

Children's Tales – A Translation

The Tale of What I Want and Don't Want, Magic Things and Other Nonsense

Well y'know Firulina said to Cocolina, who was four years old: "And you, what do you wanna have?" "Me? Nothing. You?" Cocolina said ('cause maybe she wanted to know first so she could want something more better than Firulina). "Me," said Firulina, doing like that with her hands, "a dollhouse that you can knock on their door and from inside they say: 'Who knocked? What did they want?'"

"Well *I*," Cocolina said, all happy, "I wanna dollhouse that you can knock on and with every knock you get teenier, teenier, teenier, *teeny-tinier*... until *you're* a doll too, and that the maid with a blanket full of grass opens the door and say to you: "Come in Miss Cocolina, your blonde dolls are waiting for you to talk about the girls across the street and their boyfriends!"

"Yeah, right!" Firulina said, mad, "You say things that can't happen, only! Say what you want, but that can really happen." "Okay then..." Cocolina said to her, "I wanna piggy bank that you put in one cent, and then another, and then another, and when you've put in five hundred you open it and *ta-da*! There's twelve dollars inside!"

"You dummy!" Firulina said, "I said not to want magic things." "It is *not*!" Cocolina said. "Is, too!" Firulina said, really mad, "How's it not *magicness* that you put in cents and dollars come out?" So Cocolina said: "It's *more* magicness to *wanna* have something and not even have *anything*!"

"So," Firulina said, "what *don't* you want to have?" "*I*," Cocolina said, "don't wanna have...: a giant dog with rabies in his stomach that would bite at all my bones inside of me, and

my livers and my nerves.” “Those are just the hungry ones,” Firulina said, “*I* don’t want to have a ball’a soap in my throat so that every time I yawn, those really round bombs come out.”

“That’s silly,” Cocolina said. “You dummy!” Firulina said, now *really* mad, “I’m not going to want foam bombs of glass that fly – with air inside and colors!” “Well, so what!” Cocolina said, “‘cause it’s dumb no matter what – how are you gonna yawn with such a big ball’a soap in your throat? Don’t you think that you choke a little ‘cause it tastes bad, and plus it burns when you swallow!”

“Fine, then!” Firulina said, “Then, what do you want to have and not want to have?” “I,” Cocolina said to her, “want and don’t wanna have those teeth you take out at night like the ones Niña Casilda has. I’d like ‘em ‘cause you can scare anyone you want and when you die you aren’t just a skull with your teeth all showing, and I don’t want it ‘cause I’m a scaredy-cat in the dark, and I wouldn’t like them laughing with me all night from inside a glass.”

“*I*,” Firulina said to her, “want and don’t want, a little light on my butt like those fireflies. I want it because they would take me out bent over in a carriage and plus I wouldn’t need a candle to go to the town center, and the *cucarachas* would get scared and wouldn’t bite me; and I wouldn’t like it ‘cause when my dad spansks me he’d burn his hand and also ‘cause in the movie theater people would get mad and yell: “This little girl in front better turn off her butt ‘cause it doesn’t let us see well!”

And they laughed really loudly and pushed each other and then they left running hand-in-hand doing like this and thiend.

The Tale of the Very Very First Communion of Menchedita Copalchines

Well y’know Menchedita Copalchines, the sister of her younger brother and daughter of her mama (I dunno what her name is), was going to make her First Communion and they were

making a little white dress for her with pink *nardos* and purple *margaritas*; dotted high heels pringled with tiny glass pebbles and little sapphire diamonds; and silk laces for tying and a great big candle with ribbon (the candle was really fancy); and a little crown of orange blossoms over the big beehive of pure hair stuck together with smell and everything.

And so since the Communion was already early in the morning on the day after yesterday, they sent her to confess with a priest in a big box with a chair on the wall. (Who knows how the father sat up straight in there like they tell us to do in school). And there was the bald fear of sins that, who knew how to say them and who knew if they were sins or not; but just in case, Menchedita wrote on a paper when she saw a girl get up that was wearing a shawl. She got closer with her stomach brumbling, cracking her knuckles, and went to the confession box and when the father did his hand like this through the window so the line would continue, she ran the rest of the way and kneeled looking from behind the chair (and luckily the father was low when he sat).

And she said to the father: “Good afternoon, *Padre*, do we throw away our sins here?”

“Yes, *Mijita*,” he said to her softly, “You say: ‘*I am sorry for* such-and-such thing and such-and-such other.’” and so she said this and the father said no, that she should say her sins.

And Menchedita Copalchines said, “I’m sorry, *Padre*, that I have skinned– my knee.” “What now?” he said, “You have what?” “*Ay, Diosmío*, but if it wasn’t my fault–? I only tripped ‘cause a hen knocked over the little bottle of almond cream my mama gave me!” “What are you saying!” said the priest laughing inside.

“I’m sorry, sir,” she continued saying, “that the other day I was talking about Maurischevalié – oh no, I just mentioned him again!” “But that isn’t a sin, *mijita*!” Father said, he was being nice but acting very serious.

“Oh well, if that’s not a sin forgive me!” Menchedita said. “I’m sorry sir that I dreamed of some crazy people who—listen to *this*!: they grabbed my poor papa’s beard and stuck bubble gum all over it and my mama was screaming because they say she has angstiety and I wrapped myself into my sheets and prayed an ‘Our Father’ because I was so scared.” “But *mijita*” the priest said, “that isn’t a sin either—dreams are dreams!”

“Oh well, forgive me,” Menchedita said. “I’m sorry too that I always have ears full of this yellow stuff.” “That is one, yes – that is very bad!” the father said, “because you should always clean them very well every day with soap.” “Well of course – it’s all soap pieces that I get out!” Menchedita said, “It’s ‘cause I put on a lot ‘cause my mama tells me to put on a lot.”

“Oh, gosh,” the priest said, “Well, that’s not really a sin either...”

“Ah well, forgive me,” Menchedita said to him – and then said: “*Ay, Diosmío*, I’m not gonna be able to make my First Communion tomorrow because I don’t have any sins!”

“How could that be?” the father said.

“Well see it’s all your faults – you all don’t teach us how to do sins, *ay, virgen santa*; and my dress was so pretty!” And she started to cry.

So the priest said to her: “Now do you see? Now do you see, *mijita*? *That* is a sin, accusing your elders like that and giving a dress such importance; *that* one is a sin!”

And so the Menchedita said “*Gracias a Dios*! Finally I have one! Now I can get the Eucharist and I promise I’ll come without a dress tomorrow so I don’t make it important and that I’ll save it to go to the movies!”

And the priest couldn’t hold in his laugh anymore and he let out a really loud one. And since he was inside the box he sounded really big, and Menchedita got scared and left running

and shouting: “*Ay, el padre* has gone crazy because I told him a sin! – Go get him out and heal him!” And she ran quickly to her house and thien.

The Tale of the Cat Sepultura and the Big Itch

Well y’know Niña Fenicia was sitting on her stool making tobacco cigars. And her cat Sepultura came close and thought: “I’m going to rub myself on Niña Fenicia’s stinky legs; first of all because my back itches, and second, because fleas are real pests!”

And he came up hiding and *bam!*, he rubbed himself, and *bam!*, he rubbed himself another time there and back in turns with a sound like a bee’s nest in his throat without a tie. And Niña Fenicia only kicked her foot with a boot on it and said: “Get out of here, darn Sepultura, you are already driving me crazy being so touchy, as if you were a shoeshine rag or straight razor that is seated on me!”

And all the cat did was turn around to see and say: “Meow!” and she didn’t even say “No, don’t do that” or anything – she just lit a cigar, made a puff of smoke and stood up to go sweep up all the poops that had fallen from the chickens onto the floor under where they sleep with all their eyes closed and a rooster that sings.

And the cat said: “Maybe I’ll go behind in case I need to rub my back again on her stinky legs.” And he kept following her and when she was sweeping the tiles the cat said: “I might itch more later, and as long as she’s in place I’ll rub myself now once and for all – just in case,” and he was so lucky it even rhymed and *bam!* he rubbed himself.

But since Niña Fenicia was sweeping with tiny steps, she got tripped over him and almost bumped her head on the wall. So, really mad, she grabbed the brooms and tried to get Sepultura with it, who went plowing through the halls and went to hide in a sewer that he found to be alone and thien.

The Tale of the Cipotío¹ who Stuck His Tongue Into a Little Girl's Window

Well y'know every single time he passed the little window of a girl that was kinda covered in dust like this and who had skinny eyebrows and lips covered in carmel, Canutío stood on his tippy-toes and put his face in and stuck out his ginormous tongue saying: "Hnnn!" and from there he ran away in a hurry to the sidewalk and his face didn't come back 'til another day. And the girl, since she was pretty she laughed ('cause if she was ugly she would have been *really* mad) and didn't do anything, just went to peek outside, but Canutío wasn't there anymore. And since she wanted to give him some chocolates in a green shiny shirt, she couldn't give them to him, 'cause Canutío is really dumb and he left like a stampede with his ginormous tongue and un-crossed the corner.

And since the dummy never came at the same time, she could never catch him. One day she heard a little noise and when a hand appeared, bam! She grabbed it and super fast put a chocolate into it. But the hand was the mailman's, who was surprised but happy, and she got red 'cause of embarrassment and she said: "Excuse me, sir, I thought you were a boy who sticks out his tongue at me every day!" and the mailman got all embarrassed, too, and said: "I don't stick anything out at you, I just stick things in. I was just leaving a postcard that's coming for you from Chile."

"Ah, thank you!" she said, "And pardon me – but eat the chocolate if you want." "Thank you, miss. I'm going to take it with me for lunch," he said – and maybe he didn't even have anything to eat for lunch, the poor man – and he left.

And the next day the girl was putting perfume in her armpits with this thing that looked like a bird with a rubber orange tied to it with a hose, and Canutío came by another time and said to her: "Hnnn!..." with his huge tongue; and she yelled "Come here, cutie!" and in the hurry he

¹ Salvadoran slang for "boy" or "child"

was in and the noise he was making with his footsteps Canutío heard that she said: “If I catch you I’ll lift you up!” The boy was *really* dumb, ‘cause what a big box of chocolates she had on her vanity!

And the next day Canutío came pooping himself with fear and stood behind the back of a balding man who was waiting for the bus and said: “I’m going, and I’m gonna do it!” And he found some courage and passed her house, and he went without getting himself to do it. And then he went back and stood on his tip-toes and *bam!* He stuck in his head and stuck out his giant tongue – but since the girl had put a mirror up to his forehead all up close, he left screaming ‘cause he had bumped nose to nose with a big ol’ ugly face that stuck out a humongous tongue and scared him and he never went by again and thien.

The Tale of the Flea with a Sombrerito and the Mansion of the Chosen

Well y’know the flea was walking and said: “I’m going to go to the cockroaches’s dance with my *sombrero*” and *bam!*, she grabbed her *sombrerito* and when she passed the barber she said: “I’ll tell them I’m going with my *sombrero*,” and she came back and looked inside and said: “Here I go with my *sombrero!*” and she went away racing so fast she was hitting herself on people’s stomachs; and when she got to a corner she stopped and said: “But I told you all and you didn’t catch up!”; but they never even heard her...

And after the flea passed the crickets’s carpenter shop and they were splitting planks and she said: “I’ll tell them, too.” And she peeked inside and looked both ways on the street and got her feet ready to run away and shouted at them “Here I go...!” and when she finally said “...with my *sombrero!*” she was already racing very far. And she ran into a *señora* who was going to Mass and fell on her butt and the hat fell off and the old lady said: “Jesus, how many fleas! – that don’t see where they’re running – she already knocked all the buttons off my corset, this darn

flea!” And the flea looked up really fast, and since the *señora* was carrying an umbrella the flea grabbed her *sombrero* and ran away in a hurry.

When she arrived at the cockroaches’s dance she saw that they were dancing with a marimba drum made of beetles of all different colors whose backs made a “bum” sound: “bum, ban, bim, bom,” and a dragonfly playing a little violin that was making “hoofee, hoonk, hoofee, hoonk.” And she sat to look at the dance floor; and since there was a cockroach that tripped over himself every time he spun, the flea laughed so much she was spitting and the toads started to turn to see her with giant ugly faces, and it made her laugh even more and one toad said: “What interruptions to the art!” and another said: “We’ll have to keep out the crowd to keep this place beautiful!” And another toad said: “Darned fleas never come into the mansion of the chosen ones, even if they have a felt *sombrero*!”

And ‘cause she couldn’t stop laughing, all the faces turned around to the dance floor and said: “We hope they give you your cents back and you leave!” And the flea got down, spitting on everyone ‘cause she was laughing so much – and they gave her her cents back and kicked her out.

And in the street she finally stopped laughing and returned and said: “Now I’ve stopped! Can I go in?” “Fine,” they said.

And when she went inside she saw the cockroach that was still tripping over himself and started to laugh really hard all over again. So they took her out with a big tug and didn’t give her her cents back, but the *sombrero* didn’t fly off and thassit.

The Tale of the Silly Living Dead Girl, the Boxing, the Stinking and the Way Out

Well y’know Tontonete Shuquia, Cero Culilo, Manguegato, Loconusco and Pirringa were playing burial in the garage. And Pirringa was the dead one and they put her on the ground in the middle of the garage, ‘cause not even the car was there, laid out on some big papers and with four strings from candles, and they said to her: “Stay there: if you breathe or open an eye we’re gonna hit you!”

And Piringa couldn’t do it and sat and said: “I dunno how to not breathe ‘cause I don’t know how to swim!” and they said, “Breathe, dummy, but don’t open your mouth or your eye, and don’t move your ears, or your teeth!”

And so Pirringa laid down face up doing it perfectly and they covered her with a sack and they said like they were crying: “*Ay, ay, ay, ay*, my pretty little lady, she was so good and now she’s gone and she left me!” And Chero Cuilio said: “Look how pretty she looks, like a china doll!” and so Pirringa lifted up her face with a big tear on her cheek and said: “Give me a mirror so I can see myself,” and they said to her, “No, no!” and so she laid back down staying very still.

And they went to invite Nerón and Fiel to the burial and they came in clothes with white spots ‘cause they didn’t have all black and they finally sat down crossing their hands over their knees. And Fiel made three smacking sounds with his spit and Loconusco said: “Shut up! You’re gonna wake up the dead animal!”

... And after a while they put Pirringa in the middle of everyone in a box where things come from the warehouse and they said: “This dead girl isn’t any good at all ‘cause she doesn’t stink!” And they went to look for something to put on her so she smelled bad; and Manguegato said: “Let’s put her in the garbage can,” and Tontonete said: “No, ‘cause it doesn’t smell that

bad. Let's put her in the Creolina² they put in the bathroom"; Chero Cuilio said: "No, 'cause she's gonna get cold and shake too much, let's put her in the *aceite bacalao*³."

And they went to bring the oil and the Creolina and they rubbed it all over and they said: "Ooh, that's it!..." And they put the top on the big box and Pirringa started to scream and they shouted: "Don't come back to life, no cheating!" and she yelled: "Let me out! It stinks a lot and I'm gonna tell my dad!" And the babysitter came because she heard the shouts and she said: "You're gonna see, you naughty kids – I'll tell Don José!" and they ran away and the dogs ran behind them all happy, and the babysitter took the crying stinky dead girl away, all dirty – and thassit.

The Tale of the Thoughts of Monchete with a Head⁴ and Everything

Well y'know Monchete was sat on a rock that was hot with his hands on his cheeks and he thought: "If I had a drum, I'd hit it hard while I walk." And after that he thought: "Five times eight, fourty." And then: "If I was a moviestar like Yaqui Cuper, it would be a pain 'cause I couldn't sleep every night, thinking about my famousness." And then he thought looking at a little trash can that was over there: "What a mess!" and he itched a mosquito bite and thought: "These mosquitoes always leave a little red mole that itches, but one has never bit me that left a green one." And then he spit and threw a clump of dirt and he thought: "Look, the boy goes up and down. That house looks good."

And he kept scratching and he rubbed spit all over the bite with his finger, and he kept thinking: "When I'm big I'm gonna invent a shortcut and silly, pretty things: an invisible *sombrero* for people who don't like to have hats on; beer that gets you drunk and doesn't make you fall over so no one can tell; cigars with blue smoke, and green, and red, and yellow, and

² Multi purpose cleaner known for its strong stench

³ "Codfish oil" used to be given to children for its health benefits, but was very smelly

⁴ Refers to the saying "Esto no tiene ni pies ni cabeza," meaning something doesn't make sense

orange, and black, so that it goes with the color of the dress and the tie; oxes that pull wagons and cows too so you can milk them whenever you stop; a little airplane that see-saws right when it lands, kicking around and making a huge cloud of dust and shaking its big beautiful tail; and a bathroom where you go in and *bam!* it turns into waterbeds and clean sheets and the soap turns into a little pillow and you can have a *siesta*.”

And when he thought that, it made him laugh a little, and he went by his uncle and he said: “What are you laughing about?” “I’m not laughing,” he said, “I’m just grinding my teeth so they grow strong and I can chew hard” and he was hiding his laugh and thassit.