Adios

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Abstract

Even at eleven o’clock in the evening the winding streets of Acupulco were teeming with happy Mexicans...
with a dirty mop and we close. It's four in the morning and I'm tired like Hercules after the stable-cleaning bit. After I wash the sticky flour off my face and arms, I change and come into the dining room to say good-night. The waiters are bitching because, poor things, they only made twenty bucks in tips. Twenty bucks plus their salary and they complain. What a bunch of yo-yos! they oughta have to cook; then they would have something to complain about. I was going to try and beat Sammy for a raise but what the hell, I'll be leaving soon and it doesn't seem quite fair.

"Good-night everybody."

"See ya tomarra."

"Yeah, tomorrow," I say to myself, "I can hardly wait."

Adios

by Nancy Johnston

EVEN at eleven o'clock in the evening the winding streets of Acupulco were teeming with happy Mexicans. Whole families walked barefoot together along the pavement, laughing and shoving each other, completely unaware of our car as they stepped dangerously close. But Juan, our little Mexican guide, calmly turned his old Ford in and around the swarming natives, one brown hand lying relaxed on the steering wheel, the other hanging out the window tapping a Latin beat on the side of the car. My mother leaned forward in the back seat and spoke to Juan, chuckling. "I can still remember how frightened I was the first day we rode with you in Mexico City, Juan. I thought we'd never see United States soil alive again!"

"Ah, señora!" Juan turned his head toward my mother, his teeth showing white against the darkness of his round face, as he grinned broadly. "You know I am best driver een all of Mehico. Si?"

"Si!" my mother answered laughing.

"My friends," Juan continued, turning his head to us again, "you know I am een Mehico City again later tonight?"

"Tonight!" My father repeated.
“Si, señor, thees night I must return. My boss call me to­
day and say ‘Juan! You having too much fun in Acapulco
with your friends. You come back to Mehico City and start
workeen again.’ He know me, señor. He know I keep you up
too late thees week, shoween you my city — but I theenk
Acapulco ees at eets best at night, and we have fun, deedn’t
we, señor?’” He let the wheel go for a moment and patted
my father on the knee, laughing. Even his laugh seemed to
have a Spanish accent.

“Too much fun, Juan,’’ I said from the back seat. “I
never want to leave Mexico now. Mother, couldn’t we go
back with Juan tonight so he won’t have to leave us?’”

“Oh no, señorita!” Juan shook his head. “You must stay
here and have fun een Acapulco. We will meet again some­
time, I know. And tomorrow there will be another guide to
show you my city — but he not show you the best places like
me. He not your good friend like me. Si? You liked the div­
ing boys I show you tonight, señorita?”

“We all did, Juan,” said my father. “It was a wonderful
experience. But you shouldn’t have taken us. Now you won’t
get to Mexico City until about four in the morning. Aren’t
you tired? You’ve been taking us places all day.’’

“Oh, señor!” Juan said laughing, putting his hands on his
chest in great exaggeration. “I tell you before— I am
Eendian! Eendians never get tired! I stay up and drink
tequila with my Mexican friends until I see the Acapulco
sun come up last morneneen. I see the Mehico City sun come
up again thees next morneneen. And the sunrise een Mehico —
eet ees very beautiful! I never get tired!”

Dad laughed. “But you didn’t have to show us the diving
boys, Juan. You could have left right after supper and been
back before dark.”

“Señora!” Juan turned his head again and I could see
his little black mustache stretch with his upper lip as he
smiled. “You are my friends! I know you like the diving
boys — I take you see them. Seemple, No?”

“We appreciate it, Juan,” Dad said. I knew he felt too
much emotion to say any more.

Juan pulled the car up in front of our hotel, El Presidente.
"Here we are, my friends." Juan spoke more slowly than usual. It was the first time since we'd known him that there was no laughter behind the Spanish accent. "Eet ees the time that we must say 'adios'." He stepped out of the car and opened the door for us. As I got out I heard mother whisper softly to Dad, "You're going to tip him now, aren't you?"

Standing under the heavy-leaved palm trees beside the car Juan shook each of our hands slowly. "Adios, señorita." He looked at me directly with his warm black eyes. "Remember what I tell you before. Always be happy. Een thees beautiful world there is no reason to be sad."

"Señora!" He clasped my mother's hand, then raised it to his lips. She flushed, pleased.

"And señor," he turned to my father holding out his hand. "Mi amigo." As my father lifted his hand I saw several bills folded carefully in the palm.

"Goodby, Juan." He left the bills in Juan's palm as he withdrew his hand.

"Señor," Juan said softly, "You gave me your friendship—that ees enough." He quickly slipped the bills into Dad's pocket and got into his car. As he started the engine, he looked up at us through the open window. "Maybe I come to Chicago and you show me your city. Si?" Then he drove away in his little old Ford.