

## PABLITO AND THE PONY WHO CRIED RIVERS

Pablito's pony cried big tears as they walked down the dusty road leaving their mountain village. Papa was sick in bed, and Mama was sad. Every morning before sunrise, she worked hard grinding maize, making tortillas and clayudas on the comal over a fire to sell in the village market.

Papa used to sing while working in the corn fields. Now he lay quiet.

So Pablito had to take Pony to the market in the city of Oaxaca and sell him for medicine.

They had been best friends since Pablito was a baby and Pony was a colt.

As they left the mountain village toward the valley, Pony's tears fell into the dust, making a small puddle.

Pablito patted Pony's neck.

"My good friend, I am sorry. Someone else will buy you, and you will be their friend."

Beneath a lemon tree, Pony cried harder. The puddle spread over Pablito's bare feet.

"There, there, amigo," Pablito said softly. "Maybe I will visit you and bring you prickly pear."

They walked into the dry valley. Tall cactus trees rose around them and the sun burned hot.

Thirsty, Pablito cut a red fruit from the nopal cactus and fed Pony.

Pony ate and cried bigger tears.

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His tears filled the desert, rising into a deep pond.

Pablito climbed onto Pony's back and they swam across.

When they reached the other side the land turned green.

They entered the jungle where monkeys chattered in the trees and parrots screeched.

Frogs croaked beneath giant leaves.

Hungry, Pablito picked two ripe platanos—one for Pony, one for himself.

Pony ate and cried again.

A rushing river burst through the jungle, sparkling as it wound toward distant hills.

At last the jungle opened into farmland where jacaranda and bougainvillea trees bloomed beside fields of maize and distant haciendas.

“One more hill,” Pablito whispered.

At the top, beneath an aguacate tree Pony stopped.

Then came the greatest tears of all.

Rain poured across the valley as if the sky had opened.

Pablito curled beneath Pony to keep dry while water covered the land.

By nightfall the storm quieted.

Pablito looked toward the city.

“Amigo,” he said. “The market is closed. Let's go home. We will have one more day of friendship.”

They followed the shining river through the jungle.

They followed it through the desert past a silver lake.

They followed it up toward the village. Beneath the lemon tree, Pony's tears had become a deep well of cool water.

Farther up the road, something new had grown.

A tall tree stood where the first tears had fallen, its leaves chiming like music.

At last they reached home.

Mama ran to him.

"Un milagro! A miracle! The tree's leaves healed Papa!"

Pablito hugged Pony.

"You can stay."

Pony let fall one tiny tear of joy.

It sank into Mama's garden, feeding tomatoes, maize, beans, onions, garlic, and cilantro.

From that day on the garden never stopped growing.

And Pablito, Mama, Papa, and Pony always had enough to eat—and enough to share.

Their casa was a very happy house.

And Pony was a very happy pony.

### Spanish Words in This Story

**Amigo** (ah-MEE-go) – Friend.

**Aguacate** (ah-wah-KAH-tay) – Avocado, a soft green fruit that grows on tropical trees.

**Bougainvillea** (boo-gan-VEE-yah) – A colorful flowering vine that grows in warm places.

**Casa** (KAH-sah) – House or home.

**Cilantro** (see-LAHN-tro) – A green leafy herb often used in Mexican cooking.

**Clayuda** (klee-YOO-dah) – A very large, thick tortilla.

**Comal** (ko-MAHL) – A flat clay griddle used to cook tortillas.

**Hacienda** (ah-see-EN-dah) – A large farmhouse or ranch in the countryside.

**Jacaranda** (ha-kah-RAHN-dah) – A tree with beautiful purple flowers

**Maize** (MY-eez) – Corn, an important food grown in Mexico.

**Nopal cactus** (no-PAHL) – The cactus that grows prickly pear fruit.

**Oaxaca** (wah-HAH-kah) – A city and region in southern Mexico known for its art, food, and traditions.

**Prickly pear** – A sweet fruit that grows on the nopal cactus.

**Un milagro** (oon mee-LAH-gro) – A miracle.