

DOÑA SEBASTIANA

Chale! The sheer *size* of La Tules' pride now deserves an entire monument!

(*DOÑA SEBASTIANA joins the audience.*)

LA TULES

A monument cannot aid my eternal soul.

START

CARMELITA

Sister Jane says her people, the Protestants –

LA TULES

The who?

CARMELITA

The Protestants. The Protestants, they build beautiful stone monuments to those that have passed.

LA TULES

Have what?

CARMELITA

Passed. To those who have passed. That's what they say instead of died.

LA TULE

Do not become enamored of this new religion, *mija*. They interpret scripture themselves. They will make it say whatever they wish to give themselves license to do whatever they want. (*After a thought.*) Or is it Sister Jane you are enamored of?

CARMELITA

Sister Jane can read. And she came here to teach. And she understands the importance of sanitation, *Yaya*.

LA TULES

Perhaps. Yet sanitation will not feed her. Teaching will not feed her. Monte will feed her. If she is a quick study.

CARMELITA

(*Particularly proud of her building.*) There are other ways to live, *Yaya*. Not everyone must support themselves with gambling.

LA TULES

Not everyone *can*. And those who cannot must cook and wash for those who do. Cooking and washing must hold even less charm for you, Carmelita, than playing cards.

CARMELITA

Sister Jane does not gamble. She does not play monte. She does not play card games of any sort.

LA TULES

Not yet, no.

CARMELITA

You are showing her? Why are you showing her?

LA TULES

Sister Jane has no money and no means to get any.

CARMELITA

Then why is *she* not a cook (or a washer woman?)

LA TULES

Those pay nothing.

CARMELITA

You cannot turn *me* into a gambler so you are turning Sister Jane into one. You are doing her no favors.

LA TULES

I did not claim to.

CARMELITA

You are putting her principals at odds with her needs. On purpose!

LA TULES

I did not lose Sister Jane's money, mija. She alone accomplished that.

CARMELITA

Your house will be her ruin.

LA TULES

Carmelita, you wag your finger on the one hand. And feed yourself with the other. It grows tiresome. (*LA TULES stands with envelopes in her hand.*) Now. Finish here and take these – (*LA TULES is confronted with the colossal monument CARMELITA has built.*)

Carmelita...

CARMELITA

Do you like it, Yaya?

LA TULES

What is it?

CARMELITA

It is to show you what a monument can look like. Of course, they are made of stone in most cases. Not...junk. (*LA TULES reaches out to touch it.*) Ayeee, Yaya! Don't touch it! (*Proudly showing her a drawing in the book she picked up earlier.*) Imagine it, Yaya, if it was made all of shiny marble. Like this. How beautiful. Do you love it?

LA TULES

Mija, I am amazed. Touched by your passion.

CARMELITA

And proud?

LA TULES

Si, and proud.

CARMELITA

(*Excitedly. Flipping through the book, pointing out examples.*) Look! There are many different kinds. Some are small. Some are much bigger. Many are made of marble but Sister Jane says they are made from different kinds of stone it just depends what kind of stone is found nearby and Sister Jane says that soon there will come stone cutters – they're called masons – and they will come here and make stone monuments for everyone. Sister Jane says that's how they remember where they put your earthly remains. See? The Norteamericanos have ventilated cemeteries! Sister Jane says they are like the plaza – all beautiful and shady and the family can go there and visit with you once you've entered upon an eternal Sabbath of rest. And put flowers on your grave because if there's no monument how will anyone ever know you existed? In a hundred years, no one will even know you were here if you don't have a monument to survive you. You will just disappear from memory, from history –

LA TULES

Carmelita, why? Why is this of such importance to you? (*CARMELITA cannot answer.*) Mija, we do not need these monuments. It does not matter to God what of us – our bodies – is left behind. It is all dust. This...(*Referring to the monument.*) It is admirable. But it will not help us make the perilous journey through death. Through the agonia.

CARMELITA

You are not an ignorant peasant, Yaya. Why must you be buried like one?

LA TULES

We have always buried our dead in floor of La Parroquia. Rich and poor alike.

CARMELITA

To the Norteamericanos, we *are* peasants.

LA TULES

Carmelita, this is your pride.

CARMELITA

My pride!

LA TULES

You are less concerned with my soul – *and sanitation* – than the estimation of someone like Sister Jane. And the Protestants for whom you have some foolish infatuation.

CARMELITA

Sister Jane is, at least, humble. I cannot say that for you.

LA TULES

Had I relied on humility to provide, you would be dead of starvation (*Beat.*) You remind me of myself at your age. Smart. Ambitious.

CARMELITA

I read books. You empty pockets.

LA TULES

But you have earned nothing on your own, Carmelita. Everything has been given to you. You bled for nothing. And everything you were given you have despised or shunned or squandered. At least, what you could comfortably do without. And what of this ambition of yours? It burns you inside. It burns you because it has nothing to win, and nowhere to go.

CARMELITA

All your doomsaying will not make me into a gambler.

LA TULES

It is what you do best.

CARMELITA

No! It is what *you* do best. I can read. And I can cipher.

LA TULES

All of it learned at the monte table.

CARMELITA

I learned to heal people. I know medicine! I did not learn this at your monte table! Who have you ever helped at the monte table?

LA TULES

No one knows the cards the way you do, Carmelita. No one can beat you.

CARMELITA

When people look at me and I have cards in my hand, all they see is you, Yaya. I don't want to be you.

LA TULES

*(Handing the envelopes to CARMELITA.)* Gracias, hija, for tidying the room. Deliver these to the gambucinos, por favor. Impress upon them the importance of their being present at the fandango.

CARMELITA

*(Reading the names on the invitations.)* Oscar Rodríguez Anaya? José Luis Baca? María Antonia Tijerina? They are losers. They never win. And none of them can read.

LA TULES

Some are losers. Some owe me money. Tell them all to come. Tonight the losers will win. The others will be absolved of their debts. *(CARMELITA turns to exit.)* Carmelita...*(CARMELITA halts.)* You will play a table tonight, si? One last table?

CARMELITA

One last table? Si, Yaya. *(She starts to leave.)*

LA TULES

Carmelita. *(CARMELITA halts.)* I have taught you much about monte. Everything I know, you know. And much you figured out on your own. I even learned from you, hija. But if you are not going to use it – this legacy – then I prefer to take it all to my grave. *(Beat.)* I have arranged games for Sister Jane. I will show her some tricks. Enough to play tonight and perhaps make a modest bank. *Do not teach her anything.* And tonight? Do not enchant your deck.

CARMELITA

*Enchant my deck?!*

LA TULES

Whatever you do to make your cards invincible. Don't. *(CARMELITA seethes. LA TULES dismisses her.)* Andale.

*(CARMELITA exits. SISTER JANE enters. Her conservative dress has been made over quite fantastically in RALLITOS' idea of glamor using improvised and available accessories. The high neckline and long sleeves of SISTER JANE'S original dress have been incorporated to ill effect. The women play monte.)*

LA TULES

You are well, Sister Jane.