

Chalupas y Música

A 10-minute play

By C.M. Bratton

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

CHRISTIE, a young mariachi

TÍA MARY, Christie's aunt

TÍO EDDIE, Christie's uncle

MR. SANCHEZ, one of the music instructors

SETTINGS

At a bench in a bus station early in the morning.

TIME

Late 90s or Modern Day

SCENE ONE - IN THE BUS STATION

It is a slow morning at the bus station, but people are slowly arriving in time to catch early buses. Strains of popular TEJANO music play on the station speakers.

On one side of the terminal, three people attempt to enter the station at the same time. CHRISTIE, carries a BROWN VIHUELA CASE. She is trying to carry it and drag her BLACK SUITCASE behind her.

Her uncle, TIO EDDIE, is attempting to help her but keeps tripping on the bag he is carrying.

On the other side, TÍA MARY is trying to take the bag from Tío Eddie, but he is beginning to get flustered.

EDDIE

Ay, mujer, déjame en paz!

MARY

No, tonto! You're just making it worse. Déjala pasar.

Eddie stops and sighs before exaggeratedly gesturing Christie forward. Christie smiles gratefully at Mary before maneuvering her vihuela case and suitcase easily through the door.

CHRISTIE

Thanks, Tía.

Eddie then turns his head to give Mary a look and gestures her forward. She glares at him before walking in. Mary stops beside a waiting Christie.

MARY

Where is everyone else, mija?

Christie, panicked, puts down her cases and reaches into her purse.

CHRISTIE

We can't be late! Mr. Sanchez would've text me.

She shuffles through her purse until she produces a BUS TICKET. Christie sighs with relief when she sees it. She shows it to Mary.

MARY

Ah, 7:45 AM to Monterrey. It's okay.

CHRISTIE

We're just early.

EDDIE

Not that early! Like half an hour. Pinche Mexicans. Can't ever be on time.

MARY

And who woke you up y forced you to drink your café, tónto?

It appears as if their conversation is about to escalate, so Christie steps in.

CHRISTIE

It's okay. We can just go sit on a bench and wait.

Her CELLPHONE beeps. She pulls it out.

On the other side of the stage, MR. SANCHEZ appears. He talks into his phone.

MR. SANCHEZ

Hello students! I got caught behind a train. Will be there soon. Do not under any circumstances get on the bus without me.

Mr. Sanchez presses send.

MR. SANCHEZ

Why did I volunteer to go on this trip? I just wanted to float on the river this summer. Ay!

The action returns to Christie,
Mary, and Eddie.

CHRISTIE

Oh, cool. Mr. Sanchez is almost here. You can go.

MARY

Ay, no, mija. I promised your mom and dad we would wait for
you until your teacher got here.

CHRISTIE

(quiet)

It's cool. I don't mind being alone.

MARY

Mija, it's not your fault they booked the family vacation
before you got your ticket.

The three of them walk to a nearby
bench as Christie responds.

CHRISTIE

Honestly, I don't mind, Tia Mary. I really wanted to go with
the group to the mariachi convention this year since I missed
last year.

Mary crosses herself as she
mutters.

MARY

Ay, díos mío, your poor brother. It's a miracle he lived.

EDDIE

(sitting heavily)

Or science. I mean, they gave him a lot of drugs.

MARY

(punches Eddie on arm)

He had cancer! He's supposed to take drugs.

CHRISTIE

But he's alright now. It was definitely a miracle.

Eddie makes a face and grumbles to
himself.

On the other side of the stage, Mr.
Sanchez appears. He talks into his
phone.

MR. SANCHEZ

Just got past the train. I will be there soon. Make sure you are in the waiting area. Do not wait in the Bill Miller's across the street. I repeat, no Bill Miller's!

He presses send and stares at the phone.

MR. SANCHEZ

I'm gonna have to go to Bill Miller's.

The action switches back to Christie as he phone beeps. She reads it.

CHRISTIE

Great. Now I'm hungry.

EDDIE

Me, too.

MARY

So, are you nervous about the trip?

CHRISTIE

Yeah, a little. I mean, I was excited two years ago when we went to Germany. It was awesome. But this year...

She trails off. Eddie, noticing, rouses himself.

EDDIE

This year, you're going to the motherland! You should be even more excited.

CHRISTIE

I know, tío. I am. It's just...

MARY

Tell us, mija.

CHRISTIE

Like, I don't know that much Spanish! I mean, at least in Germany no one else in the group spoke German. But now, like, almost everyone speaks good Spanish... except me.

MARY

But mija, you sing so beautifully. Like you have soul.

(sings)

'Pasaste a mi lado, con gran indiferencia, tus ojos ni siquiera voltearon hacia mi'--

EDDIE

Ay, vieja, you want to make everybody cry? Híjole. I need some menudo now.

MARY

(ignoring him)

What I'm saying is that you understand what you sing. You feel it in your bones.

CHRISTIE

Yeah, but that's different. I know what the words mean 'cause I looked 'em up. That's the easy part. It's talking to strangers in Spanish that's hard.

EDDIE

You're just shy. You'll be fine.

CHRISTIE

I don't know, tío. Like, why didn't my parents teach me to speak Spanish when I was growing up? And what was I thinking, studying French in high school?

Eddie turns to her, shocked.

EDDIE

What do you mean, they didn't teach you Spanish? You know lots of Spanish.

He begins ticking off items on his fingers.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

You know arroz, fideo, frijoles, tamarindo, enchiladas, burritos, chalupas, pan de dulce, cerveza... Taquería Vallarta, Pico de Gallo, Fiesta, San Antonio-- tons of words. That's the most important part.

Mary hits Eddie on his shoulder.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

What? It's true. As long as you can order food and ask for the bathroom, you're good.

(to Christie)

You know that one, right?

CHRISTIE

(dryly)

Dónde está el baño?

EDDIE

See? You'll be fine.

CHRISTIE

But I want to talk to people, not just ask for food.

MARY

Mija, it's going to be fine. It'll be good practice. You'll get better.

CHRISTIE

In English? Or Spanish?

MARY

Don't get smart with me. I've been around a lot longer and done a lot more than you.

EDDIE

She has. A lot longer.

Mary glares at him.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

What?

Mr. Sanchez appears on the other side of the stage. He talks into his phone.

MR. SANCHEZ

Patty, Juan, and Carmelo. I just saw you enter Bill Miller's. You better be in the bus station by the time I unload and get in there, or none of you are getting solos.

He presses send, then stops and think.

MR. SANCHEZ

This is worse than playing on the river during Fiesta. At least there, they brought me tacos when they were late!

He sighs.

The action returns to Christie, Mary, and Eddie.

MARY

Anyway! Look, last year was pretty bad, right?

CHRISTIE

Yeah. It was.

MARY

And now you got a chance to go out and have the best time and live life to the fullest, 'cause la vida es corto and could end at anytime.

CHRISTIE

I know. Gotta live life forward. You know, you sound like my mom. It's something she'd say.

EDDIE

Pretty sure your dad would say to make sure you take your toothbrush.

Christie laughs and fishes in her purse before pulling out a travel toothbrush

CHRISTIE

Don't worry. I got it right here.

EDDIE

When you make your new friends in the motherland, can't have stinky breath.

Mary turns to him in shock.

MARY

Seriously? You just told Christie her breath smells.

EDDIE

Hey, it happens.

MARY

Tónto! Good thing she doesn't have to wake up next to you!

CHRISTIE

Or we didn't have queso y frijoles for breakfast.

Mary and Christie laugh while Eddie nods seriously. Just then, Christie sees Mr. Sanchez enter. He carries a VIOLIN CASE and a SUIT CASE with him. Christie stands up and waves, and Mr Sanchez nods and heads towards them. Mary and Eddie stand.

MR. SANCHEZ

Sorry I'm late. The traffic was God-awful.

CHRISTIE

Yeah. It's too early. Can't wait to sleep on the bus.

MR. SANCHEZ

Oh, no no no no. You need to practice the harmonies on the coró to La negra.

CHRISTIE

But won't I be playing my vihuela?

MR. SANCHEZ

You get to do both.

Mr. Sanchez turns to Mary and Eddie.

MR. SANCHEZ

Good morning. Good to see you two again. Your Christie's tíos, right?

MARY

That's right. My sister and brother-in-law couldn't be here.

EDDIE

So we came to see our niece off today. Wish I could go, too.

MR. SANCHEZ

Ah, yes. The motherland.

EDDIE

(to Mary)

See? I told you.

MARY

We should let you go, Christie, so you can get started on your trip without us old folk hovering around.

CHRISTIE

You're not old!

EDDIE

Tell that to my knees and my culo.

MARY

Eddie!

EDDIE

Anyway, mija. You enjoy your three weeks.

MR. SANCHEZ

They will be packed with rehearsals and performances, that's for sure.

EDDIE

And lots of good comida, I hope.

CHRISTIE

Don't worry. I'm sure we'll have time for plenty of little side adventures.

MR. SANCHEZ

Oh. Like Germany?

Christie covers her face in her hands.

MR. SANCHEZ

That's what I thought.

Christie looks to see Mary and Eddie listening intently.

CHRISTIE

Uh... b-beer. In the soda machines.

EDDIE

(nodding wisely)

See? Cerveza. That's one of your words.

MARY

Ay, tónto.

Mary holds out her arms and Christie hugs her.

MARY

Don't get into too much trouble.

CHRISTIE

I won't. I hope.

MARY

I won't even ask.

EDDIE

Yeah, Mary, 'cause you know what you used to do.

MARY

Eddie! Cállete!

EDDIE

What? You forgot?

MARY
Why did I marry you?

EDDIE
Cerveza? No. My poetry!

MARY
Ay, díos.

Christie starts laughing as Mary and Eddie turn and walk away. She then looks at Mr. Sanchez.

MR. SANCHEZ
What?

CHRISTIE
Music, food, beautiful city. Guys.

MR. SANCHEZ
Oh no. Seriously? I'm getting too old for this.

CHRISTIE
Life is short, right?

Mr. Sanchez shakes his head and points to the bus.

MR. SANCHEZ
Come on. I see some others arriving.

CHRISTIE
Oh, did they bring Bill Miller's?

Mr. Sanchez's shoulders slump momentarily before he turns and leaves.

Christie laughs, grabs her vihuela case and bag, and follows him out.

FADE OUT.