

### *The Poor Widow Bullfighter*

When Florencio disappeared, everybody was sure he was dead. That made his wife a widow. And as her own name was Mariposa, everybody called her the Widow Mariposa.

The worst of it was that she did not know how to support her family. All she could think of was to help her neighbors grind corn. Of course this gave her something to eat, and something to take home for her children too. But she had the oldest, raggedest clothes.



And her children, too, could be seen going down the street in rags.

One day she was standing sadly in a cornfield when suddenly she heard a swishing noise. And right in front of her appeared a young man whom she had never seen before. He looked like an ordinary person, but she had never seen an ordinary person appear out of thin air.

"Don't be sad," said this person. "You used to weave pretty sashes and ribbons and girdles. Why don't you make some now, and sell them?"

"I have no wool," said Mariposa.

"I will give you all the wool you want," said the young man. He reached up and reached down, and suddenly Mariposa's hands were full of yarn. There were all the colors of the rainbow.

"Oh, thank you! You must be Tepozton," cried Mariposa.

"Yes. Take good care of your children, and don't cry any more." Then Tepozton suddenly wasn't there any more. On the spot where he had been standing, Mariposa saw a lovely green flower beginning to bloom.

So Mariposa made sashes and hair-bands and sold them. She and her children had plenty to eat, and pretty clothes. But one day she got sick. She could not weave any more. Her children were hungry again. Finally Mariposa went to a neighbor's house to grind corn. But she took it home with her so that nobody should see how sick she was.

She worked and worked, and she got so tired that she just sat down and cried. "Oh, if my husband were alive, I wouldn't be suffering like this," she cried. The minute she said that, a very strange thing happened. A big bull walked right into the house.

The bull bellowed, "Quick, quick, close the door." So Mariposa closed the door.



Then the bull said, "Take this rope off my neck and hide it quickly. And if anybody comes here looking for me, say I'm not here." And suddenly he wasn't a bull any more. He was Florencio!

Florencio told Mariposa that he had just run away from the bull ring. They would surely come looking for him. Now that he was a man it was easy to hide him. She rolled him up in a big mat and laid him down in the corner.

Soon a big crowd of people came to the door. "Have you seen a bull around here?"

"Why, no," Mariposa answered. "I haven't noticed a bull or anything like that." They didn't believe her. They saw the print of the bull's hooves inside the door. But they couldn't see a bull any place. They looked in every corner, and behind the door, and under the bed, and one even started to look in the mat that Florencio was rolled up in. But the widow said, "How silly! Who ever heard of a bull being rolled up in a mat?" So they went away.

Florencio came out and kissed his wife and took his children in his arms. He played with them. He stayed a long time. Then the bells in the church began to ring and Florencio started turning back into a bull again. Mariposa cried and cried.

"Now listen," said the bull. "I can't stay with you because I am under a spell. It is Black Magic. But at least I can help you. Tomorrow there is going to be a big bullfight, and I am going to be the third bull in the ring. I will be black all over with white spots on my chest and a white tassel on my tail. And I am going to be very fierce. I won't let anybody get near me. This will tire them out. Then you say that you are going to be a bullfighter. You will show them how. Don't do it too easily. Take the red cape and wave it and dance around and show them it is hard to do. You will win in the



end, and there is a prize of a thousand pesos for the best bullfighter. You can live happily ever after."

"But I am sick," said the Widow Mariposa.

"Don't be silly. Now remember, the third bull, black with white spots on the chest and a white tassel at the end of his tail. Good-by." And he galloped away.

The next day, the Widow Mariposa felt better. She decided to go to the bullfight after all. So she put on her best blue shawl and red petticoat and found herself a seat down in front nearest the bull ring. The first bull that came out was big and black and had white spots on his back. He had a sad and tired look on his face, but he bellowed loudly and tried to look very ferocious. A man went into the ring and threw a lasso around his feet and pulled him down. "That's not the one," said Mariposa.

Now came a bigger, blacker bull with white spots on his head. He pawed the ground and shook his horns and stuck out his tongue and bellowed so loudly that Mariposa put her fingers in her ears and wondered, "Could that be my husband Florencio?"

Everybody was afraid of this bull. It took three men to get him down and they were very proud of themselves. "I guess that's the wrong one too," said Mariposa.

The next bull didn't wait for them to open the gate but crashed right through it so that the splinters flew in all directions. He came in so fast that Mariposa couldn't tell what color he was, and he charged right across the ring and stopped in front of where she was and roared so fiercely that all the other people moved back. But she looked at him and saw the white spots on his chest and a white tassel at the end of his tail and she thought she saw a funny look in his eyes. The men started to fight this bull. The first one who came out







## THE POOR WIDOW BULLFIGHTER

danced up to the bull and said, "Huh, huh," but the bull picked him up with the tips of his horns and threw him into Mariposa's lap.

"That is more like Florencio," she said.

Then another man came out and the bull frightened him so much that he ran away and has never been heard of since.

Something happened with every one, until at last the president of the bullfight said, "I guess we'll have to take this bull out. He's too fierce."

"This must be the one," said the Widow Mariposa. So she went up to one of the bullfighters and said, "Please, sir, could I borrow your red cape?"

"What do you want my red cape for?"

"I'm going to play that bull," said the Widow Mariposa.

"How ridiculous! Who ever heard of a woman bullfighter? If you want to make a laughing-stock out of yourself . . . why don't you use your red petticoat?"

The Widow Mariposa then went to the president of the bullfight and said, "Please, sir, would you mind letting me try that bull?"

"But what will you use for a cape?" said the president.

"Why, my red flannel petticoat," said the poor widow bullfighter.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the president. "All right, but everybody will laugh at you. And understand, we are not responsible if the bull kills you, neither can we take charge of the poor innocent children that you leave."

"All right, if the bull kills me I'll be dead," said Mariposa calmly. But she knew that nothing could happen to her because the bull was really Florencio.

So she jumped into the ring and waved her red flannel petticoat.

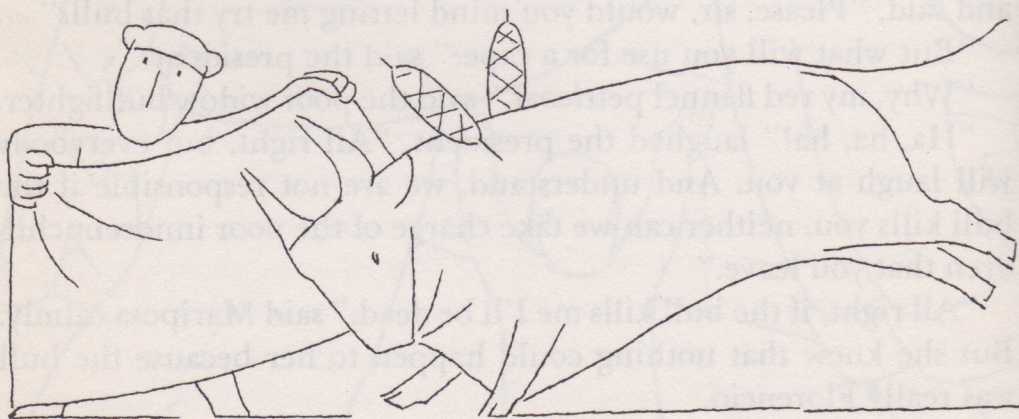


“Ha, ha, ha! Look at the Widow Mariposa! She thinks she’s a bullfighter!” everybody cried.

But after a while they stopped laughing. They saw how Mariposa danced around the ring, and the bull roared and ran at her but she dodged him so neatly that nothing happened to her. Finally she took two little spears that were trimmed with colored tissue paper and she waved them at the bull. “Huh, huh, huh!” she grunted, just like a real bullfighter. And the bull bellowed and roared and ran at her, and she stood on her toes and jumped. She landed on his back and rode him all around the ring. The band played and played and everybody clapped.

So Mariposa won the prize for being the best bullfighter. She never had to worry about money again. Everybody called her the Poor Widow Bullfighter, but she really wasn’t poor any more.

But a long time afterward, something happened that broke the spell that the wicked priest had put on Florencio. It happened because of a little boy named Chucho.





bull or a calf or something. He makes cattle out of dead people, so they say. Oh, no, I wouldn't ask him."

"Let's do this," said Chucho. "You tell the priest you're very sick or something, and that I am going to ring the bells until you get well. There must be somebody hiding there. I have the intention of finding out."

"Aren't you afraid, Chucho?"

"Oh, I can take care of myself," he said. "I know a thing or two."

So they made that arrangement between them. That evening Chucho said to his mother, "I have something to attend to," and he went to the church. He slipped in very quietly, this was before time for ringing the bells, and he hid behind an altar.

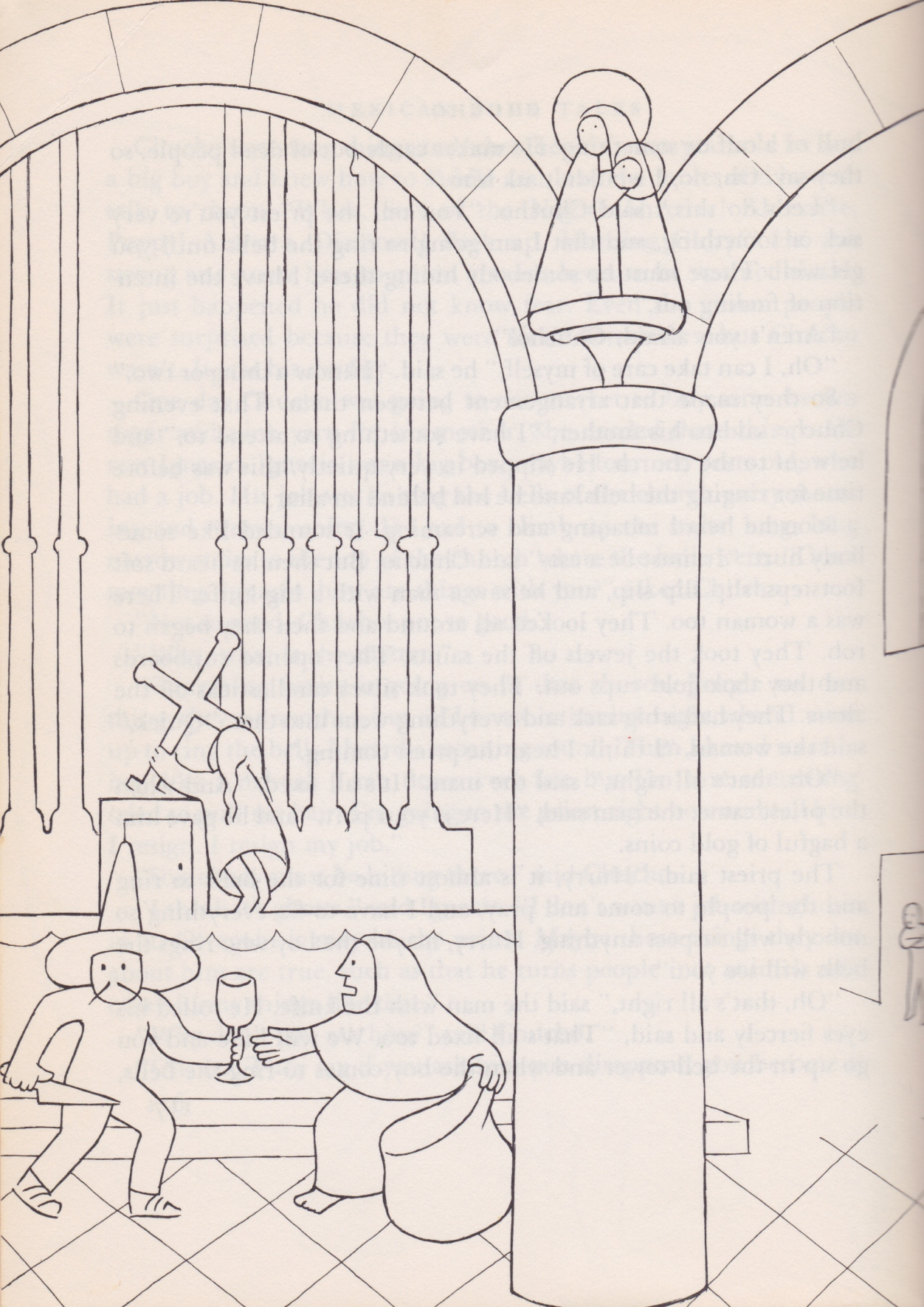
Soon he heard moaning and screaming. It sounded like somebody hurt. "It must be a cat," said Chucho. But then he heard soft footsteps, slip slip slip, and he saw a man with a big knife. There was a woman too. They looked all around and then they began to rob. They took the jewels off the saints. They opened cupboards and they took gold cups out. They took silver candlesticks off the altars. They had a big sack and everything went into that. "Quick," said the woman. "I think I hear the priest coming."

"Oh, that's all right," said the man. "It's all fixed." And when the priest came, the man said, "Here is your part," and he gave him a bagful of gold coins.

The priest said, "Hurry, it is almost time for the bells to ring and the people to come and pray, and I have to fix everything so nobody will suspect anything. Hurry, maybe the boy who rings the bells will see you."

"Oh, that's all right," said the man with the knife. He rolled his eyes fiercely and said, "That's all fixed too. We will hide and you go up in the bell tower and when the boy comes to ring the bells,







scare him. Then he will not ring the bells and the people won't come to church so soon and we will run. We will be gone a good long way before anybody suspects anything. No one will catch us."

"All right," said the priest, "but hurry because I have a little business of my own to attend to. Some cows and things I have to look after."

The wicked priest went up the stairs to the bell-tower. He hid there. It was time to ring the bells, so Chucho slipped out and then opened the church door loudly and came in whistling. It was dark but he knew his way around so he went up the stairs. While he was going up he heard a long moan and then a scream. "Aha!" said Chucho. "That is the priest imitating ghosts and nahuals." So he moaned too. "Ooooowah, ooowah, ooooo!"

"That's peculiar," said the priest. "Where could that noise be coming from?" Then he moaned and howled. And Chucho howled too. "It must be an echo," said the priest, getting worried.

Now Chucho was at the top. He was reaching for the bell-rope when he heard a long, long howl right next to him. What did he do? He pretended he didn't hear and reached higher for the bell-rope. "How strange," thought the priest, and he howled louder. But Chucho reached the bell-rope and began to ring. Clang-clang! Bong! Bong! Bong-ding-dong-ding-bong! The people heard this and began getting ready to come to prayers.

"I must do something," said the priest. He reached out and pulled Chucho's hair. What did Chucho do? He pretended he didn't feel anything, just kept on ringing the bells. Bong-bong-bong-ding! Ding-Dong! He played a tune on them. The priest pulled his hair harder, and the harder he pulled, the harder Chucho rang the bells. Each time the priest pulled, Chucho played a loud tune on the bells.



"I am getting desperate," said the priest. "Everything will be spoiled by this foolish boy." So he leaned far over and pulled Chucho's hair. He held on to it and pulled hard and meanwhile he screamed in his ear. Chucho pulled the biggest bell up, up, up, then suddenly turned around and let it go. It came swinging down bonging and the priest could not get out of the way. The bell hit him bang, bong, and knocked him off the bell-tower and he fell off the church and broke. He broke into many pieces. Then he went up in smoke.

The people were coming to the church and they saw the priest fall and then go up in smoke. "So that's how it was," they said. "There was something strange about that priest after all. Too bad."

They went in to say their prayers. There was the big man with the big knife and the woman, and they had the sack of robbed things. They were trying to run but the things they were carrying were too heavy. So they were caught. They were put in jail. And Chucho came down from the bell-tower and said, "I guess I will go home now, I am a little tired," but the people clapped and clapped and said he was a hero. "How can I be a hero if the priest fell down all by himself?" said Chucho. So he went home.

After that, Florencio and Margarita and the others who had been turned into animals by the wicked priest became people again and went quietly home. Of course the dead people who had been turned into cattle just became dead people again. They went back to their graves, rolled themselves up in their mats and lay down in peace once more. Some people said, "Maybe Chucho isn't Chucho, maybe he is Tepozton," but when anybody mentioned that to Chucho he just laughed.

"How can I be Tepozton if I am Chucho?" he said.