAYOR

I have a proclamation. Let everyone hear.

(Several people walk by, paying no attention)

Let everyone hear.

(More people walk by without listening.)

So I will save it for tomorrow.

(He exits.)

RAYMONDO

Some are greedy.

(He holds out his hand to SENORA MORENO as she enters her garden)

SENORA

Not a peso for any of you loafers. Do you think money grows on trees?

GONZALEZ

A face like that comes from tasting too many of her own lemons.

SENORA

Get away!

(GONZALEZ slouches off.)

RAYMONDO

(Indicating GONZALEZ)

Some who are loafers. Some who are always industrious.

(JESUSITA bustles by with a load of wood.)

Some who are schemers.

CONSUELO

(To RAFAELA, as they enter)

Rafaela!

RAFAELA

Ay, what?

CONSUELO

La Bruja has foretold that I will marry a count.

RAFAELA

A count, Consuelo?

CONSUELO

Si. But if I am good enough for a count, why not a prince?

RAFAELA

Can I have the count, then?

JOVITA

Hello, sisters.

CONSUELO AND RAFAELA

(Rudely)

Hello.

RAYMONDO

Some are dreamers.

JOVITA

It is said that the Golden City of El Dorado is just over those hills. I wonder if it's true.

CONSUELO

Why don't you go and find out?

(They all exit.)

RAYMONDO

Some are mysterious strangers.

COYOTE BLANCO

Am I up to no good? Or doing no harm? Perhaps it is up to you.

RAYMONDO

And some are handsome adventurers, just passing through.

(He indicates himself)

But each has his tale to tell and each lends his story to this little town.

(We are in a sunny garden bordered by a village square. A group of CHILDREN form a circle and dance as they sing. ANNA is in the middle of the circle.)

CHILDREN

Rueda, Rueda, San Miguel, San Miguel
Todos traen camote y miel
A lo maduro, a lo maduro

ANNA

Que se voltee Paco de burro

(PACO turns facing out as circle begins to move again)

CHILDREN

Rueda, Rueda, San Miguel, San Miguel
Todos traen camote y miel
A lo maduro, a lo maduro

ANNA

Que se voltee Lupe de burro

(LUPE faces outward)

CHILDREN

Rueda, Rueda, San Miguel, San Miguel

SENORA MORENO

Out! Out! Out of my garden!

CHILDREN

Si, Senora Moreno.

(They start to run away)

SENORA

(To PACO, who is frozen in fear)

You heard me. Go home before I call El Coco, the bogeyman, to snatch you from your bed tonight.

PACO

(Running fearfully)

Nooo!

RAYMONDO

(Entering, as PACO runs into him)

Take care.

PACO

Ah! El Coco!

(He exits.)

MAYOR

(Entering with his three daughters, CONSUELO, RAFAELA, and JOVITA)

Come along, daughters. Consuelo, step lively. You are so slow.

CONSUELO

Si, Papa. But you move so swiftly.

MAYOR

Rafaela, do not dawdle. You are always the last to begin and the first to quit.

RAFAELA

Ay, Papa.

MAYOR

Jovita, my dear child, follow closely.

(JOVITA has stopped to look at RAYMONDO)

JOVITA

Hello. Who are you?

MAYOR

Jovita!

JOVITA

Si, Papa.

RAYMONDO

Raymondo Gomez. And you?

MAYOR

Mind your own business, stranger. That is good advice for anyone.

EL VIEJO

(Entering)

Certainly.

JOVITA

(Running back to shake RAYMONDO's hand)

Welcome to Estrella de los Ojos.

RAYMONDO

Gracias.

MAYOR

Jovita Maria Delores Conchita Aguilar! Come quickly. I have ordered a lovely new shawl for you. Perhaps it has been delivered.

RAFAELA

Ay, Papa. What about me?

CONSUELO

And me, Papa.

MAYOR

Certainly, of course. I'm sure there will be something for the two of you as well. Jovita!

EL VIEJO

Hurry, girl! He who doesn't look ahead is left behind!

JOVITA

Coming, Papa.

RAYMONDO

Pardon, old man. Who was that young girl?

EL VIEJO

That is the Senorita Jovita, favorite daughter of our beloved Mayor.

RAYMONDO

The mayor, eh? She is a beautiful girl.

EL VIEJO

And spirited. What brings you to our little village, Senor?

RAYMONDO

I have been sent by my mother to seek my fate, just as my brothers before me have done.

EL VIEJO

And how have they fared?

RAYMONDO

It is unknown. Neither has ever returned. Mama cannot eat or sleep for worry.

EL VIEJO

Good fortune to you then. For your sake as well as your mother's. Ah, Senora Moreno, a sunny day is only overshadowed by a beautiful woman .

SENORA

Stay out of my garden, old man. Beggars are not welcome here.

EL VIEJO

I ask only an orange from your tree.

SENORA

And if I gave you an orange today, you would be back tomorrow looking for grapes.

EL VIEJO

You are a woman of wealth, Senora.

SENORA

Thanks to the love of my poor, poor husband, Juan Carlo. May he rest peacefully.

(She takes out a handkerchief and sob.s)

EL VIEJO

(To RAYMONDO)

A rich widow cries with one eye. . .

(He imitates weeping.)

and smiles with the other.

(He rubs his fingers together indicating a love of money.)

SENORA

And I have no intention of wasting what I have on the likes of you.

(She exits.)

EL VIEJO

*(Looks around, puts his finger to his lips as if telling **RAYMONDO** to be silent, then begins sneaking toward the garden.)*

Shh.

SENORA

(Suddenly reappearing)

Viejo tanto! Out of my garden. Thief! Thief!

EL VIEJO

All right, all right. Dan mas donde no conocen. They give more where you aren't known.

*(He has managed to swipe an orange, and shows it to **RAYMONDO**, who laughs.)*

RAYMONDO

You are like a cagey coyote, old man..

EL VIEJO

I am. Belly full, heart easy, as they say.

(They sit on a nearby bench.)

GARCIA

*(Entering from the opposite direction as **GONZALEZ**)*

Gonzalez! My Compadre!

GONZALEZ

Garcia! My friend!

*(They meet and embrace. **GONZALEZ** takes **GARCIA**'s hat and puts it on his own head.)*

How have you been?

GARCIA

Very good.

GONZALEZ

And your wife, Jesusita?

*(He takes the hoe out of **GARCIA**'s hand.)*

GARCIA

Happy and plump.

GONZALEZ

Excellent.

(He embraces GARCIA again and takes a small money bag from his pocket)

And your cow?

GARCIA

Content to chew her cud and eat grass.

GONZALEZ

No complaints then?

GARCIA

None. And you?

GONZALEZ

Happy as a snake in his hole.

GARCIA

How are your fields?

GONZALEZ

As well as can be wished.

GARCIA

Have you cleared them?

GONZALEZ

Tomorrow, perhaps.

GARCIA

But it is nearly planting time.

GONZALEZ

Is it, my friend?

GARCIA

(Laughing)

You are lucky you are not married. My Jesusita would throw me out of the house if I spent as much time in my hammock as you do.

GONZALEZ

I get along.

GARCIA

Yes, and that is a mystery to be solved. Well, adios, Gonzalez, I am off to buy a loaf of bread.

GONZALEZ

(With GARCIA's money in his hand)

Good luck, Garcia.

GARCIA

To you as well, compadre.

(GONZALEZ exits. GARCIA looks in his pocket for his money bag.)

Where is my money? I must have left it in the field. Back I go. It is lucky my head is attached to my body.

(He suddenly feels the top of his head.)

My hat!

(He exits in confusion.)

CHILDREN

(Entering and singing)

Estando el señor don Gato
Senadito en un tejado
Ha recibido una carta
Que si quiere ser casado
Con una gata montesa,
Sobrina de un gato pardo.
Aleyalapun, aleyalapun
Sobrina de un gato pardo

Don Gato the cat, one sunny day,
Was seated upon the roof, they say.
When they handed him a letter
Yes, they handed him a letter,
The letter was from a lady cat and
Contained a proposal quite solemn.
In his surprise he fell off the roof
And fractured his vertebral column!
Aleyalapun, aleyalapun
A cat has nine lives, and we but one.
Aleyalapun, aleyalapun
A cat has nine lives and we but one.

The doctor he came and gave him pills
And told him to take them for his ills
But he didn't want to do it.
He didn't want to do it.
At midnight he died. They took him out.
At Fishmarket Street, so it's stated
So strong was the odor of the fish

Don Gato was resuscitated
Aleyalapun, aleyalapun
A cat has nine lives and we but one.
Aleyalapun, aleyalapun
A cat has nine lives, and we but one.

EL VIEJO

(Entering at the end of the song)

Good afternoon, children. I have been looking for you.

(The CHILDREN gather around EL VIEJO)

LUPE

Why?

EL VIEJO

I have a present for one of you.

FRANCISCA

Who?

EL VIEJO

I do not know yet. It is a prize.

ANNA

Is it a game?

EL VIEJO

No, no, my little Anna. This prize will go to the one of you who performs the noblest deed.

PACO

What is a noble deed?

EL VIEJO

It is an act that is kind and courageous. It must also be generous and without thought for your own benefit.

LUPE

And what is the prize?

EL VIEJO

You will get my blessing. . . .and this!

(He pulls out a jewel from his pocket.)

CHILDREN

Ooooo.

EL VIEJO

It is all that I have left in the world. I am old and will soon have no need of earthly treasure. Since I have no family, I have decided to give this jewel to the noblest among the village children. You will have one week to perform your deeds. At the end of that time, I will make my decision.

PACO

We have to be good for a whole week?

EL VIEJO

Yes, my child.

PACO

That will be hard.

EL VIEJO

Yes, but remember the old saying, "Little by little will send you far". Take it one good deed at a time.

LUPE

Can I bring you a gourd filled with water, Tio Viejo?

EL VIEJO

Yes, my dear.

LUPE

(To other CHILDREN)

You see, I am already doing noble things.

EL VIEJO

Yes, but the deed I am thinking of will have to be much greater than showing respect to your elders. That is something you should always remember to do.

CHILDREN

Si, senior.

LUPE

I will get it for you anyway.

(LUPE and EL VIEJO exit.)

PACO

(Mimicking LUPE)

I will get it for you anyway. Yuch! Francisca, let's get some fruit from Senora Moreno's garden.

FRANCISCA

That isn't very noble, Paco

PACO

We have a whole week to do one good deed. Why start so soon?

FRANCISCA

True.

PACO

And look at her oranges, just waiting for someone to pick them.

FRANCISCA

They do look juicy.

PACO

She won't share them with anyone. She lets them fall to the ground and rot before she offers any to the rest of us.

ANNA

That just isn't right.

FRANCISCA

In a way, it would be noble of us to eat the fruit. Then, at least it wouldn't go to waste.

PACO

I think it would be very noble.

ANNA

I agree.

FRANCISCA

Well, then. . . .

(They start to sneak into the yard.)

SENORA

Aha! I caught you little rascals! Your fathers shall hear of this! And so shall the police. You stay right there while I bring out my chirrionera, my whipping snake. Then you will be truly sorry! I have taught it to stand on its head and to crack its tail like a whip. That should smart. Yes, it should.

(She rushes out.)

ANNA

(To other children)

Don't we have some noble deeds to do?

FRANCISCA

I know I do.

PACO

So do I.

ANNA

Let's go then.

OTHERS

Yes, let's go.

GARCIA

(Re-entering and addressing RAYMONDO)

Excuse me, friend. Have you seen a hat and a bag of money looking for their master?

RAYMONDO

I believe your compadre took them both.

GARCIA

What? Gonzalez? Oh no, senor, you are surely mistaken. He has a hat and money of his own. What would he want with mine?

RAYMONDO

What indeed?

GARCIA

Oh look! Here is my beautiful wife, Jesusita.

JESUSITA

(Happily)

Husband!

GARCIA

Wife!

JESUSITA

Where is your hat?

GARCIA

I do not know.

JESUSITA

Ay. Where is your money bag?

GARCIA

With my hat.

JESUSITA

Ay.

GARCIA

What brings you outside, my darling? You should be preparing the Senora Moreno's morning meal.

JESUSITA

Ay! But I have such news!

GARCIA

Tell me quickly.

JESUSITA

My mother has sent a message with Rosario's brother, Fredo, who has only this morning returned from her little village of Santa Isabella.

GARCIA

A message from your mother, Jesusita?

JESUSITA

Si.

(They stand in silence a moment.)

Would you like to know what it was?

GARCIA

Certainly, Jesusita. If you wish.

JESUSITA

She has invited herself to visit.

GARCIA

Here?

JESUSITA

Si!

GARCIA

And she will be welcome.

JESUSITA

Of course she will.

(They stand in silence for a moment.)

Would you like to know what I would like?

GARCIA

Yes, truly.

JESUSITA

I would like you to sell the cow.

GARCIA

I can do that. But why?

JESUSITA

We must have a big fiesta.

(Silence)

To celebrate my Mama's arrival.

GARCIA

We certainly must.

(A moment of silence)

I will go get the cow in the field.

JESUSITA

I will return to the Senora's kitchen. With only one bed in our little casa, where will Mama sleep?

GARCIA

She will have the bed. We will take the floor.

JESUSITA

My brilliant husband. He thinks of everything.

(They exit.)

GONZALEZ

(Entering with a sack of seeds in one hand and GARCIA's hoe in the other. He is wearing GARCIA's hat.)

Garcia, where are you going, compadre?

GARCIA

To the field to get the cow.

GONZALEZ

Would you scatter these seeds on my patch of land as you pass?

GARCIA

But the land must be tilled.

GONZALEZ

Gracias, compadre, you are kind to offer.

GARCIA

Am I, my friend? I have nothing to use for digging.

GONZALEZ

(Handing Garcia his own hoe)

Here. I will lend you this one.

GARCIA

You are too kind. Such a fine instrument. It resembles my own.

GONZALEZ

And you will have to bring water from the well or the little seeds will die of thirst.

GARCIA

Si, it is so. But how will I carry it?

GONZALEZ

(Handing GARCIA his own hat)

Use this.

GARCIA

Muchas gracias. A fine hat such as this will hold water without leaking. I know. Mine is very much like it.

(He puts it on his head.)

Gonzalez! It fits.

GONZALEZ

Diablo! It does? You may use it. But bring it back to me, my friend. And Garcia! Don't forget to cover each seed with soil.

GARCIA

You can count on me. Adios, Gonzalez.

GONZALEZ

Hasta la vista, Garcia.

(He pulls out GARCIA's money bag)

Well, this will buy a nice loaf of bread and perhaps a bit of cheese to make a fine meal for me after such a hard day of work in the fields.

(He exits happily, bumping into COYOTE BLANCO.)

Out of my way.

COYOTE

My pardon, senior.

(GONZALEZ drops the money bag without noticing. COYOTE picks it up)

My pardon indeed.

(He howls in triumph)

CONSUELO

(Entering with RAFAELA)

Rafaela.

RAFAELA

Si, Consuelo?

CONSUELO

I am hungry.

RAFAELA

Ay, so am I.

CONSUELO

I am thirsty.

RAFAELA

And I as well.

CONSUELO

I would like a fancy new blouse. Would you?

RAFAELA

Si, Consuelo.

CONSUELO

And ribbons of every color for my hair.

RAFAELA

Ay, so would I.

CONSUELO

Then all the young men would look at me and sigh for love.

RAFAELA

And the handsomest would ask me to dance at the next fiesta.

CONSUELO

Well, I would share a man or two with you, Rafaela.

RAFAELA

No, I would share with you.

CONSUELO

But we have none of these things.

RAFAELA

Ay, no, we do not.

CONSUELO

And do you know why, Rafaela?

RAFAELA

(Unsure)

Because. . . .

CONSUELO

Because of that sister of ours, Jovita.

RAFAELA

Ay, I hate her.

CONSUELO

She is Papa's favorite.

RAFAELA

Si!

CONSUELO

She gets the tenderest morsels.

RAFAELA

Si!

CONSUELO

She has the most beautiful clothes.

RAFAELA

Si!

CONSUELO

And ribbons?

RAFAELA

Every color in the rainbow. And more!

CONSUELO

She is all smiles and kind words. She never complains.

RAFAELA

Why should she? She has nothing to complain about.

COYOTE

Why not be rid of her?

*(The sisters do not look at **COYOTE**, nor acknowledge his presence. He seems to be almost invisible to them. They respond as if the other were speaking rather than **COYOTE**.)*

CONSUELO

Excellent idea! But how?

COYOTE

Show him how much you love him.

RAFAELA

What good would that do?

COYOTE

How can it hurt? Jovita gets everything now.

CONSUELO

Si, everything!

RAFAELA

Ay, I hate her! I could say it all day!

MAYOR

(Entering with JOVITA)

You've been a good girl today, Jovita. Let me buy something for you as a reward.

CONSUELO

We have also been good Papa.

RAFAELA

What will you buy for us?

MAYOR

You? Well.

COYOTE

Have a contest.

MAYOR

(Responding as if one of his daughters has spoken)

A contest?

COYOTE

To see which daughter loves you most.

MAYOR

I don't know.

COYOTE

It will give you another chance to shower presents on your favorite daughter.

MAYOR

True. Come, daughters. Tell me which one of you loves me most and I will buy that child whatever her heart desires.

CONSUELO

Let me speak first.

MAYOR

Very well, Consuelo, my eldest.

COYOTE

Here is your chance.

CONSUELO

I love you more than there are waves in the ocean or grains of sand on the beach. More than all the fish that swim or animals that walk the earth. Stronger than any ox. Sweeter than a pajarito's song. That is how much I love you, my papa.

MAYOR

I never knew you cared so much.

CONSUELO

You never asked.

RAFAELA

And now, Papa, may I speak?

MAYOR

Certainly, Rafaela.

RAFAELA

My sister, although she has certainly never shown it, has sworn her greatest love to you. But I, Papa, I have a love that is even greater.

MAYOR

You do?

RAFAELA

Si, Papa. My love is greater than the sky above us. There is more love in my heart for you than there are stars to count. My love is brighter than the sun and fuller than the roundest moon. It is endless as the universe. And therefore, infinite.

MAYOR

Well, well. That is an impressive declaration. Jovita, my youngest. It would seem impossible to love me more than your two sisters do. Tell me how much you love me, my sweet one.

JOVITA

I love you, Papa, more than salt.

MAYOR

Salt? Salt!

CONSUELO

What kind of love is that?

MAYOR

Speak again, Jovita. Surely your love is stronger than that.

JOVITA

I can't speak in extravagant phrases as Consuelo and Rafaela have done, but believe me, Papa that my love is as great as theirs.

MAYOR

Because it is like salt?

JOVITA

Si, Papa.

COYOTE

This is outrageous! How dare she speak so!

MAYOR

Yes, yes! Outrageous!

COYOTE

She must be punished for her ungrateful words. She, the one to whom you have given your greatest affection.

MAYOR

Yes, you must be punished for this!

JOVITA

But Papa. Let me explain my meaning.

MAYOR

No need for explanations. Leave my sight forever.

JOVITA

No, Papa!

MAYOR

Do not return to this little town on pain of death.

JOVITA

You don't understand.

MAYOR

All of these years, I have been blind. To give favor to such a daughter. Out! Out I say. I shall never speak your name again!

(He exits angrily.)

JOVITA

Consuelo, Rafaela. Talk to Papa. Reason with him.

CONSUELO

Why should we?

RAFAELA

You got just what you deserved!

(They exit, laughing nastily. COYOTE trips them as they walk by.)

COYOTE

If I were you, I would run home to steal my father's money and hide my sisters' Sunday shoes.

JOVITA

(Looking at COYOTE and speaking directly to him)

I won't betray my family. One day they'll see, but until then, I'm off to seek my fortune.

COYOTE

(Blocking her path)

It is a dangerous world for a young senorita, all alone.

JOVITA

I'm not afraid.

COYOTE

(Standing aside)

Go then. Vaya con Dios.

RAYMONDO

Pardon me, senorita. Would you like a traveling companion? I, too have heard that the Golden City of El Dorado is just beyond those hills.

JOVITA

Thank you, Raymondo. I'll need a good companion.

RAYMONDO

And I as well.

JOVITA

I'll collect my belongings, then.

RAYMONDO

I will wait here on this very spot.

(She exits. SENORA MORENO enters. COYOTE approaches her.)

SENORA

Bring my breakfast into the garden, Jesusita. I shall eat in the sunshine today.

JESUSITA

Si, Senora.

SENORA

Place it on the table.

(JESUSITA places a covered dish on the table. NOTE: The table has a false top that can be removed, and the tray has a false bottom so that a hand can go through it.)

Now get inside and clean the house.

JESUSITA

Si, Senora.

SENORA

Ah, delicious!

(She sucks a lemon, making her face more sour than usual)

COYOTE

Senora, por favor. I am a poor hungry beggar. Can you spare a small morsel? Anything at all?

SENORA

Where do these peasants come from? Every day another poor soul at my door crying for food. If I shared my bounty with them all, I would no longer be a rich woman. I would soon be a beggar myself. Be gone! I have never believed in charity and today will be no different.

COYOTE

Please, Senora. Generosity enriches the soul.

SENORA

I have no need of such wealth.

COYOTE

Everyone will need a good accounting when their time has come.

SENORA

Don't try to frighten me with such talk. I have no food to spare.

COYOTE

A bit of meat, a kernel or two of corn.

SENORA

Nothing, I say! Now, be off.

COYOTE

Very well.

RAYMONDO

Come, señor. I have a crust of bread to share. It's not much, but it would give me pleasure to give you some.

COYOTE

Bless you, young man. Enjoy your meal, Senora.

(He howls.)

SENORA

I certainly shall.

(She takes the cover off the tray and discovers a plate full of wriggling snakes.)

Ahhhh!

(She puts the cover back on the tray.)

JESUSITA

What is wrong, Senora?

SENORA

What have you done?

JESUSITA

Why, nothing.

SENORA

You have put snakes on my plate.

(She pulls cover from tray. There are no snakes.)

What? Where are they?

JESUSITA

Who?

SENORA

The snakes! The snakes!

JESUSITA

I see only your morning meal. Just as I prepared it.

SENORA

I thought. . . . Never mind. Go scrub the floors.

JESUSITA

Si, Senora.

SENORA

(Settling back into her chair. She takes the lid off the tray. The snakes have returned.)

Ahhhh!

(She replaces the cover.)

JESUSITA

What is it?

SENORA

Snakes.

JESUSITA

But, Senora. . .

SENORA

Never mind. I am no longer hungry. Take it away.

JESUSITA

Certainly.

EL VIEJO

(Entering with children)

Ah, Senora. Did you enjoy your meal?

SENORA

(Running out)

Ahhhh!

ANNA

Sit here, Tio Viejo.

FRANCISCA

Are you comfortable?

VIEJO

Oh, si.

PACO

Can we get you anything?

LUPE

Shall we sing you a song?

VIEJO

No, no. I know you are only trying to win my favor.

PACO

Tio Viejo! How can you say so?

VIEJO

You wish to be chosen the one who has done the noblest deed. But let me remind you that it must be a very special deed. Very unusual.

(He exits.)

ANNA

Play a game with us, senior. Will you?

RAYMONDO

Very well. What will it be?

PACO

The Big Flower. You're "it"! Hide your eyes.

CHILDREN

(As RAYMONDO covers his eyes. FRANCISCA produces a small flower and chooses one of the children to hold it hidden in his/her hand.)

El floron anda en las manos, en las manos,
Y en las manos lo han de hallar,
Adivinen quien lo tiene, quien lo tiene
O se queda de planton.

FRANCISCA

Quien lo tiene?

RAYMONDO

(Guessing who has the flower.)

Paco.

PACO

No.

(The children sing again as FRANCISCA chooses someone else.)

RAYMONDO

Lupe.

Si!

LUPE

(Entering)

I'm back.

JOVITA

RAYMONDO

Bueno. Then we will be off.

COYOTE

Wait, amigo. You have been so kind to share your last crust of bread with me. I would like to return the favor. I have no food or money to give you, but perhaps you will take some good advice.

RAYMONDO

I would welcome it.

COYOTE

Very well then. I have three bits of advice. First, do not ever leave the main road. Second, do not ask about that which is none of your business. And third, no matter what you feel, do not lose your temper. Can you remember my advice?

RAYMONDO

I can. Muchas gracias, amigo. And adios.

COYOTE

Until we meet again.

JOVITA

Good-bye, little town. I hope that I will one day see you again.

CHILDREN

*(As others change scenery to a **DUSTY ROADSIDE**, they gallop like burros. Then at the end of the verse, they jump over each other, leap frog style and exit.)*

Arre, mi burrito que vamos a Belen
Que manana es fiesta y el otro tambien
Arre, arre, arre, lleveme usted al trote
Arre, arre, arre, lleveme al galope
De prisa, de prisa!

RAYMONDO

*(As he and **JOVITA** stop at a road sign.)*

We have been on the road for three days. For three days we have seen no sign of man nor beast. We seem to be getting nowhere.

JOVITA

Perhaps we should turn down a side path.

RAYMONDO

No, we must stick to the main road.

COYOTE

(Appearing, somewhat disguised)

Excuse me, señor. May I be of help?

JOVITA

Who are you?

COYOTE

They call me. . . Coyote Blanco.

JOVITA

Where do you come from?

COYOTE

From the Kingdom of Riquiriquiriqui.

JOVITA

How did you get here?

COYOTE

Too many questions. You should mind your own business, señorita. You are looking for the road to El Dorado.

RAYMONDO

Si, señor.

COYOTE

This is the highway. But it is a long, long road. You should take the shortcut. Down that path, past the wooden bridge, over the grassy hill, and through the daisy meadow.

JOVITA

It sounds lovely.

COYOTE

It does, doesn't it? Why don't you take it?

RAYMONDO

(Stopping JOVITA from following the path)

Muchas gracias, señor, but we have been advised to stay on the main road, and so we shall.

JOVITA

This path is shorter.

RAYMONDO

Yes, but this one is truer. We will keep to the main road.

(They exit.)

COYOTE

They have passed test number one. If they had taken the shortcut, they soon would have fallen into quicksand and never have been heard from again. It pays to follow good advice. Meanwhile, back in the little village of Estrella de los Ojos.

GONZALEZ

Garcia, mi amigo. Did you ever sell your cow?

GARCIA

Si, compadre. I traded her for a little goat.

GONZALEZ

A little goat? It's a good deal for the other hombre.

GARCIA

No, for a goat will eat less, and so I will save money and will be able to afford a nice fiesta for Jesusita's mama. Or so, I thought.

GONZALEZ

Eh?

GARCIA

Well, then I had the opportunity to trade the goat.

GONZALEZ

And did you?

GARCIA

Of course. I traded for a fine, fat goose. It would lay eggs and provide feathers for a new pillow to give to Jesusita's mama as a gift.

GONZALEZ

Very thoughtful.

GARCIA

Yes, it was, until another opportunity presented itself.

GONZALEZ

What did you trade the goose for?

GARCIA

(Pulling a plucked chicken from his sack.)

A chicken! Plucked and ready for the pot.

GONZALEZ

A clever move indeed. But since you are in the market for a trade. Perhaps you would consider one more.

GARCIA

What?

GONZALEZ

I have a bag of manure here.

GARCIA

Manure?

GONZALEZ

Not just any manure. From the king's own stable. Very valuable. Worth its weight in gold.

GARCIA

Is it?

GONZALEZ

Certainly. Who wouldn't want to fertilize their fields with this manure. For wherever you spread it, ruby trees will grow.

GARCIA

Ruby trees?

GONZALEZ

Just think what a gift you could buy for your mother-in-law with such a tree growing in your field. In fact, there is a tree on the border between our two fields -- you know the one?

GARCIA

Si.

GONZALEZ

Well, it has already been fertilized once. This bag will surely do the trick. You will have rubies dropping into your hands mañana.

GARCIA

How Jesusita's eyes would shine to see such a thing.

GONZALEZ

It's a deal then?

GARCIA

It is a deal.

GONZALEZ

You will not regret this move, Garcia.

(They trade)

Come to me, little supper.

(He exits.)

GARCIA

I will get my rake.

(He exits as COYOTE enters.)

COYOTE

(Calling piteously)

Senora! Senora!

SENORA

What! Are you here again?

COYOTE

I am starving, Senora! Have pity!

SENORA

Go to Mayor Aguilar. Perhaps he will feed you.

COYOTE

I am dying!

(He falls to the ground and writhes dramatically)

SENORA

You are not dying.

COYOTE

(Sitting up abruptly)

Well, what if I was?

SENORA

I am no fool to fall for such tricks.

COYOTE

Do you remember what happened when you refused me the other day?

SENORA

No. Si! Don't try to tell me that was your doing.

COYOTE

No, Senora, it was merely a coincidence.

SENORA

I knew it.

COYOTE

It could never happen again.

SENORA

No.

COYOTE

(Falling to his knees)

Oh, please, Senora. A morsel, a swallow!

SENORA

All right! All right!

(She immediately regrets such generosity)

You can have. . . . these lemon peels.

COYOTE

Lemon peels?

SENORA

Si. If you are truly hungry, you will be grateful for them.

COYOTE

And so I am. Bless you for your generosity, Senora. And may you never be truly hungry yourself.

SENORA

De nada.

COYOTE

(Howls)

Adios.

SENORA

(Suddenly clutching her stomach)

What is this gnawing in my stomach? Jesusita! Jesusita!

JESUSITA

Si, senora?

SENORA

Bring me food. I am . . .suddenly. . .very . . .hungry!

JESUSITA

What would you like?

SENORA

Anything, you fool. I must have something immediately or I feel I will starve.

JESUSITA

Momentito, Senora.

SENORA

(Exiting, followed by JESUSITA)

Never mind. I can't wait for a tortoise like you. I'll get it myself. Oh, my stomach!

EL VIEJO

(Entering with the CHILDREN)

Well, well, children. It has been three days. Have you used your time wisely?

CHILDREN

Si, Tio Viejo.

EL VIEJO

Tell me what noble deeds you have performed.

ANNA

Tio Viejo. I thought and thought. What could I do which would be truly noble? Finally, I knew what it would be. I went to my own little house, and for the last three days, I have done all the chores for my Mamacita. She has been treated like a queen and I have been her servant.

EL VIEJO

That was truly generous of you, Anna. And yet not noble. For you should always treat your Mama like a queen, for doesn't she treat you like a princess?

ANNA

Si. She does.

LUPE

Well, I have rescued a poor dog from the street. I found him in a ditch, cold and hungry. His paw was bleeding and his coat was covered with cactus thorns. I took him home and cleaned and fed him. Now he is happy to lie in the sun and wag his tail.

EL VIEJO

That, too, was an act of kindness, but not noble. One should always treat animals with gentleness, for they look to us for protection. And now you have a fine new amigo besides.

LUPE

Si, Tio Viejo. Just this morning he licked my face.

EL VIEJO

And for the rest of you?

PACO

We are still thinking, Tio.

EL VIEJO

Thinking? That is always good. Unless one is thinking of mischief.

(They continue on their way.)

CONSUELO

(Entering with a lacy shawl over her head)

Do you think this shawl brings out the sparkle in my eyes, Rafaela?

RAFAELA

Nothing could do that. I think it makes you look pale.

CONSUELO

Well, yours makes you look fat!

RAFAELA

Ay! You liar!

CONSUELO

Well, I will tell Papa he is the best padre in all the world and he will buy me a better one.

RAFAELA

I will tell him he is the best padre in the universe and he will buy me one that is better than yours.

CONSUELO

Fat cow!

RAFAELA

Silly Goose!

*(They tear at each other's shawls and are about to begin slapping each other when **MAYOR AGUILAR** enters.)*

MAYOR

Ah, my two beloved daughters.

(They immediately smile and kiss his cheeks)

BOTH

Papa.

MAYOR

I wish to speak with you two.

BOTH

Si, Papa?

MAYOR

It's about the house.

CONSUELO

What about it?

MAYOR

Well, nothing is getting done while I am off attending to the town's official business.

RAFAELA

What do you mean?

MAYOR

The beds are not made, the dishes are not washed, the food is not prepared.

CONSUELO

So?

MAYOR

Why aren't you doing it?

RAFAELA

Why should we?

CONSUELO

We have never done any of those things before?

You haven't?

MAYOR

No!

BOTH

Well then, how were such things accomplished?

MAYOR

Jovit. . . .

CONSUELO

Ah, ah ah! Never say that name in my presence again.

MAYOR

You know who did the chores.

RAFAELA

All of them?

MAYOR

Si, every one.

CONSUELO

Very well, but Jov. . .you know who is gone. Someone else must do the chores.

MAYOR

CONSUELO
(As RAFAELA stares at her expectantly)
Don't look at me. I wouldn't know how to begin.

Rafaela?

MAYOR

If she's not doing them, I'm not doing them.

RAFAELA

Then how shall we manage?

MAYOR

Hire a maid!

BOTH
(They kiss him on each cheek and exit.)

MAYOR

(Without conviction)

I am so happy since that ungrateful youngest daughter of mine is gone forever.

(He sits sadly and sighs. GARCIA enters carrying his sack of manure.)

Greetings, Senor Garcia. Where are you going?

GARCIA

I am going to fertilize my ruby tree.

MAYOR

Ruby tree.

GARCIA

Si, mi compadre Gonzalez says that if I fertilize it today, the rubies will be dropping into my hands mañana.

MAYOR

Gonzalez said so?

GARCIA

Si, when I traded my chicken for this sack of magic manure.

MAYOR

Magic. . .? My friend, Gonzalez has deceived you.

GARCIA

No, he is my compadre.

MAYOR

Where did you get the chicken to trade?

GARCIA

I traded the cow for the goat and the goat for the goose and the goose for the chicken and the chicken for this sack of magic manure. I think I made a very good deal, don't you?

MAYOR

I think your wife Jesusita will be very angry when she hears how foolish you have been.

GARCIA

Jesusita will be overjoyed.

MAYOR

No, my friend, she will probably throw you out of the door for this.

GARCIA

Never. Jesusita believes I am a man of wisdom.

MAYOR

I will bet you a bag of gold coins that she will think you a fool when she hears of this bargain.

GARCIA

What must I do if I lose?

MAYOR

You must become my servant. I'm looking for one.

GARCIA

Very well, Mayor Aguilar. It is a bet. One I cannot lose. Now, I am off to fertilize my rubies.

MAYOR

I warn you, Garcia. The whole town will declare you the biggest fool in creation.

GARCIA

No bigger, Senor Mayor, than a man who cannot distinguish between love and flattery.

MAYOR

What's that? What's that?

(As he exits in opposite direction)

What did he mean by that?

COYOTE

(Entering as JESUSITA enters with a basket.)

Where are you off to?

JESUSITA

To buy more flour. Senora Moreno has a burning hunger that will not be satisfied. The more she eats, the hungrier she gets. And yet, can it be? She seems to be growing thinner before my very eyes.

(She exits.)

COYOTE

Very strange indeed. Ah, here come two little pollitos, never knowing that danger is near.

RAFAELA

Ay, I am so bored.

CONSUELO

So am I.

RAFAELA

I wish something exciting would happen to us.

CONSUELO

So do I.

COYOTE

Buenas dias, señoritas!

(He grabs them and ties them up.)

RAFAELA

What are you doing?

COYOTE

I am Coyote Blanco, the famous bandit and you are my captives.

BOTH

Ohhhhh!

(COYOTE drags them off, but before leaving he turns to the audience and says:)

COYOTE

Meanwhile, back on the road to El Dorado.

(Others set up Bandit's Lair. As the lines are said, COYOTE enters with his two captives. We see him hide them behind a curtain. He gags them with handkerchiefs.)

RAYMONDO

We have traveled for five days on this road.

JOVITA

I still think we should have taken the short cut.

RAYMONDO

We will never know now.

JOVITA

I am so tired.

RAYMONDO

I am so hungry.

JOVITA

Look! A cabin in the woods. Let's go in.

RAYMONDO

Wait! Who would live way out here, all alone?

JOVITA

Who cares? We'll starve if we go a step further without food.

RAYMONDO

True. Just remember. Whatever we see or hear -- we must mind our own business.

COYOTE

Buenos tardes. Pase joven.

JOVITA

(Secretly to RAYMONDO)

Isn't that El Coyote Blanco? The one we met on the road two days ago?

RAYMONDO

Si. And this looks to be the lair of a bandit.

COYOTE

Come right in, amigos. I'll give you something to eat.

JOVITA

Let's run!

RAYMONDO

Too late!

COYOTE

Yes, I'll give you a supper that you will never forget.

RAYMONDO

(As they enter)

Remember, mind your own business. No matter what.

COYOTE

Sit down.

(The two captives squeal from behind the door. RAYMONDO and JOVITA react, but stay silent.)

Will you have something to drink?

(He opens the other curtain to get glasses, revealing a large collection of knives and guns.)

Is anything wrong?

No. Nada.

RAYMONDO

COYOTE

(To JOVITA)

Did you have any questions?

JOVITA

I prefer to mind my own business.

(More squeals from behind the curtain)

COYOTE

Bueno. And now for the supper.

(He brings out a tray. When he uncovers it, there is a skull on the plate.)

What do you think of my supper, eh?

RAYMONDO

It. . .it is. . . a supper such as I have never seen.

COYOTE

Don't you want to know where I got it?

JOVITA

That. . .that is your business, senior.

COYOTE

Yes, well, it isn't a real one anyway.

(He throws it behind curtain. There are more muffled squeals.)

Quiet!

(Squeals stop)

I see you are looking at the curtain. Wouldn't you like to know what is behind it?

(They shake their heads.)

No?

(COYOTE laughs)

I see you have received and taken some very good advice, my friends. And because you have minded your own business, I will give you a little reward. Here, this is a bag of money. It is yours. And because you have asked no questions, I will let you continue on your journey without harm.

JOVITA

(Aside)

Raymondo, that bag belongs to Senor Garcia back home. I recognize it.

RAYMONDO

Just take it and smile.

(They do.)

COYOTE

Adios.

(Captives squeal)

JOVITA

There is someone behind that curtain.

RAYMONDO

Si.

JOVITA

They are in danger.

RAYMONDO

Si.

JOVITA

Are we going to help them or not? How does he dare to keep them captive and make us pretend that all is well?

RAYMONDO

Remember, Jovita. The last piece of advice. We must not lose our tempers.

JOVITA

But. . .

RAYMONDO

Stay calm.

(They start to leave.)

COYOTE

Wait! Where are you going with that sack? I have changed my mind. Give it back!

JOVITA

What?

RAYMONDO

(Holding her back)

Certainly. And now, we will leave.

COYOTE

Wait! Not so fast! I have a proposition for you. First let me show you what is hiding behind my curtain.

(He opens the curtain revealing CONSUELO and RAFAELA. They squeal.)

JOVITA

My sisters!

COYOTE

Si, the very ones who plotted to steal away your father's love. The very ones who laughed when you were banished. The very ones who would love nothing better than to see you sitting in their place. Which brings me to my proposition. Two will be allowed to leave. Two must stay behind. It is up to you. . .

(He points to JOVITA)

to choose.

JOVITA

Me?

COYOTE

Hurry up and choose.

RAYMONDO

I will stay.

JOVITA

No, no, you will go.

CONSUELO

Let him stay if he wants. Jovita, you know you were always my favorite sister. It was Rafaela who wanted you dead.

JOVITA

Dead?

RAFAELA

Me? She is such a liar, Jovita. I cried all night after Papa sent you away. She laughed.

CONSUELO

I cried and you laughed.

RAFAELA

Lying crow!

CONSUELO

Selfish pig!

(COYOTE closes the curtain on them)

COYOTE

Si, bueno, it is time to choose.

JOVITA

Raymondo and I will stay. Release my sisters.

COYOTE

They are your enemies.

CONSUELO

(From behind the curtain)

No, no, we love you more than life itself.

RAFAELA

Well, almost as much as that.

JOVITA

Let them go.

COYOTE

As you will.

(He releases them.)

CONSUELO

You will pay for this, bandit.

RAFAELA

Our father is mayor of our town.

COYOTE

Then perhaps you should hurry back to him.

BOTH

We will!

COYOTE

But take some advice and don't take that shortcut down the road.

CONSUELO

We will take any path we wish.

RAFAELA

Why should we listen to the likes of you?

(They exit.)

COYOTE

Good fortune to you both.

RAYMONDO

Well, now we are your captives.

COYOTE

Captives? No, amigo. You passed every test.

(To RAYMONDO)

You took advice and followed it. And you. . .

(To JOVITA)

loved your enemy as yourself. You are free to go.

JOVITA

We are?

COYOTE

Certainly. But if either of you had failed your test. Well. . . So now, be on your way. The Golden City of El Dorado is in that direction. Your own home is that way. But don't take the shortcut to the quicksand bog.

JOVITA

Quicksand?

COYOTE

Si. Your sisters should be up to their knees by now. If no one saves them. . . .

RAYMONDO

Let's hurry. Maybe it's not too late.

COYOTE

One more thing. Take this money bag to Senor Garcia. And tell him you found it in the tree at the edge of his property.

JOVITA

But. . .

COYOTE

Mind your own business.

JOVITA

Very well.

(They exit.)

COYOTE

And now I just have time to gallop ahead and arrive in town for all the action. Follow me!

(OTHERS set up TOWN SQUARE as CHILDREN speak.)

ANNA

It has been seven days. El Viejo must choose the noblest deed today.

LUPE

What did you do Francisca?

FRANCISCA

My little brother was playing by the stream and suddenly he fell in. Without thinking, I jumped in although I could not swim. Fortunately, the water was not swift and we were both saved.

ANNA

That sounds noble to me.

FRANCISCA

Tio Viejo said it was loving, but not noble for any sister would protect an innocent little brother who was in danger.

LUPE

What did you do, Paco?

PACO

I gave half of my toys to the church to be given to children who are poorer than me. If there are any. But Tio Viejo said that it is expected that we should be generous to the needy.

ANNA

Well, he has to choose someone. The week is over. The celebration is beginning.

GONZALEZ

I hope there will be food at this fiesta. I'm hungry.

EL VIEJO

Not as hungry as Senora Moreno, from all I have heard.

JESUSITA

(Helping SENORA MORENO out to the yard. SENORA is walking with a cane and looks very pale and sickly.)

This way, Senora. The fiesta is about to begin.

SENORA

(Weakly)

Bring a plate of food. I must keep up my strength.

JESUSITA

But Senora, the more you eat, the weaker you become.

SENORA

It is not enough. Not enough.

EL VIEJO

Is everyone here? Where is Mayor Aguilar. He must make a proclamation.

MAYOR

I am here. I am sorry, Tio Viejo, but I can make no more proclamations. All three of my daughters are gone. My life is without meaning.

EL VIEJO

Perhaps a morsel of food. A crust of bread?

MAYOR

It is no use. Nothing I eat has any flavor since my daughters left. It is as if the food were without. . .without. . .

EL VIEJO

Salt?

MAYOR

Salt, si!

(Realizing)

Salt! Old man! Now I understand what Jovita meant when she said her love was like salt. It gives flavor and satisfaction to everything. One cannot enjoy life without it. In fact, one must have salt to live. She loved me after all.

EL VIEJO

Si, el Mayor, she did.

MAYOR

If only I had understood before.

SENORA

Come, Mayor Aguilar. Sit by me. Share my food, for I guarantee it is well salted. Jesusita is the best cook in town. It is not for her trying that I am unsatisfied.

MAYOR

Gracias, Senora.

(He takes a bite.)

Yes, quite delicious.

SENORA

Take another bite, mayor.

MAYOR

Yes, quite tasty.

SENORA

Senor Gonzalez. Have a bite.

GONZALEZ

May I?

(He eats a cookie)

Gracias.

SENORA

I feel better.

JESUSITA

What?

SENORA

With each bite that is shared with my neighbors, my own hunger pains are going away. Jesusita! Pass the plate of cookies to everyone.

CHILDREN

Hooray!

SENORA

Eat quickly everyone. Now I see my own greed was consuming me.

JESUSITA

Oh Wonderful day! Where is my husband to see such a miracle?

MAYOR

He is probably out using his “magic” fertilizer to grow rubies on trees.

JESUSITA

What?

MAYOR

Didn't he tell you? He traded the cow for a bag of fertilizer.

JESUSITA

My husband?

MAYOR

Yes! What do you say to such foolishness?

JESUSITA

Well. . . He must have had his reasons.

MAYOR

I owe you a bag of gold coins, Senora Garcia.

CONSUELO

(Entering , covered in mud)

Papa, Papa, we are saved!

RAFAELA

We have returned to our own little town!

MAYOR

My daughters! What happened?

CONSUELO

We were kidnapped by bandits!

RAFAELA

Oh, at least a hundred of them!

CONSUELO

But then, Jovi. . . You know who saved us.

RAFAELA

Twice.

MAYOR

Jovita? My Jovita?

JOVITA

(Entering with RAYMONDO)

Si, Papa!

MAYOR

My little girl! I love you like salt!

JOVITA

As I love you.

CONSUELO

Jovita was willing to sacrifice her life for ours.

RAFAELA

Twice. Once in the robber's lair and once in the quicksand.

EL VIEJO

Then I have my winner. Anyone who would put her own life in danger to save an enemy is truly noble. Here is your prize.

(He gives the prize to JOVITA, and exits as others cheer. GARCIA runs in.)

GARCIA

Jesusita! We are rich!

JESUSITA

Husband! How can that be?

GARCIA

Raymondo just found the money bag that I lost a week ago. Guess where it was? Hanging in the tree at the edge of our field. Guess what is in it? Rubies! We can buy your Mama her own bed now!

GONZALEZ

Garcia! Let me trade you my cow for that tree. You don't need it any longer. You're a rich man.

GARCIA

True. And I do need a cow. Certainly, compadre. It is a deal.

GONZALEZ

I will go gather my rubies now.

JOVITA

But. . .

RAYMONDO

Remember, Jovita, what Coyote Blanco said.

JOVITA

Mind your own business.

(Everyone laughs and cheers as JESUSITA passes a plate of cookies to everyone.)

SENORA

And I hope you all will join me for a glorious supper. Nothing is too much to share with my neighbors.

MAYOR

(As OTHERS cheer)

I proclaim today a fiesta. No work. Celebration for all!

RAYMONDO

(To Audience)

So there you are. Everyone was so friendly, I decided there was no need to search for the Golden City of El Dorado anymore. After all, I had many new friends and a beautiful wife. . .

(JOVITA takes his hand)

who knew how to stick to the main path, mind her own business, and never lose her temper. So how could we help but to live happily the rest of our days in this little town.

(Everyone cheers and begins to sing as COYOTE enters, unnoticed, looks around and howls happily.)

THE END