Dia de los Muertos Version

CUENTOS DE JOSEFINA (JOSEPHINE'S TALES)

CHARACTERS:

ACTOR 1, female
Plays JOSIE, CALACA, PARTY GUEST, ALICIA, COZCOTL/DOVE, LUPITA

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

ACTOR 3, female
Plays YOUNG JOSEFINA

ACTOR 4, male
Plays IGNACIO, PAL, CALACA, GUEST 2, SUITOR 1, XOLOITSCUINTLE DOG

ACTOR 5, male
Plays PABLITO, GUEST 3, SUITOR 2, YOUNG MAN, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 1, XOLOITSCUINTLE DOG, OFFICER

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

ACTOR 7, female
Plays MARISOL, NEIGHBOR, GUEST, EL ESQUELETO (In TALE OF THE HAUNTED SQUASH), BROWNIE

ACTOR 8, female
Plays PAL, EL PANADERO, OLD MAN (RODOLFO), ANABEL, PEDDLER/BRUJA 2,

ACTOR 9, male
Plays DON AGUSTÍN, FILIBERTO, SUITOR 3, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2, XOLOITSCUINTLE DOG, JARDINERO

ACTOR 10, female
Plays LA DUEÑA, ELVIRA, BRUJA 1, CALACA, XOLOITSCUINTLE DOG

NOTE:
Actors should have a good grasp of the Spanish language.
Actor playing THE MARQUESS sings well and plays guitar.

AND…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 fifteen. In any case YOUNG JOSEFINA and IGNACIO should be young actors. The actor gender does not have to match character gender. The purpose is to have fun and celebrate theatricality.

THIS IS ENSEMBLE STORY TELLING. ACTORS ARE READY TO STEP IN AND PORTRAY A ROLE QUICKLY. WHEN NOT PLAYING A PARTICULAR PART, ACTORS MIGHT 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 SPONTENEITY.

AT LIGHTS UP, ACTORS ENTER WITH TONS OF ENERGY, ACKNOWLEDGING THE AUDIENCE, THEY FORM A CIRCLE OF UNITY, THEN THEY QUICKLY TAKE THEIR PLACES. ACTOR STRUMS A FEW CHORDS ON THE GUITAR.

JOSIE, STEPS FORWARD, INVITING US IN.

JOSIE

This is our family business here on Olvera Street. My abuelo (grandfather) got a lease on this *puesto* when he first came to the US from a small town in Chihuahua, Mexico a long time ago. Grandpa and my grandmother, Josefina ran the shop for years. And then my dad ran the shop, and then my cousin. And even though generations have gone on to law school, and teaching, and medicine, and some have gone on to be dreamers and artists, like me, we owe it all to the hard work and sacrifices of those that came before us.

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 on Olvera Street, 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, 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, fotos from Mexico, and a garden of bougainvillea, gardenias, hydrangeas, green peppers, carrots, sunflowers, and corn. The house smelled like a magic combination of corn *masa*, chili powder, fresh *pan dulce*, 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* and all her pets; Pinto the dog, Whisky 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 sewed my *Quinciñera* 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.

LIGHT UP ON JOSEFINA, JOSIE'S MEMORY OF HER.

JOSEFINA

Okay *niños*, what stories shall we hear tonight?

JOSIE

Grandma, tell the story of the *The Bruja* 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*!!!

IGNACIO

Tell us about *Dia de los Muertos!!!* (Day of the Dead).

JOSEFINA

Ahhh, Bueno (Oh, 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's became orphans. My grandma 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 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* (nonsense)! *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.

MARISOL

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 harder, Pablito.

PABLITO

How? What options do I have?

MARISOL

You gave up after the factory closed.

PABLITO

We could have gotten us out of this place, but instead of helping us, he left his money to build 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

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

- playing cards with your no good buddies!

PABLITO RAISES HIS HAND TO STRIKE MARISOL. SHE SCREAMS.

Pablo!

MARISOL'S MOTHER ENTERS. SHE'S DOUR AND CORSE.

MARISOL'S MOM

Marisol, are you two fighting again?

MARISOL

It's fine, *Amá* (Mom).

MARISOL'S MOM (sizing up PABLITO)

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

Pablito is just leaving to buy the *ofrendas*(offerings) for the altar. 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 *tontos* (jerks)!

MARISOL'S MOM EXITS SHAKING HER HEAD. MARISOL TURNS TO PABLITO, HANDS HIM MONEY.

MARISOL

For the altar…. One *tamal de carne* (beef tamal) 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!" 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

Memories fade.

MARISOL (harshly)

For me too!

PABLITO (referring to Marisol's mother)

Híjole! (Wow!) You're turning into that ugly old lady.

MARISOL

If you spend a *centavo* of that money on beer, you're going 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. To prepare for an afterlife that doesn't exit. Hah, hah hah!

PABLITO APPROACHES THE GRAVEYARD.

Día de los Muertos! (Raspberry) Another waste of money. 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 a business and made something of my life. Well, *gracias para nada!* (thanks for nothing)

PABLITO SPITS AT THE GRAVE.

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

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Pablito continued on to complete his tasks.

PABLO ENTERS LA VICTORIA RESTAURANT. LA DUEÑA ENTERS.

LA DUEÑA

Buenas tardes, Pablito. How can I help you today?

PABLITO

One *tamal de carne*.

LA DUEÑA

Ah! That was Don Agustín's favorite! Rest his soul. I bet you're taking this as an *ofrenda* (offering) for the altar.

PABLITO

I don't believe in those *tonterías* (nonsense).

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 PANADERIA* (BAKERY). *EL PANADERO* (BAKER) ENTERS.

EL PANADERO

Buenas tardes, Pablito. What can I do for you?

PABLITO

One *empanada de fresa*.

EL PANADERO

Ah. That must be for the memory of Don Agustín! It was his favorite, rest his soul.

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 was Don Agustín's favorite, rest his soul. I'll bet you're building an altar!

PABLITO

Just give me the Tequila!!!

PABLITO PAYS AND EXITS.

YOUNG 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. MUSIC RISES. 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

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! (Ooooouch!)

DON AGUSTÍN

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

DON AGUSTÍN WEILDS 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

Realize your potential, *pendejo* (jerk)! 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. PABLO WAKES UP WITH A START, THEN LOOKS AROUND IN THE DARKNESS.

What happened to me? It must 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 FLOWERS.

JOSEFINA

That night in every house in the *pueblo* (town) altars were built. *Ofrendas* (offerings) 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

-The Ranchito, 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* (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.

YOUNG 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.

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!

CARD PLAYER AND FILIBERTO SIGN DEED. THEY SHAKE HANDS.

Gracias, Señor Trujillo.

ELVIRA INSPECTS THE DEED AS THE CARD PLAYER 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 10 acres and it's ours! *Híjole*! (Wow) 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* (cents). 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.

FILIBERTO

Here's the money from today's sales.

ELVIRA (counting)

Five, ten, fourteen, fifteen *centavos* (cents). 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.

A STRANGE AND MAGICAL SOUND IS HEARD AS PUMPKINS GROW AND TAKE OVER THE GARDEN FILIBERTO ENTERS.

FILIBERTO

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

ELVIRA

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

FILIBERTO

Mira! (Look!)

ELVIRA

Híjole! (Wow!)…

FILIBERTO

Beautiful ripe *calabazas*.

ELVIRA

Ripe and beautiful! We can sell them at the *mercado* 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

We can't sell them.

ELVIRA

Estás loco? (Are you crazy?) We have to sell them!

FILIBERTO

We promised not to plant here.

ELVIRA

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*.

FILBERTO

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*)

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.

YOUNG 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.

BEAT DROPS HARD. PARTY WITH NEIGHBORS ENSUES.

ELVIRA

Mira. (Look)We had so much squash I made delicious squash soup for the guests.

PARTY CONTINUES. GUESTS EAT PUMPKIN SOUP AND DANCE. PARTY DIES DOWN.

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!!! *Ayyyy!*

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* (cents). 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 niiiiiice.

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? 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.

ACTOR 6

The very next morning the garden was abundant with big fat, ripe, healthy *calabazas*. (pumpkins).

ELVIRA OPENS A SQUASH AND PULLS OUT MONEY.

ELVIRA (gleefully)

Ahhhh! This time we have enough money to renovate the house. We might even buy the land next door and expand!!!

YOUNG 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, just to brag, they threw a *fiesta*. A big *fiesta*!

THE BEAT DROPS, 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! (Oh, God!) 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.

GUEST 1

Aaaaaah!!!! Look at her hair!

EVERYONE FREEZES. THEY TAKE IN THE HORRIBLE SIGHT OF ELVIRA.

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 monster!

GUEST 4

It's a curse!!

THE GUESTS SCREAM AND SCRAMBLE AWAY.

ELVIRA

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

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* (a curse), 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 Mr. Trujillo from the card game and get to the bottom of this.

FILIBERTO

Me…?

ELVIRA

Well I can't go out in public like this.

ELVIRA DESOLVES 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

Maybe we took it a little too far.

MORE TEARS FROM ELVIRA.

FILIBERTO

I'll get to the bottom of this. I'll solve the curse, I promise.

ELVIRA

I'm a monster!

ELVIRA RUNS OFF IN HUMILIATION.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

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 DOORS SHUTTING ECHOS.

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 (*Interrupting*)

You! We went to your lousy party and now everyone is 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.

FILEBERTO

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

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

FILIBERTO

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.

FILBERTO 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

(Weary) 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 FROM HER HEAD, CRYING.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

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.

VOICE/LA TIA

Who's there?

FILIBERTO

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

VOICE/LA TIA

I don't want visitors, *tonto*! (idiot!)

FILIBERTO

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

VOICE/LA TIA

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 TIA* (THE AUNT). SHE IS WEARING BLACK FROM HEAD TO TOE AND IS COVERED IN A DIAPHONOUS BLACK VEIL.

LA TIA

Ah, si. (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 TIA

Something strange?

FILIBERTO

Something horrible.

LA TIA

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

FILIBERTO

Yes, but-

LA TIA

Did you abide by that agreement?

FILIBERTO

Well….not exactly-

LA TIA

-And now you've discovered the consequences.

FILIBERTO

We have to sell the house back to you.

LA TIA

Impossible.

FILIBERTO

We weren't told there was a curse.

LA TIA

You signed an agreement!

FILIBERTO

Something has happened to my wife.

LA TIA

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 TIA

Don't look at me!

FILIBERTO

You too!

LA TIA

Leave me alone.

FILIBERTO

It's a *maldición?* (curse)

LA TIA

Yes! What else?

FILIBERTO

We have to undo the curse.

LA TIA

You aren't brave enough to face it. No one is.

FILIBERTO

But I'll face it. I have to.

LA TIA (sizing him up)

You? Bah!

FILIBERTO

Tell me, please. I have to help my wife!

LA TIA

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

FILBERTO

Why? What's there?

LA TIA

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

FILIBERTO

For my wife, I will be brave!

HE STARTS TO LEAVE. SHE CALLS AFTER HIM.

LA TIA

And my message?

FILIBERTO

The message is - Rodolfo is still waiting for you.

LA TIA (a painful memory)

Rodolfo….?

LA TIA BEGINS TO CRY. SHE COVERS HER HEAD WITH THE VEIL AS SHE RUNS OFF SOBBING. FILIBERTO HEADS HOME.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

As fate would have it, that very night there was a full 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 (Aunt) 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 SOMETHING.

ELVIRA

What is this?

FILIBERTO

It's a…

FILIBERTO/ELVIRA (recoiling in fear)

…A coffin!

ELVIRA

Don't go near it.

FILIBERTO

We have to free you. Who knows how many generations fell into this curse. It has to end.

FILIBERTO REACHES DOWN TO OPEN THE COFFIN.

ELVIRA

Wait! What if this is a trick?

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

Why do you open my coffin?

ELVIRA

There's been a *maldición*.

EL ESQUELETO

What kind of *maldición*?

ELVIRA

Hello??? Look at me!

FILIBERTO

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

EL ESQUELETO

The *maldición* of this garden is against greed. 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.

EL ESQUELETO (voice echoing)

Live in generosity!!!!

WIND SWIRLS AROUND FILIBERTO AND ELVIRA. EL ESQUELETO DISAPPEARS. SUDDENLY ELVIRA IS BACK TO NORMAL.

ELVIRA

(Feeling her head) I'm me again!

THEY EMBRACE. LA TIA ENTERS. SHE NO LONGER HAS VINES GROWING OUT OF HER SKULL.

LA TIA

You did it. You had the courage to remove the curse.

FILIBERTO

(Reaching to ELIVIRA) We did it, together.

THE OLD MAN ENTERS.

LA TIA

Rodolfo.

OLD MAN

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

LA TIA

You came back.

OLD MAN

I told you I would wait for you.

LA TIA

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* (my love).

LA TIA AND THE OLD MAN EMBRACE.

FILIBERTO

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

LA TIA

Yes! 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

And feed those in need!

ACTOR 10

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

ACTOR 9

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

JOSEFINA

This is a *cuento* (tale) about envy and vanity.

ANABEL

Anabel was plain and 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

No, you don't.

ANABEL

Well...

ALICIA

Who says so I'm pretty?

ANABEL

Everyone.

ALICIA (encouragingly)

Well…you're pretty too… In your own special way.

JOSEFINA

Anabel could not contain the envy she had for her sister's beauty.

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

He has to pass this way to get to town.

DIEGO

Buenos días, Alicia.

ALICIA

Buenos días, Diego.

ANABEL

Buenos días, Diego.

DIEGO

Hola, 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. Thank you. 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.

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 PROMENDADE 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.

JOSEFINA

Under the light of a bright moon, Anabel ran until she could run no longer run. 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.

ANABEL

Who's out there?

BRUJA ENTERS.

ANABEL

Ahhh!!!!

ANABEL TREMBLES IN FEAR. THE BRUJA CIRCLES HER.

BRUJA

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

ANABEL

My heart's desire?

BRUJA

A desire powerful enough to transcend time and space.

ANABEL

Who are you?

BRUJA

Someone powerful enough to grant you one wish. The wish of a lifetime.

ANABEL

You'll grant one wish?

BRUJA

Anything. That is…for a small compensation.

ANABEL

One wish - small compensation? What compensation?

BRUJA

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

ANABEL

Gracias (Thanks), I'm not comfortable with the unknown. I want to go home.

BRUJA

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.

ANABEL

Will it be worth it?

BRUJA

Tell me your wish and it will come to pass.

ANABEL (conflicted)

I…can't say it.

BRUJA

No, 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. THE BRUJA 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 Mexico!

BRUJA

And so it shall be!

SOUNDS REACHES A CRESCENDO.

ANABEL

How do I look?

BRUJA

Eh. Give it time.

BRUJA 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 San Lázaro.

FESTIVAL MUSIC RISES. ANABEL AND PARTY GUESTS ENTER. THE MEN 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, now I'm the prettiest woman in Mexico. I mean*, look* at me!

DIEGO

No one can deny your beauty. But my love for your sister goes so much deeper. It's the sound of her laugh, the way she stops to admire flowers and trees, and the way she cares for people, the way she smiles at strangers and animals, and the way she sees me. A million things that make her Alicia.

ANABEL (stung)

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.

ANABEL

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.

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 beauty. A strange transformation took place every midnight. She realized her wish was all for nothing. So, she returned to the hills and to find the *Bruja* (witch).

ANABEL RETURNS TO THE HILLS.

ANABEL

Hello? Are you there? Bruja? Bruja!

GLOBES OF LIGHT/FIRE SHINE. BRUJA APPEARS.

BRUJA

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

Queeee? (Whaaaat?)

ANABEL

I want to go back. To what I was.

BRUJA

But you're the most beautiful woman in all of México. That's what you wished.

ANABEL

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

BRUJA

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

It was *your* wish not mine!

ANABEL

How do I reverse it? Tell me.

BRUJA

You must discover it yourself.

ANABEL

That's not fair!

BRUJA

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

THE BRUJA DISAPPEARS LAUGHING. HER LAUGH AND MUSIC CRESCENDO.

ANABEL

Please wait! Help me! Please! Bruja! Help me, Please!

BRUJA 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.

JOSEFINA

Which kept anyone from truly loving her.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

People say the ghost of Anabel still haunts that *pueblo* (town).

IGNACIO

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

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Someone to love the beauty she buried deep inside.

ANABEL WANDERS. A YOUNG MAN FOLLOWS HER.

To this day, there are sightings of a beautiful young woman wondering 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

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 Goddesss Xochiquetzal, protector of female power and beauty, hid three of her most beautiful daughters in the fruit of an orange tree.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

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

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

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. BEAUTIUL 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 pedals.

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!

MARQUESS PICKS ANOTHER ORANGE AND CUTS INTO IT. BEAUTIFUL WOMAN 2 EMERGES FROM ORANGE.

MARQUESS

Whoa! It happened again! And this 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 pedals.

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.

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 PEDALS FROM AN ORCHID.

Oh! Right. I need to make a drink of chocolate with corn, flavored with vanilla beans and pedals 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 (WITCH 2), PULLING HER HORSEDRAWN WAGON APPEARS ON THE ROAD. SHE SEES THE MARQUESS AND BROWNIE AND SHE QUICKLY DISGUISES HERSELF AS A PEDDLER WOMAN.

PEDDLER

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

A fountain??? Oh, I'm soooo parched. I'm wondering if you might have a bit of water you could spare with a thirsty old 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 GREEDILY GUZZLES ALL THE WATER UNTIL THE CANTEEN IS EMPTY. BROWNIE NEIGHS IN PROTEST.

PEDDLER

Thanks, Señor.

MARQUESS

You finished it all.

PEDDLER

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.

MARQUESS AND BROWNIE START OFF.

PEDDLER

Maybe you're hungry. Some nice beans-

MARQUESS

No, thanks, got beans.

PEDDLER

Got a good deal on crickets today.

MARQUESS

No, thank you.

PEDDLER

Got a couple blocks of ancient chocolate.

THE MARQUESS STOPS.

MARQUESS

Chocolate? Do you also happen to have corn?

PEDDLER

Lemme look. Let's see here. Yep, uh huh. I got a few cobs here.

MARQUESS

Do you happen to have the vanilla beans and the pedals of an orchid?

PEDDLER

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 pedals.

MARQUESS

I'll take all those items, please!

PEDDLER

You got a deal, *Señor!* Two silver pieces.

THE MARQUESS PAYS HER.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

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

MARQUESS

Stand back!

HE CUTS OPEN THE THIRD ORANGE. COSZCOTL EMERGES. THE PEDDLER 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 the vanilla beans and orchid pedals.

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

Hmm, she looks about a size four. Try this.

PEDDLER 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 to meet my family and maybe, I don't know, fall in love with me and get married?

COSZCOTL

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

MARQUESS

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

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

(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 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. MARQUESS JUMPS ON BROWNIE. THEY EXIT.

PEDDLER

So. Big day for you, huh?

COSZCOTL

I'm sorry?

PEDDLER

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

Yes, how fortunate you are. But…. If I might make one suggestion that could help your future?

COSZCOTL

Oh, yes, please.

PEDDLER

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

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

I suppose that would be a reasonable compromise. Alright.

THE PEDDLER APPROACHES WITH A LARGE COMB. SHE BEGINS COMBING COSZCOTL'S HAIR. AS SHE COMBS SHE TURNS INTO THE HORRIBLE BRUJA (WITCH) THAT SHE TRULY IS.

PEDDLER

Such nice long dark hair.

COSZCOTL

Ouch. That's a little rough.

PEDDLER

So long and black and thick and luxurious.

COSZCOTL

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

THE PEDDLER SUDDENLY WEILDS A LONG PIN AND STICKS 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. THE EVIL BRUJA SHOOS HER AWAY.

BRUJA

Now get out of here! Beat it! Go!

THE BRUJA EXTRACTS A SLING SHOT 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.

THE BRUJA/PEDDLER TURNS INTO THE IMAGE OF COSZCOTL AND PUTS ON THE SAME CLOTHES. [THE ACTOR WHO PLAYS COSZCOTL CAN PLAY BRUJA AS COSZCOTL]

So when The Marquess returned he found…

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?

BRUJA2 AS 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

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

BRUJA/AS 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/AS COSZCOTL ON TOP OF BROWNIE AND HE LEADS THEM OFF.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

When they returned to the hacienda the disguised Bruja convinced The Marquess to marry her immediately. And although it felt a little rushed, he was entranced by her 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 -

DOVE ENTERS

DOVE

Excuse, 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, 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 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...

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.

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.

MARQUESS EXITS.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

A few days later…

JARDINERO IN JARDIN (GARDEN), WORKING. THE DOVE APPEARS.

DOVE

Hello, Mr. Jardinero.

JARDINERO

Hello little Dove.

DOVE

I'm sorry to bother you, but….Can you tell me…how is The Marquess?

JARDINERO APPOACHES 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

Is it…you???

COSZCOTL

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 off 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!

THEY PURSUE THE BRUJA, COSZCOTL LEADING. THEY ENTER THE OLD BRUJA'S ROOM IN THE HACIENDA. SHE'S JUST FINISHING OFF THE REMAINS OF AN INFANT. HER MOUTH IS SMEARED WITH BLOOD. A SECOND INFANT IS CRYING NEARBY.

MARQUESS

Evil Bruja! What are doing?

BRUJA

It's called lunch.

COSZCOTL

Where did you get these children?

BRUJA

In the *pueblo* (town), where I got the rest. They're so delicious! Juicy little bones! Crunch, crunch, crunch.

BRUJA PICKS AT HER TEETH, THEN GRABS THE NEXT INFANT.

COSZCOTL

Don't touch that child!

BRUJA

I'll spare the child - if you're willing to return to that orange.

MARQUESS

No!

BRUJA

How about you, Juan Guillermo? Is this child's life worth you living in poverty and pain the rest of your days?

COSZCOTL

No!

BRUJA

What are you going to do?

SHE LIFTS THE LEG OF THE INFANT AND BEGINS TO TAKE A BITE.

COSZCOTL

I call upon the powers of my forbearers!

DOGS BARKING IS HEARD.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Suddenly, a pack of Pre-Columbian xoloitzcuientles dogs entered and attacked the Bruja.

XOLOITZCUINTLES DOGS ENTER AND ATTACK THE BRUJA. SHE THROWS THE BABY HIGH IN THE AIR, COSZCOTL CATCHES IT. THE BRUJA SCREAMS AS DOGS CHASE HER, CORNER HER AND RIP HER TO SHREDS.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

And that was the end of the evil Bruja. The Marquess Juan Guillermo and Coszcotl did fall in love. In the evenings they could be seen on the balcony of the hacienda.

MARQUESS AND COSZCOTL ON THE BALCONY. HE STRUMS A GUITAR.

JOSEFINA

Juan Guillermo made beautiful music for Coszcotl and she pointed out the wonders of the celestial skies as taught to her by her mother, the Goddess Xochiquetzal.

BANNERS WITH EAGLE AND SERPENT UNFURL AS MUSIC REACHES A CRESENDO AND ENDS. THE ACTORS TAKE THEIR BOWS. YOUNG JOSEFINA TAKES A NARRATOR POSITION AGAIN.

JOSIE STEPS FORWARD.

JOSIE

My grandmother and my uncle Ignacio had seen many pueblos: Queretaro, Guanajuato, Aguas Calientes, Charcas, Matejuala, Cuencamé, Hidalgo del Parral, Moctezuma, and Buenaventura, and so many more. All the names of the towns are written in the tattered pages of my grandmother's story book. It was a fine spring day when they finally arrived in Ciudad Juarez and El Paso del Norte. There was nothing but a river separating the land of their birth and their new home. But first, they had to cross.

BORDER PATROL OFFICER STEPS FORWARD. IMMIGRANTS/ACTORS FORM A LINE BEHIND JOSEFINA AND IGNACIO.

OFFICER

Papers?

IGNACIO

What's he saying?

OFFICER

(With heavy American accent) *Papeles. Necesitas papeles para entrar*. (Papers. You need papers to enter.) *Passporte y Visa*. (Passport and Visa.)

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Lo siente (I'm sorry). *Nesitamos cruzar. Tenemos familia en Los Estados Unidos*. (We need to cross. We have family in the United States.)

OFFICER

Oh no, young lady. You can't just walk across the border. *No cruzen!* Immigration laws have changed, for this week, anyway. You need *documentación* - visa, or proof of U.S. citizenship. Step aside please. Next. Step aside.

JOSEFINA AND IGNACIO ARE PUSHED ASIDE BY THE EAGER PEOPLE IN LINE.

IGNACIO

Now what do we do?

JOSEFINA COUNTS THEIR MONEY.

How much do we have?

YOUNG JOSEFINA

One hundred pesos.

EL COYOTE, A SHADY CHARACTER, STEPS FORWARD. HE HAS TINY HORNS AND A POINTED BEARD.

COYOTE

Excuse me *niños* (kids). I see you couldn't make it over the bridge. I think perhaps you could use my services.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

What services are those, Señor?

COYOTE

I work for an American company and they need workers just like you. For a small fee I can help you cross the river and take you to the company where you can make a good living.

IGNACIO

What kind of company?

JOSEFINA ELBOWS IGNACIO. THEY ARE BOTH WARY OF THE STRANGER.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

A small fee?

IGNACIO

How much?

COYOTE

100 pesos. There's good work waiting for you at the factory on the other side. What else are you going to do?

YOUNG JOSEFINA

We have family waiting for us in (Fill in the city here). Gracias, Señor. But we can cross the river ourselves.

COYOTE

Ah, but you have to know where to cross. The river can be treacherous. And it's patrolled by *La Migra* (Immigration). They have trained dogs and they'll sniff you out! And then of course…there's *La Llorona* (The crying woman), she haunts this river.

IGNACIO

La llorona??? Haunts the river?

COYOTE

Like a rabid dog. Arf! Arf! Aft!

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Thank you, but we don't need your help, Señor.

COYOTE (sizing her up)

When you come to your senses you can find me here at the bridge.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Let's go, Nachito.

THEY HURRY AWAY FROM EL COYOTE.

JOSIE

All the rest of that day, Josefina and Ignacio walked the banks of the river looking for the best place to cross. They discovered an isolated spot and waited there until after sundown.

THE RIVER APPEARS. NIGHT FALLS. JOSEFINA AND IGNACIO COWER IN THE SHADOWS.

Unexpectedly a distant storm brought high tide and an undercurrent to the river.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Do you see those lights on the other side of the river?

IGNACIO

…Yes.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Don't take your eyes off those lights. That's what we're aiming for. And don't let go of me when we cross. You understand?

IGNACIO

Yes.

THE WIND IS HEARD. DISTANT BARKING DOGS.

What is that sound?

YOUNG JOSEFINA

It's just the wind.

THE SOUND OF BARKING DOGS AGAIN, CLOSER.

IGNACIO

La Migra. They're going to find us!

YOUNG JOSEFINA

It's okay, just follow me.

SOUND OF WIND AND THE DISTANT VOICE OF *LA LLORONA*.

LA LLORONA

Ayyyy, mis hiiiiijos. (Oh, my children….)

IGNACIO

Did you hear that?

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Hold on to me, Nachito, we're crossing.

JOSEFINA AND IGNACIO BEGIN TO CROSS THE RIVER. DOGS BARKING CLOSER AND MENACING.

VOICE (closer)

Ayyy, miiiiis hiiiijos.

IGNACIO

The water is pulling me.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Hold on to me.

VOICE (closer still)

Ayyyy, miiiis hiiiijos!!!

IGNACIO

It's her! It's La Llorona!

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Don't look back, keep moving forward, hold on!

VOICE (very close)

Ayyyy, miiiis hiiiijos!

SUDDENLY THE HUGE IMAGE OF LA LLORONA APPEARS AT THE RIVER'S EDGE. THE WIND BLOWS AND THE CURRENT BECOMES TREACHEROUS.

IGNACIO

The water's too strong! I can't hold on!

LA LLORONA

Ayyyyy, miiiis hiiiijos!!!!

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Nachito!!!

THE CURRENT SEPARATES IGNACIO FROM JOSEFINA AND HE IS PULLED DOWN STREAM. SHE ATTEMPTS TO SWIM TO HIM AS THE WIND HOWLS AND LA LLORONA CALLS "*AYYYY, MIIIIIS HIIIIIJOS!!!!* BEFORE JOSEFINA CAN REACH IGNACIO, LA LLORONA REACHES DOWN AND PULLS HIM FROM THE WATER AND SETS HIM ON THE RIVER BANK. JOSEFINA MANAGES TO MAKE IT OUT OF THE RIVER AND RUNS TO IGNACIO, WHO LAYS AT LA LLORONA'S FEET UNCONCIOUS.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Stay away from him!

LA LLORONA

Mis, hijos.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

No, we are not your children! We know the legend. You killed your children and now you're looking to find them. You cannot take my brother. We've come too far. Please, go away!

LA LLORONA

But you *are* my children.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

No. Don't touch him!

LA LLORONA

I cry for all my children.

LA LLORONA LEANS OVER IGNACIO.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Don't hurt him! Nachito, wake up!

LA LLORONA

Hurt him? No Mija. I will not hurt the children I mourn.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

Mourn? Nachito, open your eyes. Say something!

LA LLORONA

I cry for you. I cry for your brother.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

What are you doing to him?

LA LLORONA

Healing, *Mija*. (my daughter) Healing.

LA LLORONA TOUCHES IGNACIO GENTLY. GUITAR IS PLAYED SOFTLY AS LA LLORONA PERFORMS A RITUAL.

I cry for all my children.
I cry for the children of my land lost to the conquest.
I cry for my children lost in the revolution.
I cry for my children who become orphaned.
I cry for my children lost to hard labor.
I cry for my children who perish in the river and in the desert in an attempt to cross.
I cry for my future children who will be lost on their journey to the other side.
I cry for the missing
I cry for the faceless
Ayyyy, miiis hijos.

IGNACIO STIRS.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

What do you want from us, Señora?

LA LLORONA

To remember, *Mija*. To always remember.

YOUNG JOSEFINA

We will. We'll remember all the people and all the stories. We'll remember the mountains, the fields, and the flowers and trees, the food and the sky. And our history. We'll remember the place that was once our home.

LA LLORONA

(Proudly) *Mis, hijos.* (My children)

IGNACIO OPENS HIS EYES. LA LLORONA EMBRACES JOSEFINA AND IGNACIO. THE WIND BLOWS, LA LLORONA DISAPPEARS. JOSEFINA HELPS IGNACIO TO HIS FEET. THEY ARE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER. THEY LOOK BACK

TOWARD MEXICO, THEN SLOWLY TURN AWAY AND HEAD ON TO THEIR NEW HOME.

JOSIE

My Abuela and my Tío Ignacio did make it to (fill in the city here –). And when they arrived at the address written in the pages of the storybook, they were met with open arms.

THE COMPANY MEMBERS COME FORWARD AND EMBRACE JOSEFINA AND IGNACIO.

In truth, they were returning home to a place that was part of Mexico long before there was a border.

JOSEFINA

And our family had roots in this land for generations.

JOSIE

Josefina and Ignacio learned to speak another language, used their skills to work and contribute to the family, and made lives for themselves in this new place. My grandmother worked as a seamstress and Tío Ignacio became a professional musician. *Abuela* (Grandma) said that on Sundays the whole family would gather for a big meal. They'd sing songs, share gossip, make plans for the future, and of course tell stories.

THE ACTORS ASSEMBLE AROUND YOUNG JOSEFINA. ACTOR STRUMS A GUITAR. THEY MIGHT SING A SHORT FOLKSONG TOGETHER. A GLOW OF MEMORY FALLS OVER THE FAMILY AS YOUNG JOSEFINA ANIMATES A STORY, AND TRANSFORMS INTO JOSEFINA. FAMILY MEMBERS LISTEN INTENTLY.

JOSEFINA

This is the story of a young woman, who left the life she knew, and traveled thousands of miles to find her new home.

JOSIE STEPS FORWARD.

JOSIE

One day Abuela Josefina met a handsome American soldier named Mario and they married and had a family. They started their little business on Olvera Street. They bought

that little house downtown where I'd spend my weekends as a child - making delicious food, learning how to sew, tending to plants, caring for animals, and learning about a land that is a part of me. Thanks to her stories, I know who I am. My grandmother made a final crossing at the age of 86. I'll never forget that crystal clear day in the city of angles. Huge white clouds in a vast blue sky. As I held her hand, she said it reminded her of the skies of her childhood in Jalisco, Mexico; the family, the language, the music, the stories, her journey. Before she passed on, she told me - that's really all life is, a series of crossings. Every crossing is another story. And for now, this story has come to an end.

FINAL CHORDS ARE STRUMMED ON THE GUITAR. THE ACTORS STAND IN TABLEAU. WE SEE A SILHOUETTE.

LIGHTS FADE.

THE END.