

CUENTOS DE JOSEFINA
(JOSEPHINE'S TALES)

A full-length folk tale with music by
Gregory Ramos

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

OPENING/ APPEARING THROUGHOUT:

JOSIE, female.

JOSEFINA, female.

YOUNG JOSEFINA, female. Age 15.

IGNACIO, male. Age 11.

ACTORS 4-10, any gender.

TALE 1:

MARISOL, female.

PABLITO, male.

LA DUEÑA, female.

EL PANADERO, male.

MARISOL'S MOM, female.

MERCHANT, any gender.

DON AGUSTÍN, male.

CALACAS, any gender.

PALS, any gender.

TALE 2:

FILIBERTO, male.

ELVIRA, female.

LA TÍA, female.

SEÑOR TRUJILLO, male.

EL ESQUELETO, any gender.

NEIGHBOR, any gender.

OLD MAN (RODOLFO), male.

GUESTS 1-4, any gender.

TALE 3:

ALICIA, female.

ANABEL, female.

DIEGO, male.

BRUJA 1, female.

YOUNG MAN, male.

SUITORS 1-3, male.

TALE 4:

MARQUESS, male. May also appear throughout playing guitar.

COSZCOTL/DOVE, female.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2, female.

BROWNIE, any gender.

BEAUTIFUL WOMEN 1 & 2, female, but can be played by actors of any gender.

XOLOITZCUINTLE DOGS, any gender.

TALE 5:

LUPITA, female.

MIGUEL, male.

LUIS, male.

GHOST OF MINER/DISTANT VOICE OF MINER, any gender.

GHOSTS 1 & 2, any gender.

WORKERS 1-3, any gender.

STRIKERS, any gender.

TALE 6:

LA LLORONA, female.

EL COYOTE, any gender.

OFFICER, any gender.

SUGGESTED MULTIPLE CASTING

For 10 Actors

ACTOR 1, female. Plays JOSIE, CALACA, PARTY GUEST, ALICIA, COSZCOTL/DOVE and LUPITA.

ACTOR 2, female. Plays JOSEFINA, LA TÍA, MARISOL'S MOM, CALACA, GUEST 1 and LA LLORONA.

ACTOR 3, female, age 15. Plays YOUNG JOSEFINA.

ACTOR 4, male, age 11. Plays IGNACIO, PAL, CALACA, GUEST 2, SUITOR 1, XOLOITZCUINTLE DOG, WORKER 1 and STRIKER.

ACTOR 5, male. Plays PABLITO, GUEST 3, SUITOR 2, YOUNG MAN, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 1, XOLOITZCUINTLE DOG, LUIS and OFFICER.

ACTOR 6, male. Plays PAL, MERCHANT, SEÑOR TRUJILLO, GUEST 4, DIEGO, MARQUESS, MIGUEL and EL COYOTE.

ACTOR 7, female. Plays MARISOL, NEIGHBOR, GUEST, EL ESQUELETO, BROWNIE, GHOST 1, WORKER 2 and STRIKER.

ACTOR 8, female. Plays PAL, EL PANADERO, OLD MAN (RODOLFO), ANABEL, PEDDLER/BRUJA 2, GHOST 2, WORKER 3 and STRIKER.

ACTOR 9, male. Plays DON AGUSTÍN, FILIBERTO, SUITOR 3, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2, XOLOITZCUINTLE DOG, JARDINERO and GHOST OF MINER/DISTANT VOICE OF MINER.

ACTOR 10, female. Plays LA DUEÑA, ELVIRA, BRUJA 1, CALACA, XOLOITZCUINTLE DOG, GHOST 3 and STRIKER.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The play can be performed with as few as 10 actors (6 female/4 male) or more than 50. Feel free to distribute the roles as you feel appropriate, following the suggestions above as a starting point.

Gender suggestions are not set in stone. If you can find other creative ways to have fun and bring characters to life, please do so!

The play can be performed with actors of any age. If you are going traditional, then Josefina should be mature (Grandma age), Josie is an adult female (20s-30s), and Young Josefina is 15. In any case, Young Josefina and Ignacio should be young actors.

Actors should be bilingual or have a good grasp of the Spanish language. English translation for Spanish words and phrases is provided in parenthesis for understanding. It is not meant to be spoken by the actors.

In Spanish, the word *esqueleto* translates in English to skeleton. The word *calaca* is a colloquial Mexican Spanish name also for skeleton, but refers specifically to a human skull or skeleton commonly used for decoration during the Mexican Day of the Dead festival. The skeletons that appear in the graveyard in the "Pablito El Agnostico" tale are referred to as *calacas* to suggest they are large decorative figures rather than realistic skeletons. The character El Esquelito in "The Tale of the Haunted Squash" can appear as a big scary realistic skeleton.

The actor playing the Marquess should sing well and play guitar.

Special thanks to Carlos Manuel for help with the Spanish translations!

(This is ensemble storytelling. Actors are present at all times, ready to step in and portray a role. When not playing a particular part, actors can indicate the setting with the use of their body or props or set pieces. The directorial approach can be bare bones or lots of fancy design elements, but whatever you do, please emphasize creativity, playfulness and spontaneity.)

(Actor playing the MARQUESS should play guitar. It would be great if he could be accompanied with percussion where appropriate. If you can manage it in the budget, a conjunto [band] to play the underscoring and transitions would be lovely.)

(At lights up, actors enter with tons of energy, acknowledging the audience. They form a circle of unity, then they quickly take their places. The actor playing the Marquess strums a few chords on the guitar.)

(JOSIE steps forward, inviting us in.)

JOSIE: Sometimes she visits in my dreams. I see her tending to her plants or sewing or cooking. She appears healthy and vibrant, the way she looked when I was a little girl, and I feel a deep *añoranza*, a longing, because I know it's a dream, which, like all things, will come to an end. I tell myself, "Don't wake up just yet. One more moment, one more moment with my Grandma Josefina." When she passed away, she still lived in that tiny family home they bought downtown with the help of Grandpa's GI loan. Old furniture, photos from Mexico, and a garden of bougainvillea, gardenias, green peppers, carrots and corn. The house smelled like a magic combination of corn *masa* (dough), chili powder, fresh *pan dulce* (Mexican sweet bread), coffee, and Lemon Pledge. A smell that I've never experienced since those days. I can close my eyes and still feel the Sunday afternoons we spent there with *Abuela* (Grandmother) and all her pets; *Pinto* (Spot) the dog, Whiskey the cat, and a parrot named Laura.

(Actors create various animal sounds in the background: a bark, a meow, etc.)

She even had a goat for a time, a hen named Beauty, and a rooster named Macho.

(Cock crows.)

Well, until the neighbors made her give them away. She had a green thumb, made the world's most delicious sweet tamales, and she designed and sewed my *Quinceañera* (Girl's 15th Birthday) dress. But her greatest talent was that she was a storyteller. All the grandchildren in our family would tumble into her bed on weekend nights and she'd lean back against the creaky wooden headboard and weave tales: stories of mystical places and legendary figures, lost fortunes, the hereafter, and of course, romance. At the time, I didn't know where those stories came from, how she knew them, or their real purpose.

(Lights up on JOSEFINA, Josie's memory of her.)

JOSEFINA: Okay *niños* (kids), what stories shall we hear tonight?

JOSIE: Grandma, tell the story of the *bruja* (witch) who wants to steal the child!

ACTOR 7: Grandma, tell the story about the haunted gold mine!

ACTOR 4: No, tell the story about the hidden treasure!

ACTOR 9: The haunted garden!

ACTOR 10: Tell "The Maiden in the Orange"!

ALL ACTORS: Tell us about *La Llorona* (The Crying Woman)!!!

IGNACIO: Tell us about *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the

Dead)!!!

JOSEFINA: *Ahhh, Bueno. (Ohhh, okay.) (She announces to us:) The story of Pablito, El Agnostico (The non-believer).*

(Actors scramble to places.)

JOSIE: Just after the revolution in Mexico, an epidemic hit, and *La Muerte* (Death) took the lives of many people. My Grandmother, Josefina, and her brother, Ignacio became orphans. My grandmother was fifteen years old and her brother was only eleven. They lost everything, and their only hope was to make it across the border to family on the other side.

JOSEFINA: *El otro lado. (The other side.)*

JOSIE: These stories helped them survive.

(YOUNG JOSEFINA [Josefina at age fifteen] steps forward. She opens a tattered homemade book. We're in the past.)

TALE 1: PABLITO EL AGNOSTICO

YOUNG JOSEFINA: In a small *pueblo* (town) in the state of Sonora, there lived Marisol and her husband Pablito. They had married at a very young age. Marisol's father was a stern man who wanted only the best for his daughter, and he was always skeptical about the union. The tale begins on the fiesta of *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) when...

MARISOL: Pablito? Pablito! *Donde estas?* Where are you?

(MARISOL finds PABLITO playing cards outside with his PALS.)

There you are. Can I speak to you? Inside, *por favor* (please)?

PABLITO: Speak to me here. *(Shuffling cards:)* Can't you see I'm in the middle of a card game? *(To pal:)* Pass me another beer.

MARISOL: Pablito. Since it's *Día de los Muertos*, I'm going to make an altar for my beloved father.

PABLITO: (*Dismissively:*) *Día de los Muertos!* Bah!

MARISOL: I have to stay home to cook the dinner and prepare for guests. Can you please go to town to pick up some things for the altar?

PABLITO: Can't you see, I'm busy today?

MARISOL: Doing what?

PABLITO: What does it look like?

MARISOL: Pablito. Can I speak to you inside, *por favor*?

PABLITO: Why do you bother with those *tonterías* (foolish things)? *Día de los Muertos!* It's for children and fools.

MARISOL: Pablito, *por favor*?

(He reluctantly leaves the card game. They cross inside the house.)

Can you please go to town for me and get the items for the altar? I'll give you some pesos and —

PABLITO: Why should I? Your father never liked me. He always berated me and called me *flojo* (lazy) and a no good *vagabundo* (bum) —

MARISOL: He said that you weren't living up to your potential.

PABLITO: He was always turning you against me.

MARISOL: He just wanted you to try a little harder, Pablito.

PABLITO: How? What options do I have?

MARISOL: It's as if you gave up after the factory closed.

PABLITO: The only chance we had was the money your father left when he died. It could have gotten us out of this

place. But instead of leaving it to us, he donated it for the construction of the new church. As if México needs another church!

MARISOL: *Ya!* (Enough!) Just take this money and buy the items for the altar.

PABLITO: Are you crazy, *mujer* (woman)? We live on the pittance we get from your stingy, mean old mother, and you want me to spend those pesos on food for a dead man?

MARISOL: Ah hah! But it's okay for you to spend my mother's money on cigarettes and beer!

PABLITO: Hey, hey, hey!

MARISOL: (*Over him:*) And hang around all day smoking and drinking!

PABLITO: *Cállate la boca!* (Shut your mouth!)

MARISOL: And playing cards with your no good buddies!

(Pablito raises his hand to strike Marisol. She screams.)

Pablo, no!

(MARISOL'S MOM enters. She's dour and coarse.)

MARISOL'S MOM: What's going on in here, Marisol? Are you two fighting again?

MARISOL: No, *Amá* (Mom). It's fine.

MARISOL'S MOM: (*Sizing up Pablito:*) Hah! It's not fine.

PABLITO: Mind your own business, *vieja* (old lady).

MARISOL'S MOM: Until you wear the pants in this family, *everything* is my business!

MARISOL: *Amá!* *Por favor!* Pablito is just leaving to buy the *ofrendas* (offerings) for the altar that I'm making for Papá. Aren't you, Pablito?

(Pablito looks at Marisol, then to her mother, who crosses her arms and straightens her back.)

PABLITO: *Está bien* (Fine).

MARISOL'S MOM: Better use of his time than drinking and playing cards all day with those no-good-loser *tontos* (fools)!

(Marisol's Mom exits shaking her head. Marisol turns to Pablito, hands him money.)

MARISOL: For the altar... One *tamal de carne* (beef tamale) from La Victoria, an *empanada de fresa* (strawberry pastry) from La Panadería, and a bottle of Tequila Cuervo from the General Store.

PABLITO: (*Scoffing:*) When is the last time you gave *me* such nice gifts?

MARISOL: Gifts have to be earned, Pablito!

PABLITO: (*Mocking:*) "Gifts have to be earned Bah-bah-bah!" *Ay, Dios!* (Oh, God!) I need a *cerveza* (beer)!!!

MARISOL: What happened to us? I remember when we laughed together and took walks in the countryside. We imagined faces in the clouds, made up funny stories, dreamed about our future.

PABLITO: Those memories faded.

MARISOL: (*Harshly:*) Well, for me too!

PABLITO: (*Referring to Marisol's Mom:*) *Híjole!* (Wow!) You're turning into that ugly old lady.

MARISOL: If you spend a *centavo* (cent) of that money on beer, you're going to be sorry.

(*She exits.*)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: The road into town took Pablito through a passage where the new church was being built on the other

side of the old graveyard.

PABLITO: What a waste of money. There's a church on every corner in this country. And all for what? To prepare for an afterlife that doesn't exist. Hah, hah, hah!

(Pablito approaches the graveyard.)

Spending money on dead people! That's a waste of money too. *Día de los Muertos?* *(Pablito blows a raspberry.)* Ah, there's my father-in-law's grave. *(To grave:)* You never thought I was good enough for your daughter. Eh, Don Agustín? You could have left *us* the money. I could have started my business and made something of my life. Well, thanks for *nada* (nothing)!

(Pablito spits at the grave.)

Your daughter is a *tonta*, just like all the other *tontos* in this town, wasting time and money on altars. You're not coming back tonight. *(To all the graves:)* None of you are! *(Pablito blows a raspberry!)*

YOUNG JOSEFINA: And Pablito continued on to complete his tasks.

(Pablito enters La Victoria restaurant. LA DUEÑA enters.)

LA DUEÑA: *Buenas tardes* (Good afternoon), Pablito. How can I help you today?

PABLITO: One *tamal de carne*.

LA DUEÑA: One *tamal*, only? Ah! That was Don Agustín's favorite! Rest his soul. I bet you're taking this as an *ofrenda* for the altar.

PABLITO: I don't believe in those *tonterías*.

LA DUEÑA: The rest of us do. The whole town is preparing for the celebration.

PABLITO: Just give me the *tamal*!

(He pays and heads over to La Panadería [bakery]. EL PANADERO [baker] enters.)

EL PANADERO: *Buenas tardes, Pablito. What can I do for you?*

PABLITO: *One empanada de fresa.*

EL PANADERO: *One empanada, only? Ah. That must be for the memory of Don Agustín! It was his favorite, rest his soul. Are you building an altar in his memory?*

PABLITO: *Just give me the empanada!*

(Pablito pays for the empanada and heads over to the general store. MERCHANT enters.)

MERCHANT: *Buenas tardes, Pablito. How can I help you?*

PABLITO: *One bottle of Tequila Cuervo.*

MERCHANT: *Ah. That must be for the memory of Don Agustín. It was his favorite, rest his soul. I'll bet you're building an altar!*

PABLITO: *Just give me the tequila!!!*

(Pablito pays and exits.)

JOSEFINA: *Having completed his tasks, Pablito headed home, soon reaching the passage where the new church was being built next to the old graveyard. He had traveled quite a distance and now he was tired, hungry and thirsty.*

(Pablito approaches Don Agustín's grave.)

PABLITO: *You again! Well, I hope you're happy. I've gotten the items your daughter requested for your stupid altar. And now I'm tired and hungry and... Hmmm. This tamal smells pretty good.*

(He contemplates, then takes a bite of the tamal.)

Mmmmmm. That's good.

(He takes another bite.)

Delicious. But now I'm thirsty.

(He regards the bottle of tequila, then shrugs and takes a swig.)

I'll say this about you, father-in-law, you had good taste.

(He takes another big swig of the tequila, then another sloppy bite of the tamal.)

Wow, that's good. I could use something sweet now.

(He regards the empanada de fresa, then takes a generous bite.)

Ay! Delicioso! (Oh! Delicious!)

(He washes it down with more tequila. He burps. Swigs more. A bite, then another swig.)

Híjole, that was good. Delicious. Oh boy. I'm so tired. I might just...

(He lays his head down. Darkness falls. Pablito snores. Distant music, then it gets louder. Several CALACAS [skeletons] suddenly rise from the graves. One of them has a large elaborate sombrero [Mexican hat]. This is DON AGUSTÍN, Pablito's father-in-law. Calacas dance and encircle Pablito. He opens his eyes, registers the Calacas and screams.)

PABLITO: What's happening? It must be the tequila!

(He tries to escape but the dance continues. The Calacas deliver him to Don Agustín.)

Don Agustín!

DON AGUSTÍN: So, you're a non-believer, eh?

PABLITO: This is a dream! You're dead and buried. You're not real!

DON AGUSTÍN: Is *this* real?

(Don Agustín kicks Pablito in the rear end.)

PABLITO: *Ay!* (Ouch!) That hurt!

DON AGUSTÍN: How about this?

(Another kick in the rear end.)

PABLITO: *Ayyyy!* (Oooouch!)

DON AGUSTÍN: It will hurt much more by the time I'm finished with you!

(Don Agustín wields a knife and slices across Pablito's chest, tearing his shirt.)

PABLITO: *Ay!* Don't hurt me, please!

DON AGUSTÍN: Do you believe in spirits?

(The Calacas gather around Pablito.)

PABLITO: I...I...I...

DON AGUSTÍN: Do you believe?

PABLITO: Yes, yes, yes!!! I believe. What do you want with me?

DON AGUSTÍN: What I've always wanted. For you to realize your potential, *pendejo* (jerk)! You take care of my daughter or I will haunt you until the day you die!!!

PABLITO: I will! I believe! I believe!!!!

(The music swells as the Calacas dance Pablito back to his sleeping position. Calacas disappear. The music stops. Pablito wakes up with a start, then looks around in the darkness.)

What happened to me? It had to have been a dream.

(Pablito stands and notices his torn shirt and spot of blood on his chest. He looks to the graveyard, screams and runs off.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: And *that* is how Pablito became a

believer.

(Marisol at home, Pablito runs in.)

PABLITO: Marisol! I believe! I believe!

MARISOL: Pablito, what's happened to you? *Estás bien?* (Are you alright?)

PABLITO: I am, now that I'm home with you.

(He grabs and kisses her.)

MARISOL: I haven't heard you speak that way in a very long time.

PABLITO: Marisol. I've neglected you and I'm sorry.

(Another embrace.)

MARISOL: *Mi amor* (My love), you're shaking.

PABLITO: I'll be fine now.

MARISOL: Did you get the items for the altar?

PABLITO: Well... I have half a *tamal*, half a *pan dulce* and half a bottle of tequila.

MARISOL: But Pablito—

PABLITO: Please don't make me go back. Not tonight when all the spirits are out.

MARISOL: Well...I'm sure Papá doesn't mind sharing.

(Marisol takes Pablito's hand and leads him to the altar. Music rises. They place the offerings. COMPANY MEMBERS join in the ritual. They have candles, pan de muerto (Day of the Dead bread) and cempasuchil [Mexican Marigold] flowers.)

JOSEFINA: That night, in every house in the *pueblo*, altars were built. *Ofrendas* for loved ones lost were carefully placed. The smell of incense and the bright color of the *cempasuchil* flowers guided spirits to the material world. And they stayed

for one night in the homes of their loved ones, until the next day when a quiet calling pulled them back to the great beyond.

(Actors wave spirits back to the afterlife.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Oh, one last thing... Marisol's mother died, leaving just enough money for Pablito to start a successful business.

(Pablito steps forward, throws some pesos in the air, gestures like a champion. Actors pull him back. Music punctuates as the actors take a bow. Then Josie steps down.)

JOSIE: The stories my grandma Josefina told were family tales that her mother wrote by hand and collected in a book.

JOSEFINA: When we lost everything –

IGNACIO: – *El Ranchito* (The little ranch), the animals, and our land....

JOSIE: They headed north.

JOSEFINA: With only the clothes on our backs.

IGNACIO: And our wits!!!

JOSIE: And hope.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: *(Holding the book:)* And the book of tales.

JOSEFINA: In the margin of one page was the address of family *en el otro lado* (on the other side).

JOSIE: Josefina and Ignacio traveled town by town, village by village, state by state, hoping to make it to that address and to family on the other side of the Rio Grande.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: And at every stop –

IGNACIO: – another tale!

(Josefina steps down. She invites her younger self forward.)

Young Josefina steps downstage.)

JOSEFINA: *Damas y Caballeros* (Ladies and Gentlemen), our next *cuento* (tale) is about greed and its consequences.

TALE 2: THE TALE OF THE HAUNTED SQUASH

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Filiberto and his wife Elvira faced hard times.

(FILIBERTO and ELVIRA enter with meager belongings.)

IGNACIO: There was a drought. And they were forced to leave their *pueblito* (village).

YOUNG JOSEFINA: On the train, leaving the village, Filiberto played a high stakes card game.

(Actors assemble for card game.)

IGNACIO: Desperate to improve their situation, he bet the few pesos that he and Elvira had saved.

ELVIRA: Filiberto, no!!!

YOUNG JOSEFINA: But—he won! And lost! And won! And lost. And finally...

FILIBERTO: I won the deed to land!

(SEÑOR TRUJILLO and Filiberto sign deed. They shake hands.)

Gracias (Thank you), Señor Trujillo.

(Elvira inspects the deed as Señor Trujillo slinks away.)

ELVIRA: *(Suddenly:)* *Mira!* (Look!). There's a clause here that says we're forbidden to plant in the west garden. Why?

FILIBERTO: Who cares? It's a house and ten acres and it's ours! *Híjole!* My mother always said I was born under a lucky star.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: So, Filiberto and Elvira settled into their

new house. Elvira made bread in the kitchen and peddled it on the streets, but there was a lot of competition. Filiberto planted tomatoes, carrots and lettuces only in the east garden. They grew, but they were puny and sickly and he tried to sell them.

(Elvira and Filiberto count their earnings at the end of the day.)

ELVIRA: Ten, eleven, twelve *centavos*. That's all?

FILIBERTO: I tell you, no one wants my vegetables. They're puny and sickly.

ELVIRA: If we could only plant in the west garden. The soil there is so rich.

FILIBERTO: We can't.

ELVIRA: Why not?

FILIBERTO: We signed an agreement.

ELVIRA: Who's going to know?

FILIBERTO: Elvira!

YOUNG JOSEFINA: *(Narrating:)* That next day, Elvira did not make bread to peddle on the streets. Instead, while Filiberto was peddling his puny vegetables in the market, she went into town, bought a bag of *calabaza* (pumpkin) seeds and spent the entire day in the warm sun sowing the seeds in the west garden.

(Elvira sows seeds. End of day, she's spent.)

FILIBERTO: Elvira, I'm home.

(Elvira cleans up quickly and runs into the house.)

Here's the money from today's sales.

ELVIRA: *(Counting:)* Five, ten, fourteen, fifteen *centavos*. That's all?

FILIBERTO: How did the bread sales go today?

ELVIRA: How do you think? Lousy. If only we could...

FILIBERTO: No!

ELVIRA: But we're barely surviving!

FILIBERTO: Maybe I wasn't born under a lucky star after all.

(He starts off, deflated.)

ELVIRA: Filiberto...

(Rooster [actor] crows.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: But...the next morning, Filiberto and Elvira discovered something in the west garden.

(Filiberto stands in the west garden surrounded by calabazas [pumpkins].)

FILIBERTO: Elvira! *Ven! Mira!* (Come! Look!)

ELVIRA: Filiberto, *qué pasó* (what happened)?

FILIBERTO: *Mira!*

ELVIRA: *Híjole!*

FILIBERTO: Beautiful, ripe *calabazas*.

ELVIRA: Ripe and beautiful! We can sell them at the *mercado* (market) and make so much money!

FILIBERTO: Where did they come from?

ELVIRA: What difference does it make? This is just the luck we've been waiting for.

FILIBERTO: Wait. We can't sell them.

ELVIRA: Can't sell them? *Estás loco?* (Are you crazy?)

FILIBERTO: We promised not to plant here.

ELVIRA: *Pues* (Well), if you're not selling them, I am. I'm

going to load up the wagon with all of these beautiful, ripe *calabazas* and I'm not coming home until every last one is sold. If you want to try and peddle those sickly vegetables from the other garden, be my guest.

(Filiberto looks at his puny vegetables, then at Elvira's beautiful calabazas.)

FILIBERTO: Let's cut these and get them on the wagon!

ELVIRA: *Andale!* (Go for it!)

ACTOR 5: But as Filiberto and Elvira began to cut the *calabazas* from the vines, they made an incredible discovery. The squashes opened up when they touched them and inside—

FILIBERTO: Silver!

ELVIRA: Gold!

ACTOR 8: Every squash they opened contained a precious metal. Which of course to them meant—

ELVIRA & FILIBERTO: Money!!!

FILIBERTO: *(Extracting silver from a calabaza:)* Well this beats peddling bread on the streets!

ELVIRA: Ooooh. Let's spend it!

ACTOR 5: And spend, they did.

JOSIE: They didn't use the money to buy a new wagon.

JOSEFINA: Or to invest in new vegetable seeds for planting.

ACTOR 8: Or to purchase flour for Elvira's bread.

ACTOR 6: Instead, they bought new clothes, Elvira got some fine jewelry, and with the rest, they threw a party for all the neighbors.

(Party music drops hard. Party with neighbors ensues.)

ELVIRA: *Mira.* We had so much squash I made delicious squash soup for the guests.

(Party continues. GUESTS eat pumpkin soup and dance. Party dies down. Guests leave.)

JOSIE: After the party, Filiberto and Elvira were cleaning up and...

(Elvira pours soup into a container. The soup has turned to blood. She screams.)

FILIBERTO: *Ay, Dios mío!* (Oh, my God!)

ELVIRA: What happened to my soup?

FILIBERTO: It's turned to blood!

ELVIRA: That can't be! There has to be some explanation.

FILIBERTO: *Sangre!* Blood! This is a *maldición* (curse)!

ELVIRA: *Cálmate!* (Calm down!)

FILIBERTO: We weren't supposed to plant in the west garden!

ELVIRA: Don't be superstitious.

FILIBERTO: We are not planting in that garden again. Ever!

ELVIRA: But, Filiberto —

FILIBERTO: It's a curse!!! *Ayyyyy!*

(Filiberto runs off terrified.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: So they went back to peddling bread and the sickly vegetables from the other garden.

ELVIRA: *(Peddling:)* *Pan caliente! Tengo pan caliente!* (Fresh bread! I have fresh bread here!)

FILIBERTO: *Zanahorias! Lechugas! Jitomate!* (Carrots! Lettuce! Tomato!)

(*Elvira and Filiberto at the end of the day counting their earnings.*)

ELVIRA: Ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen *centavos*. That's all!!!!?

FILIBERTO: (*Sadly:*) That's all.

ELVIRA: We don't even have enough to make it through the week. Filiberto...

FILIBERTO: No.

ELVIRA: I'm tired of peddling bread on the streets and going to bed hungry. We're going to starve. Why shouldn't we have a little comfort and luxury?

FILIBERTO: But—

ELVIRA: Remember when we bought all those new clothes and threw a big party for all the neighbors? That was niiiiice.

(*Filiberto regards her skeptically.*)

We're planting another crop of *calabazas* and this time we're planting more!

FILIBERTO: But, but, but—

ELVIRA: You say you aren't lucky? Hah! I say maybe this is the luck you've been waiting for. *Vámanos!* (Let's go!)

ACTOR 7: So Elvira and Filiberto sowed another crop in the garden. And yes, they planted even more.

ACTOR 6: The very next morning the garden was abundant with big, fat, ripe, healthy *calabazas*.

(*Elvira opens a squash and pulls out money.*)

ELVIRA: (*Gleefully:*) Ahhhh! I'm going to buy another new wardrobe! And this time we have enough money to renovate the house. Hey, we might even buy the land next door and expand!!!

JOSEFINA: And that's just what they did. They bought the land next door and built a brand new big house. They bought new furniture and then, because of course they wanted to share their new status with their neighbors, they threw a *fiesta*. A big *fiesta*!

(Party music drops again. Another party ensues. Elvira and Filiberto are greeted by guests as if they were royalty. And they love it.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Elvira and Filiberto enjoyed the praise and considerable envy of their neighbors. Everyone drank and laughed and danced the night away. And then, just at the stroke of midnight, the heavens sent a moonbeam directly into the west garden.

GUEST 1: Hey everyone. Look! Look at those vines over there in the garden.

GUEST 2: Something's happening.

GUEST 1: They're growing!

GUEST 3: And...and they're moving this way!

GUEST 1: The vines are going to attack us!

GUEST 4: *Ay, Dios!* Everybody run!

(Guests scramble. The music stops.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: The vines from the west garden had a life of their own. They ran along the ground, over the garden fences, around the patio and up the sides of the house until the whole place was engulfed in squash vines.

(Guests cry out.)

FILIBERTO: It's okay, everyone, just stay calm. There is an explanation for this, it's okay.

(Elvira emerges from the crowd with squash vines growing out

of her head.)

ELVIRA: That's right, stay calm, stay calm.

(Everyone freezes. They take in the horrible sight of Elvira.)

GUEST 1: Aaaaaah!!!! Look at her hair!

GUEST 2: It's not hair!

GUEST 3: Vines are growing out of her skull!

GUEST 1: Aaaah! It's horrible.

GUEST 2: She's a - a - a monster!

GUEST 4: It's a curse!!

ELVIRA: Wait! What's wrong? Where is everybody going?

(The guests scream and scramble away. Filiberto stands frozen.)

What's happened?

FILIBERTO: You have...*enredaderas de calabaza* (pumpkin vines) growing out of your head.

ELVIRA: I...whaaaah?

(Elvira feels her head.)

Ahhhhhh!!!!!!!!!! What's happened?

FILIBERTO: It's a *maldición*, I'm telling you! We never should have planted in that garden.

ELVIRA: Well, it's too late for that now.

FILIBERTO: What are we going to do?

ELVIRA: I'm going to tell you what *you're* going to do.

FILIBERTO: Me?!!

ELVIRA: You are going to find that Señor Trujillo from the card game, and get to the bottom of this.

FILIBERTO: Me...?

ELVIRA: Do you expect me to do it? I can't go out in public like this. I'm a monster!

(Elvira dissolves into tears.)

FILIBERTO: Don't cry.

ELVIRA: I just wanted to have a few nice things for once. Does that make me a bad person?

FILIBERTO: Well, maybe we did overdo it a bit.

(More tears from Elvira.)

There, there. It's okay. I'll try to get to the bottom of this.

ELVIRA: Don't try. Do it!

JOSIE: Filiberto went door to door to see if he could locate someone from the Trujillo family.

FILIBERTO: Excuse me, do you know where I can find the Trujillos?

(Sound of door shutting. He goes to next house.)

Excuse me, do you know where I can find the Trujillos?

(Sound of door shutting. He goes to next house.)

ACTOR 6: Word had spread about a strange curse that had befallen Filiberto and his wife, and the town wanted nothing to do with them.

FILIBERTO: Excuse me, do you know who where I can find –

NEIGHBOR: You! We went to your lousy party and now everyone in town is allergic to squash! You're cursed! Get away from my house.

(OLD MAN approaches. He's been following Filiberto.)

OLD MAN: Hey. Psst. Psst. I know who you're looking for.

FILIBERTO: You do?

OLD MAN: Yes. And I'll tell you where to go under one condition.

FILIBERTO: What is it?

OLD MAN: Do you accept? Yes or no?

FILIBERTO: (*Tentatively:*) Yes.

OLD MAN: You must give *her* a message.

FILIBERTO: ...*Bueno* (Okay), I can do that.

OLD MAN: Your land was previously owned by the *Tía* (Aunt). Eugenia Trujillo. Go to the house behind the big iron gates on the *Calle Aldama* (Aldama Street).

FILIBERTO: You mean...the house that everyone says is haunted?

OLD MAN: The very one. Do you want to find her or don't you?

FILIBERTO: I do. What's the message?

OLD MAN: Tell her...Rodolfo is still waiting for her.

FILIBERTO: Rodolfo is waiting.

OLD MAN: (*Correcting him:*) *Still* waiting.

FILIBERTO: Rodolfo is *still* waiting for her.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Filiberto left the old man and set off to the stone house behind the big iron gates on the other side of town.

(Filiberto clangs the iron knocker on the gate. Nothing. He clangs it again.)

FILIBERTO: Hello! Is anybody home?

YOUNG JOSEFINA: He tried for hours. But no one answered.

(He clangs again and calls out.)

FILIBERTO: Is anybody home?

ACTOR 6: He became weary.

FILIBERTO: Anybody...?

YOUNG JOSEFINA: And when he was ready to give up and walk away, he was reminded of poor Elvira waiting for him at home.

(Memory of Elvira with vines growing out of her head.)

ELVIRA: Don't try. Do it!!!

YOUNG JOSEFINA: So with no other options, Filiberto scaled the huge iron gate.

(Filiberto climbs the tall gate and lands on the other side.)

FILIBERTO: Such a magnificent courtyard. And grand fountain. Ooooh. I'm trespassing.

LA TÍA: *(Off:)* Who is there?

FILIBERTO: Hello... Hello... My name is Filiberto. I'm sorry to enter your home. I knocked for hours but no one answered.

LA TÍA: *(Off:)* That means I don't want visitors, *tonto!*

FILIBERTO: I'm sorry, but errrr... I have a message for you.

LA TÍA: *(Off:)* A message?

FILIBERTO: Yes, but first...my wife and I live the home on *Calle San Antonio*. I won the land in...

(A strange figure enters from the shadows. It's LA TÍA [The Aunt]. She is wearing black from head to toe and is covered in a diaphanous black veil.)

LA TÍA: *Ah, sí.* (Oh, yes.) My nephew told me you won the land fair and square. Now go, and stay away from us.

FILIBERTO: But...something strange is happening in the garden.

LA TÍA: Something strange?

FILIBERTO: Something horrible.

LA TÍA: Ah hah. You signed an agreement with the deed to that land.

FILIBERTO: Yes, but –

LA TÍA: Did you abide by that agreement?

FILIBERTO: Well, but my wife. Well...no. Not exactly –

LA TÍA: And now you've discovered the consequences.

FILIBERTO: Please. We have to sell the house back to you.

LA TÍA: Impossible.

FILIBERTO: We weren't told there was a curse. That wasn't fair.

LA TÍA: You signed an agreement!

FILIBERTO: But something has happened to my wife.

LA TÍA: Leave my home. You're trespassing.

FILIBERTO: We have nowhere else to turn.

LA TÍA: You made your choice and sealed your fate. Now, get out!

(She turns to leave.)

FILIBERTO: Wait, please!

(Filiberto pursues, reaches out and grabs her veil. He unwittingly pulls it off her head, revealing an elaborate spray of squash vines coming out of her skull. She screams.)

LA TÍA: Don't look at me!

FILIBERTO: You too!

LA TÍA: Leave me alone.

FILIBERTO: What causes this? Is it a *maldición*?

LA TÍA: Yes! Yes! Yes! What else?

FILIBERTO: We have to undo what's been done.

LA TÍA: You can't.

FILIBERTO: There has to be a way.

LA TÍA: You aren't brave enough to face it. No one is. I chose to live my life like this instead.

FILIBERTO: But...I'll face it. I have to.

LA TÍA: (*Sizing him up:*) You? Bah!

FILIBERTO: Wha...what is it? Tell me, please. I have to help my wife!

LA TÍA: Dig into the dirt in the west garden at midnight on a full moon. And if you attempt it, heaven help you.

FILIBERTO: Why? What's there?

LA TÍA: No one knows. For centuries no one has been brave enough or foolish enough to try.

FILIBERTO: I will.

LA TÍA: Hmph!

FILIBERTO: For my wife, I will be brave!

(He starts to leave. She calls after him.)

LA TÍA: And my message?

FILIBERTO: Ah. Your message. The message is—Rodolfo is still waiting for you.

LA TÍA: (*A painful memory:*) Rodolfo...?

(La Tía begins to cry. She covers her head with the veil as she runs off sobbing. Filiberto heads home.)

JOSIE: As fate would have it, that very night there was a full

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moon and by the time Filiberto returned home, it was just about midnight...

(Someone hands Filiberto a shovel. He begins digging. Elvira enters.)

ELVIRA: Filiberto, I was so worried about you. What are you doing?

FILIBERTO: I found the woman who owned this place.

ELVIRA: And? Will she buy it back from us?

FILIBERTO: No, but she told me what has to be done.

ELVIRA: That's why you're digging?

FILIBERTO: There's no telling what kind of evil is beneath this soil. It might be the devil himself. But I'm going to do it and break this curse.

ELVIRA: But Filiberto—

FILIBERTO: Go back to the house and wait for me. Please. Just go.

ELVIRA: Whatever evils there are to face, we'll face them together.

(Someone hands Elvira a shovel. They dig.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: So together, they dug. Filiberto told Elvira about the old *Tía* and the old man, and he told her about the message from Rodolfo. And they dug all through the night under the full moon. Until—

(Filiberto's shovel hits a hard surface.)

FILIBERTO: Here! I've found something.

(Elvira moves to Filiberto and together they uncover his discovery.)

ELVIRA: What is this?

FILIBERTO: It's a huge wooden box, like a...

FILIBERTO & ELVIRA: *(Recoiling in fear:)* ...A coffin!

ELVIRA: Don't go near it. Maybe it's my fate to live the rest of my life as this horrible thing. Maybe I deserve this for being so greedy.

FILIBERTO: We have to free you. And who knows how many generations of people fell into this *maldición*. It has to stop.

(Filiberto reaches down to open the coffin.)

ELVIRA: Wait! What if this is a trick?

FILIBERTO: We have to take that chance.

ELVIRA: Wait! What if the old woman is part of all this evil?

FILIBERTO: There's no way to know. Stand back!

ELVIRA: Filiberto!!!

(Filiberto opens the coffin. They gasp.)

FILIBERTO: *Un esqueleto!* (A skeleton!)

ELVIRA: And look! Gold! Silver!

FILIBERTO: It's a fortune!

ELVIRA: And jewels! Oooh, they're so beautiful!

FILIBERTO: Don't touch them!

ELVIRA: But they're so shiny and pretty!

(She grabs at the jewels. Music swells as a huge ESQUELETO [skeleton] emerges from the coffin, along with glittering silver and gold pieces. Filiberto and Elvira scream. The skeleton towers over them.)

EL ESQUELETO: Who are you?

FILIBERTO: We are Filiberto and Elvira. We live here on this land.

EL ESQUELETO: And why do you open my coffin?

ELVIRA: There's been a *maldición*.

EL ESQUELETO: What kind of *maldición*?

ELVIRA: What kind? Helloooooo??? Look at me!

FILIBERTO: We were told if we find the secret buried in this garden, we could cure the *maldición*.

EL ESQUELETO: The *maldición* of this garden is against greed. Now the story is revealed. When I, Juan Ortiz Orizaba died, my treasure was buried with me to hide it from the greedy Spaniards. But before my wife could dig the treasure out, death took her and I've been stuck here ever since. Look into the coffin.

(Filiberto and Elvira peer into the coffin.)

FILIBERTO: Gold and silver!

ELVIRA: And jewels!

EL ESQUELETO: The *maldición* ends when there is no more greed on this land or in this house!

ELVIRA: No more greed.

FILIBERTO: We promise!

ELVIRA: Er...okay!

EL ESQUELETO: Riches are for the purpose of generosity!

FILIBERTO: *La generosidad* (generosity)!

(A huge wind kicks up. It swirls around Filiberto and Elvira. El Esqueleto disappears. Suddenly Elvira is back to normal.)

FILIBERTO: Your head!

ELVIRA: *(Feeling her head:)* I'm me again!

(They embrace. La Tía enters. She no longer has vines growing

out of her skull.)

LA TÍA: You did it. You had the courage to remove the curse.

FILIBERTO: (*Reaching to Elvira:*) We did it, together.

(The Old Man enters.)

LA TÍA: Rodolfo.

OLD MAN: I heard a great wind and saw a bright light coming from this place of my fondest memories.

LA TÍA: You came back.

OLD MAN: I told you I would wait for you.

LA TÍA: I'm sorry I shunned you, but I couldn't bear for you to look at me, I was so horrible.

OLD MAN: And I told you it didn't matter, *mi amor*.

(La Tía and the Old Man embrace.)

FILIBERTO: And now we will share in these riches...with others!

LA TÍA: What a good idea. We can build a library for the town.

ELVIRA: And start an orphanage.

FILIBERTO: And a public garden so people can plant vegetables for their families.

OLD MAN: There are many uses for these treasures!

ELVIRA: (*To audience:*) Filiberto and Elvira found many ways to give to others. They went down in the history of the *pueblo* as great philanthropists.

FILIBERTO: (*To audience:*) But neither of them ever went near a squash again.

(Music rises. Actors take a bow, then quickly take their places for

the next tale. Young Josefina steps down.)

TALE 3: THE TALE OF CURSED BEAUTY

YOUNG JOSEFINA: This is a *cuento* about envy and vanity.

ANABEL: Anabel was plain, but her sister Alicia was not plain at all.

ALICIA: Everyone in town said she was a great beauty.

(ANABEL and ALICIA are hanging laundry.)

ANABEL: Everyone says you are so pretty. I hate you.

ALICIA: Who says I'm so pretty?

ANABEL: Everyone.

ALICIA: *(Encouragingly:)* Well...you're pretty too... In your own special way.

JOSEFINA: There was nothing Alicia could do to alleviate her sister's jealousy. It was an unspoken thorn that pricked each of them daily.

ALICIA: Oh, look. Here comes Diego.

(Anabel desperately tries to improve her appearance as DIEGO enters.)

ANABEL: Why does he have to pass by *now*, when we look like *this*?

ALICIA: Shh. He has to pass this way to get to town.

DIEGO: *Buenos días* (Good day), Alicia.

ALICIA: *Buenos días*, Diego.

ANABEL: *Buenos días*, Diego.

DIEGO: *Hola* (Hello), Anabel. *(More to Alicia:)* Just on my way into town. I was wondering if you were going to attend the dance at the festival this weekend.

ALICIA: We were considering it. Weren't we, Anabel?

ANABEL: (*Shyly:*) Will you be there?

DIEGO: I will. (*More to Alicia:*) And I hope you will be too.

ALICIA: *Gracias.* We will.

DIEGO: (*Smitten:*) Wonderful. *Hasta entonces.* (Until then.)

ALICIA: Until then.

DIEGO: *Adios.*

ALICIA: *Adios.*

(*Diego exits with no acknowledgment of Anabel.*)

ANABEL: (*After him:*) *Adios, Diego.*

(*The festival music begins.*)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Anabel had a secret place in her heart for Diego since the time they were children. But that weekend at the festival dance, when it came time for the promenade...

(*Diego and Alicia promenade together as the music plays.*)

Alicia had never looked so lovely. The festival attendees watched her and marveled at her beauty.

(*Music swells. Anabel watches and then runs off in tears.*)

Under the light of the bright moon, Anabel ran until she could run no longer. Without realizing, she had followed the path out of town to the small valleys in the nearby hills... The hills rumored to be inhabited by *brujas* (witches), who traveled in balls of fire.

ANABEL: What have I done? Where am I? I'm lost. (*Calling out:*) Hello? Hello? Someone? Anyone? I'm lost!

(*Globes of light/fire gradually appear in the air.*)

This is strange.

(BRUJA 1 *enters.*)

Ahhh!!!!

(*Anabel trembles in fear. Bruja 1 circles her.*)

BRUJA 1: Don't be afraid, young thing. You've been led here because your heart desires something deeply.

ANABEL: My heart's desire?

BRUJA 1: A desire powerful enough to transcend time and space.

ANABEL: Who are you?

BRUJA 1: Someone powerful enough to match that desire. One wish. The wish of a lifetime.

ANABEL: One wish?

BRUJA 1: Anything. That is...for a small compensation.

ANABEL: One wish for a small compensation? And...what compensation?

BRUJA 1: That is an answer you will not learn until the wish is granted.

ANABEL: *Gracias*, but I'm not comfortable with the unknown. I just want to go home.

BRUJA 1: The road to the *pueblo* is that direction. Go...if you choose to forfeit the wish of a lifetime.

(*Anabel considers then starts off. Then pauses.*)

(*After her:*) What have you been secretly wishing for as you've wandered through these hills tonight? Is your heart brave enough to admit it?

ANABEL: Will it be worth it?

BRUJA 1: Tell me your wish and it will come to pass.

ANABEL: (*Conflicted:*) I...can't say it.

BRUJA 1: But your thoughts are powerful. Powerful enough to bring you here. Powerful enough to call to me. Admit your wish.

(As Anabel reveals her wish the globes of fire flicker and the sound rises. Bruja 1 repeats her words and circles her uttering the incantation.)

ANABEL: I want to be the most beautiful girl in the world! I want to possess a beauty that makes men fall to their knees in worship and makes women cower in fear. I want a beauty like no one has ever possessed. I want a beauty that is revered and praised. I want to be the most beautiful woman in all of México!

BRUJA 1: And so it shall be!

(Sounds reach a crescendo.)

ANABEL: How do I look?

BRUJA 1: Eh. Give it time.

(Bruja 1 exits.)

JOSEFINA: Over the next few months, there was a change in Anabel. Little by little, her bone structure and physique changed. It was as if all the family beauty of Alicia was now seen in Anabel, but elevated and pronounced in such a way that no one could deny the power of Anabel's magnificence. It became clear at the festival in honor of Saint Lazarus.

(Festival music rises. Anabel and PARTY GUESTS enter. The SUITORS surround her.)

SUITOR 1: If you were mine, I would shower you with all the gifts that money can buy.

SUITOR 2: If you were mine, I would never look at another

woman.

SUITOR 3: If you were mine, I would move heaven and earth for you.

(She sees Diego, ignores all Suitors and rushes to him.)

ANABEL: Hi, Diego!

DIEGO: *Buenas noches* (Good evening), Anabel.

ANABEL: I've been trying to speak to you all night.

DIEGO: I couldn't get near you. You've become the most sought after woman in the whole state of Zacatecas.

ANABEL: I suppose I have, yes.

DIEGO: Our town has become famous because of your beauty.

ANABEL: I know. But I only dream of praise from one person.

DIEGO: Has someone captured your heart?

ANABEL: Someone has.

DIEGO: Do I know him?

ANABEL: Diego, don't play games with me.

DIEGO: Anabel. I'm going to ask Alicia to marry me. You must know I've been in love with her since we were children.

ANABEL: You were under the spell of her beauty.

DIEGO: Yes, she is beautiful.

ANABEL: But she's not the prettiest sister anymore. I mean, *look* at me!

DIEGO: You've changed and no one can deny your beauty. But it's not just your sister's appearance. It's the sound of her laugh, the way she stops to admire flowers and trees, and the way she cares for others, just a million things that make

her...Alicia.

ANABEL: But Diego, I've sacrificed so much.

DIEGO: Sacrificed?

ANABEL: *(Breaking down:)* You have no idea.

DIEGO: Please don't cry.

ANABEL: I've done this for you!

(The church bells toll midnight.)

Ah! I have to go.

DIEGO: I'm sorry. Wait, come back.

(Anabel runs as church bells continue to toll. Diego pursues her.)

ANABEL: Go back. Stay away from me!

DIEGO: Anabel! Wait!

JOSEFINA: Anabel managed to escape from Diego.

(She outruns him.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: She ran swiftly away from the fiesta and through the *placita* (town square) across town to her family's big house, where she opened the front door and ran up the stairs into her bedroom and to her mirror.

(As the church bells chime twelve times, Anabel pulls a sheet off a large mirror and reveals her reflection. She has the head of a horse.)

JOSEFINA: Anabel had discovered the price for her great beauty. A transformation took place every midnight. Her wish, it seemed, was all for nothing. So she returned to the hills and to the *Bruja*.

(Anabel returns to the hills.)

ANABEL: Hello? Are you there? Bruja? Bruja!

(Globes of light/fire shine. Bruja 1 appears.)

BRUJA 1: Ah ha, you see? The wish has come true. Such magnificent beauty. You look good, girl!

ANABEL: Yeah, *gracias, pero no* (thanks, but no thanks). I don't want my wish anymore.

BRUJA 1: *Queeee?* (Whaaaat?)

ANABEL: I want to go back. To what I was.

BRUJA 1: But you're the most beautiful woman in all of México. That's what you wanted.

ANABEL: I can't go through life with a horse head every night. It's so ugly! And inconvenient.

BRUJA 1: I see. Well, there is only one thing that can return you to the way you were. And it is not something that I can give you.

ANABEL: But you made me this way.

BRUJA 1: It was *your* wish, not mine!

ANABEL: How do I reverse it? Tell me.

BRUJA 1: You must discover it yourself.

ANABEL: That's not fair!

BRUJA 1: Vanity! Envy! Jealousy! These are things of the heart that I cannot erase. It's up to you to find your way now.

(Bruja 1 disappears, laughing. Her laugh and music crescendo.)

ANABEL: Please wait! Help me! Please! *Bruja!* Help me, Please!

(Bruja 1 is gone. The light/fire globes dissolve.)

ACTOR 9: Anabel's vanity, envy, and jealousy dictated her

fate.

ACTOR 5: She retained her magnificent beauty. But only by day.

(Tableau of Alicia and Diego. Happy.)

ALICIA: But seeing her sister so happy, over time, Anabel became a bitter and angry woman.

JOSIE: Which kept anyone from truly loving her.

JOSEFINA: People say the ghost of Anabel still haunts that *pueblo*.

IGNACIO: She wanders the winding colonial streets searching for the one thing that will break the spell.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Someone to love her for the beauty she buried deep inside.

(Anabel wanders. A YOUNG MAN follows her.)

To this day, there are sightings of a beautiful young woman wandering the streets at midnight, but when she is pursued...

(Anabel turns to Young Man, revealing her horse head. He screams and runs. We hear the sound of horse hooves and neighing. Music punctuates end of tale. Actors take a bow then prepare for the next tale as Young Josefina steps down.)

TALE 4: THE MAIDEN IN THE ORANGE

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Once upon a time in the land of the Mexicas, light skinned foreigners entered the kingdom from the east. Seeing a dangerous future for the children of her land, The Goddess Xochiquetzal, protector of female power and beauty, hid three of her most beautiful daughters in the fruit of an orange tree.

JOSEFINA: As time went by, the foreigners took hold of the land and of the people who lived there. The foreigners became

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the ruling class.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: One such well-to-do family had a son, who held the title of the Marquess.

ACTOR 9: His parents, eager to maintain family wealth, had promised him in marriage to the daughter of European aristocracy. But he was an independent young man who wanted to find true love on his own terms.

(The Marquess and his horse, BROWNIE, enter.)

MARQUESS: I was born in this land and I will set out and search this country for my true love. Come on, Brownie!

IGNACIO: So he loaded up his favorite horse, Brownie, and set off toward the horizon.

(The Marquess jumps on Brownie and takes off riding.)

After a very long day of travel he came upon a fork in the road where there was a mysterious, but beautiful, fountain.

MARQUESS: How strange that there should be a mysterious, but beautiful, fountain in the middle of nowhere at this crossroads. We've been traveling a long while, so let's have a drink of this beautiful clear water.

YOUNG JOSEFINA: As the Marquess bent over the water, he saw a reflection of three perfectly shaped oranges hanging on the branch of a tree.

MARQUESS: *(Looking up:)* Such perfect oranges! I didn't notice the tree before. Did you, Brownie?

(Brownie neighs and shakes her head "no.")

We've been traveling a long way and could use a delicious treat.

(He picks an orange, cuts into it. BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 1 emerges from orange.)

MARQUESS: Whoa! That was unexpected!

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 1: Thank you for freeing me. I've been in that orange for so long. I'm hungry and thirsty.

MARQUESS: I'm happy to share my food with you. I have tortillas and beans and *pan dulce* and—

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 1: Thank you, but the only thing that will quench my thirst and satisfy my hunger is an ancient drink of chocolate and corn, flavored with vanilla beans and orchid petals.

MARQUESS: I'm sorry. I don't have those ingredients.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 1: I'm sorry too.

(Beautiful Woman 1 disappears.)

MARQUESS: Wow, that was odd, wasn't it, Brownie? She was so beautiful. And there are two more oranges!

*(The Marquess picks another orange and cuts into it.
BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2 emerges from orange.)*

MARQUESS: Whoa! It happened again! And this dark beauty is even lovelier than the last one!

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2: Thank you for freeing me. Oh, I've been in that orange for so long. I'm hungry and I'm thirsty.

MARQUESS: I'd be happy to share my food with you. I have tortillas and beans and *pan dulce* and—

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2: Oh, thank you. That's very kind of you, but the only thing that will quench my thirst and satisfy my hunger is an ancient drink of chocolate and corn, flavored with vanilla beans and orchid petals.

MARQUESS: Huh, I'm sorry, I don't have those ingredients.

BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2: I'm sorry too.

(Beautiful Woman 2 disappears.)

MARQUESS: Wow. That was odd, wasn't it Brownie? But she was so beautiful. There's one orange left on that branch.

(The Marquess reaches up. Brownie neighs and paws the ground with her hoof.)

MARQUESS: What's that, Brownie?

(Brownie mimes mixing chocolate with corn and flavoring it with vanilla beans and petals from an orchid.)

Oh! Right. I need to make a drink of chocolate with corn, flavored with vanilla beans and petals from an orchid *in advance*. I wonder where I can find those ingredients.

(Brownie neighs, paws the ground, and gestures that they should hit the road.)

Good idea. We'll travel down the road and see if we can find those ingredients!

JOSEFINA: So the Marquess plucked the third orange from the tree, jumped on Brownie, and set off on his way.

(BRUJA 2, pulling her horse-drawn wagon, appears on the road. [This is a different bruja than the one in "The Tale of the Cursed Beauty."] She sees the Marquess and Brownie and quickly disguises herself as a PEDDLER.)

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Hello fellow traveler! Such a long road and such a hot day!!! Where are you coming from and where are you headed?

MARQUESS: Hello, old peddler woman. I just came from a magical fork in the road where there was a flowing fountain of clear blue water and a perfect orange tree bearing three ripe oranges.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: A fountain??? Oh, I'm soooo parched. I'm wondering if you could spare a drop of water a thirsty old

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woman?

(Brownie is skeptical.)

MARQUESS: Well, we haven't got much left. But you do look pretty beat and you sure are old, and I was taught to respect my elders, so here you go.

(He hands her his canteen. Peddler/Bruja 2 greedily guzzles all the water until the canteen is empty. Brownie neighs in protest.)

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Thanks, *Señor*.

MARQUESS: You finished it all.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Yeah, well, I told you I was thirsty. Now maybe I can do something for you. I have some wonderful things to sell here. I've got fur, pans for cooking, leather goods, and— How 'bout a pair of nice new riding boots? Discount, today only.

MARQUESS: Thanks. I doubt you have what I'm looking for.

(The Marquess and Brownie start off.)

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Maybe you're hungry. Some nice beans—

MARQUESS: No, thanks, got beans.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Got a good deal on crickets today.

MARQUESS: No, thank you.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Got a couple blocks of ancient chocolate.

(The Marquess stops.)

MARQUESS: Chocolate? Do you also happen to have corn?

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Lemme look. Let's see here. Yep, uh huh. I got a few cobs here.

MARQUESS: Do you happen to have vanilla beans and the petals of an orchid?

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: *Híjole!* (Geeez!) What do you think I am, magic? Let's see here. Let me see...almond extract, coconut extract, vanilla extract. Oh, here we go, vanilla beans and...yep, orchid petals.

MARQUESS: I'll take all those items, please!

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: You got a deal, *Señor!* Two silver pieces.

(The Marquess pays her.)

JOSEFINA: And without haste the Marquess melted the chocolate in the sun, added the corn, and flavored the drink with the vanilla beans and the petals from the orchid.

MARQUESS: Stand back!

(He cuts open the third orange. COSZCOTL emerges. Peddler/Bruja 2 hides partway behind the wagon and watches.)

Whoa, it happened again and this is the most incredible woman I've ever seen!

COSZCOTL: Thank you for freeing me. Oh, I've been in that orange for so long. I'm hungry and I'm thirsty.

MARQUESS: Maybe you'd like a drink I made of chocolate and corn, flavored with vanilla beans and orchid petals.

COSZCOTL: You read my mind!

(She drinks.)

Yummy!

YOUNG JOSEFINA: Suddenly the orange evaporated, leaving her standing naked before the Marquess.

COSZCOTL: Thank you, I'm free now, but I'm naked, do you think you could...?

MARQUESS: Peddler, do you have any clothing?

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Hmm, she looks about a size four. Try

this.

(Peddler/Bruja 2 hands Coszcotl some clothes. Coszcotl puts them on.)

MARQUESS: What is your name, beautiful woman?

COSZCOTL: I am Coszcotl.

MARQUESS: What an enchanting name!

COSZCOTL: Thank you. It means jewel. I was named by my mother, the Goddess Xochiquetzal.

MARQUESS: A perfect name for you. I am Juan Guillermo Enriquez Carlos Cristian Sanchez de Aguirre, Marquess Villar de Cervantes.

COSZCOTL: And they say Aztec names are complicated!

MARQUESS: I'd like to bring you to my home, if I may. To meet my family and maybe, I don't know, fall in love with me eventually?

COSZCOTL: Well, you were nice enough to free me and give me that tasty chocolate drink. And I have no other plans yet.

MARQUESS: I've never seen anything like you. I come from a rich and powerful family. I can shower you with gifts and offer you a wonderful life.

COSZCOTL: That sounds promising.

MARQUESS: Great! Let's go!

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Ah, ah, ah! Excuse me, hold up there, but, eh...aren't you going to need more water for the journey?

MARQUESS: *(Pointedly:)* Yes, that's true, since it's all been drunk.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: *(Scheming:)* How about...eh, I'll stay here and care for this beautiful young thing. You go back to the

fountain and fill your canteens with water. And we'll be here waiting for you.

MARQUESS: We are going to need water for the long journey. (*To Coszcotl:*) Will you wait for me?

COSZCOTL: Of course I will.

MARQUESS: I'll return as quickly as I can. Come on, Brownie, let's go.

(Brownie neighs. The Marquess jumps on Brownie. They exit.)

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: So. Big day for you, huh?

COSZCOTL: I'm sorry?

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Well, freed from your orange jail, brand new clothes, and now you've met a nice, good-looking nobleman from a big fat wealthy family.

COSZCOTL: I'm grateful the gods have smiled upon me.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Yes, how fortunate you are. But... If I might make one suggestion that could help your future?

COSZCOTL: Oh, yes, please.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: This young man is from a European family. They are accustomed to different styles of appearance for their women. He might tolerate your particular beauty, but when his mother and father see you, ooo-eee, forget it, honey.

COSZCOTL: What should I do?

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Well, for instance, that hair.

COSZCOTL: What's wrong with my hair?

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: It's all wrong. They never wear their hair like *that*. I could help you comb it into the European style. Then they will see that you have breeding and you are genteel.

COSZCOTL: Well, I suppose that would be a reasonable

compromise. Alright.

(Peddler/Bruja 2 approaches with a large comb. She begins combing Coszcotl's hair. As she combs, she turns into the horrible bruja that she truly is.)

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Such nice, long, dark hair.

COSZCOTL: Ouch. That's a little rough.

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: So long and black and thick and luxurious.

COSZCOTL: Please. Now you're hurting me. Please, stop!

(Peddler/Bruja 2 suddenly wields a long pin and sticks it into Coszcotl's head.)

JOSEFINA: The evil *bruja* stuck a pin into Coszcotl's head and she suddenly turned into a dove.

(Coszcotl turns into a Dove. Peddler/Bruja 2 shoos her away.)

PEDDLER/BRUJA 2: Now get out of here! Beat it! Go!

(Peddler/Bruja 2 extracts a slingshot from the wagon and begins pelting the Dove.)

I said get lost!!! Go! Shoo! *Lárgate!* (Scram!)

(The Dove flies off.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: The evil *bruja* had a plan. She released her horse and disguised herself as Coszcotl.

(Peddler/Bruja 2 releases her horse, turns into the image of Coszcotl and puts on the same clothes. [The actor who plays Coszcotl can play the bruja as Coszcotl.]

So when the Marquess returned, he found...

(The Marquess and Brownie return.)

MARQUESS: I've returned. This should be enough water to get us back to the hacienda. Where's the peddler woman and

her horse?

BRUJA 2/COSZCOTL: I'm so glad you're back! The horse got loose and went running wild, the old peddler woman chased after but she never returned. I've been waiting here for hours. I'm eager to leave with you and head back to your sprawling hacienda and... (*Suggestively:*) ...you know.

MARQUESS: Oh. But I wonder if we should wait for the peddler. She might need help.

BRUJA 2/COSZCOTL: Eh, she'll be fine. She's a strong old thing. We'd better go, it's getting dark.

MARQUESS: You're right. It would be wise to make the journey before sundown.

(The Marquess places Bruja 2/Coszcotl on top of Brownie and he leads them off.)

JOSEFINA: When they returned to the hacienda, the disguised *bruja* convinced the Marquess to marry her immediately. And although it felt a little rushed, like many men, he was entranced by beauty. But very soon after the wedding, strange things began to happen in and around the hacienda.

(JARDINERO [gardener] enters and begins working.)

JARDINERO: All the plants in the garden are dying.

ACTOR 7: And even more disturbing, several local children had gone mysteriously missing. One day –

(The Dove enters.)

DOVE: Excuse me, *Señor Jardinero*. Can you tell me...how is the Marquess?

JARDINERO: Poor Don Juan Guillermo. I'll tell you this, little Dove. He no longer sings happy songs. He's very upset by the

missing children and the other strange occurrences.

DOVE: That makes me very sad.

(The Dove cries and flies off.)

JOSEFINA: Every few days the Dove would return to the *jardin* (garden).

DOVE: Excuse me, *Señor Jardinero*. Can you tell me...how is the Marquess?

JARDINERO: No better. I'd say he's even worse.

DOVE: But why?

JARDINERO: More children have gone missing and the plants continue to die, and now the vegetables. That new wife is spending all the family money, creating gossip, and making enemies in town. There is a dark shadow over the hacienda.

DOVE: Oh, that's terrible.

(The Marquess enters the balcony with his guitar.)

JARDINERO: I've known Juan Guillermo since he was a young child. He used to stand on the balcony and sing songs of love. But now...

(The Marquess plays a sad tune on the guitar.)

DOVE: That's so sad!

(The little Dove cries and flies off. The Marquess crosses to Jardinero.)

MARQUESS: *Buenos días, Señor Jardinero.*

JARDINERO: Don Juan Guillermo, how are you today?

MARQUESS: Meh.

JARDINERO: You have a heavy heart.

MARQUESS: So heavy I doubt everything. Myself, the future,

I even doubt...love.

JARDINERO: When I feel like that, I sit in the garden among the flowers and plants and trees and listen to the birds sing. Maybe you should try. In fact, there's a little dove that comes here asking about you.

MARQUESS: A dove? Asking about me?

JARDINERO: A truly beautiful little thing.

MARQUESS: True beauty would do my heart good. The next time the bird comes, please capture it and bring it to me.

JARDINERO: I will, señor.

(The Marquess exits.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA: A few days later...

(Jardinero in jardin [garden], working. The Dove appears.)

DOVE: Hello, *Señor Jardinero*.

JARDINERO: Hello little Dove.

DOVE: I'm sorry to bother you, but... Can you tell me...how is the Marquess?

(Jardinero approaches the Dove.)

JARDINERO: Oh, he's just about the same.

DOVE: Oh, I see.

JARDINERO: Sad.

DOVE: Sad?

JARDINERO: Crying.

DOVE: Crying?

JARDINERO: Forlorn.

DOVE: For —

(Jardinero quickly nabs the Dove and sticks it in a bag, then crosses and hands the Dove to the Marquess.)

JARDINERO: Here's that dove I was telling you about.

MARQUESS: Ah. A truly beautiful bird.

(He strokes Dove's head.)

Such beautiful coloring and such a sweet little face. What's this? It feels as if there's something stuck in the dove's head. A pin!

(Jardinero shrugs. The Marquess pulls the pin out. The Dove instantly becomes Coszcotl.)

MARQUESS: It's you!

COSZCOTL: *(Breathlessly:)* Yes, the real me! That peddler woman wasn't really a peddler! She is a *bruja* who stuck that pin in my head and turned me into a dove and then she made off with you and forced you to marry and now she's spending all your family's money and making gossip and enemies of everyone in town and she's probably doing other horrible evil things too!

MARQUESS: I knew there was something strange about her!

COSZCOTL: Let's get her!

MARQUESS: But how will we stand up to her powers?

COSZCOTL: She's met her match.

MARQUESS: *(Swooning:)* Beautiful *and* fearless.

COSZCOTL: I come from a long line of warriors and cosmic deities.

MARQUESS: And I come from...okay, I'm right behind you!

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