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Cuentos from Long Ago

Paulette Atencio

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This bilingual sampler of southwestern tales, legends, and myths offers the modern reader wisdom passed down for hundreds of years. The themes of these stories are universal--love and its costs, forgiveness, good versus evil--but the voices, images, and incidents are unique to the Southwest. Set in New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and northern Mexico, this timeless material offers lessons about life and how to triumph over its hardships: from making a bargain with the devil to gaining peace through true love; from dealing with inexplicable, even supernatural events to accepting special gifts that transform pain into joy; and from overcoming jealousy, anger, or stinginess to accepting others just as they are.

Moving stories of the first *farolito* as well as other Christmastime stories evoke children's wonder at the season's simplest gifts. Throughout the volume, stories simultaneously instruct, console, and even amuse us, such as the accounts of the impoverished hunter who, for lack of a bullet, shoots a deer with a cherry pit and then harvests a crop of fruit from the animal; or the penniless young man trying to win over the family of his loved one who heeds a voice that tells him soon he "will be sad but glad" if he picks up stones on his journey to her house.

These cuentos continue a rich oral tradition in which stories appeal to our emotions and their impact is experienced long after the telling.

"A viable contemporary portrait of an age-old tradition."--Professor Enrique Lamadrid, University of New Mexico"

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