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Stories for Young Readers

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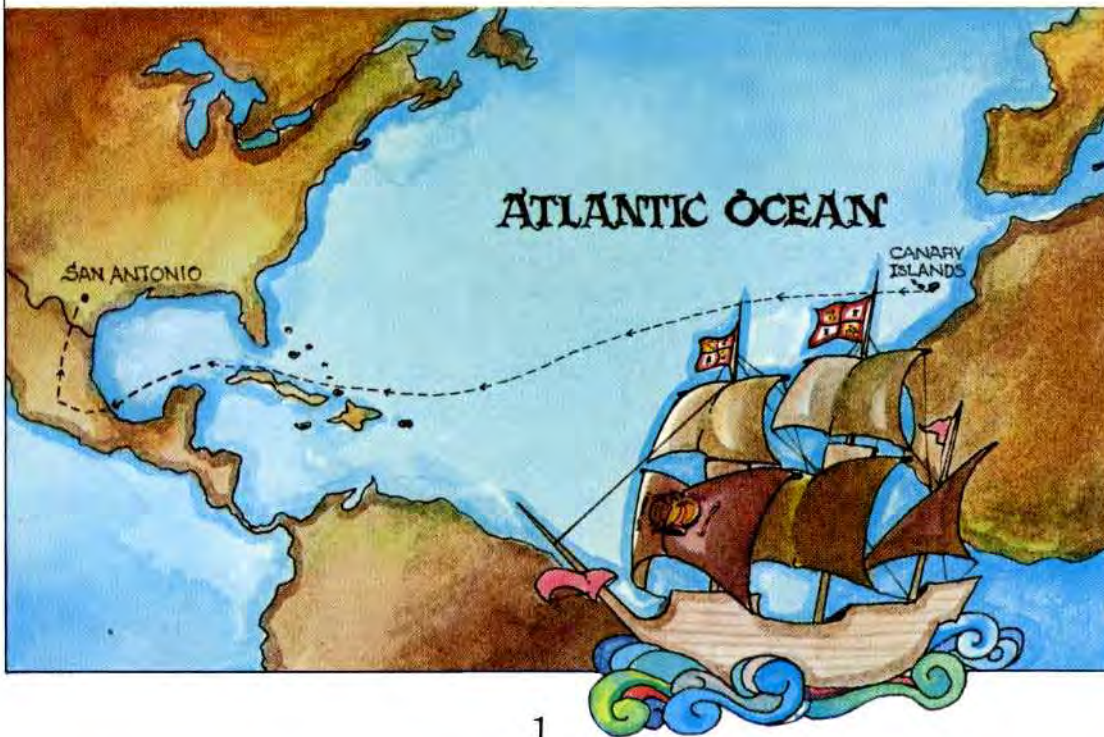
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# Preface

Almost 250 years ago, a group of 56 Canary Islanders settled in the Villa de San Fernando de Bexár along the banks of the Río San Antonio de Padua – the place that is now the city of San Antonio, Texas.

By 1730, land was becoming more and more scarce in the volcanic Canary Islands. The *Isleños*\* requested the King of Spain to allow them to settle in a Spanish colony. About the same time, King Philip was hearing rumors that the French in Louisiana were getting closer to Texas. The Marqués de Aguayo suggested that the two problems might be settled at once by offering the Canary Islanders a chance to settle in New Spain. That is what the king did.

\**Isleños* - islanders



Ten families accepted the king's offer of his best ships to take them to the New World where they would be well taken care of. He promised the head of each family money for one year plus cattle, goats, sheep, farming tools, supplies and their own land in the new settlement. He even promised to give the new settlers titles of nobility. They would be called *hijos de algos* or *hidalgos*, meaning "sons of something" or someone important. Therefore, each man could add the title *Don* to his name.

The *Isleños* set off from the Canary Islands on a journey that would last almost a year. They stopped in Havana, Cuba, then came to Vera Cruz, Mexico, and traveled overland through Saltillo on their way to Texas.

During a rest stop at Quautitlán, Mexico, on November 8, 1730, a list was made of the members of the group. Sixteen separate households were named:

### **First Family**

Juan Leal Goras, 54 years, grandfather of Domingo Leal  
Sons: Vincente Leal, 18 years  
Bernardo Leal, 13 years

### **Second Family**

Juan Curbelo, 50 years  
Wife: García Perdomo y Umpiennes, 46 years  
Sons: Joseph Curbelo, 25 years  
Juan Francisco Curbelo, 9 years  
Daughter: María Curbelo, 13 years

### **Third Family** (the subjects of this story)

Juan Leal Jr., 30 years, son of Juan Leal Goras of the first family, native of Lancerota, medium build, broad shoulders, dark complexion, long face, thick beard, sharp nose, curled hair, black hair, eyes almost grey

Wife: García de Acosta, 30 years, also called María de Acosta, daughter of Pedro Gonzales Cabezas and Francisca de Acosta, native of Teneriffe, tall full-faced, fair complexion, light grey eyes, black hair, pointed nose

Sons: Manuel Leal, 12 years, native of Lancerota, round face, dark complexion, aquiline nose, light grey eyes, chestnut curled hair, scar above left eyebrow

Miguel Leal, 10 years, native of Fuerteventura, round face, large grey eyes, meeting eyebrows, light chestnut hair, thin nose, scar at the end of the left eyebrow

Domingo Leal, 7 years, native of Palma Island, round face, fair complexion, black eyes, reddish hair, flat nose, freckly face

Pedro Leal, 5 months old, native of Havana, round face, fair complexion, black eyes, black hair

Daughter: María Leal, 6 years, native of Fuerteventura, round face, dark complexion, grey eyes, black hair

#### **Fourth Family**

Antonio Santos, 50 years

Wife: Isabel Rodriguez, 34 years

Son: Miguel Santos, 17 years

Daughters: Catharina Santos, 12 years

María Santos, 7 years

Josepha Santos, 2 years

#### **Fifth Family**

Joseph Padron, 22 years

Wife: María Francisca Sanabria, 22 years

#### **Sixth Family**

Manuel de Niz, 50 years

Wife: Sebastiana de la Peña, 42 years

**Seventh Family**

Vincente Alvarez Travieso, 25 years

Wife: María Ana Curbelo, 18 years, daughter of Juan and  
García Curbelo (second family)

**Eighth Family**

Salvador Rodriguez, 42 years

Wife: María Perez Cabrera, 42 years

Son: Patricio Rodriguez, 15 years

**Ninth Family**

Francisco de Arocha, 27 years

Wife: Juana Curbelo, 14 years, daughter of Juan  
and García Curbelo (second family)

**Tenth Family**

Antonio Rodriguez, 18 years

Wife: Josefa de Niz, 19 years

**Eleventh Family**

Joseph Leal, 22 years, son of Juan Leal Goras (first family)

Wife: Ana Santos, 15 years

**Twelfth Family**

Juan Delgado, 19 years

Wife: Catarina Leal, 16 years, daughter of Juan  
Leal Goras (first family)

**Thirteenth Family**

Joseph Cabrera, 50 years

Son: Marcos de Cabrera, 6 years

Daughter: Ana Cabrera, 13 years

**Fourteenth Family**

María Rodriguez-Provayna, 27 years, widow

Sons: Pedro Rodriguez Granadillo, 12 years

Manuel Francisco Rodriguez Granadillo,  
3 years

Daughter: Josefa Rodriguez Granadillo, 10 years

### **Fifteenth Family**

Mariana Meleano, 30 years, widow

Sons: Francisco Delgado, 16 years

Domingo Delgado, 2 years

Daughter: Leonor Delgado, 4 years

### **Sixteenth Family**

Felipe Perez, 20 years

Joseph Antonio Perez, 19 years

Martín Lorenzo de Armas, 20 years

Ignacio Lorenzo de Armas, 22 years

The two pairs of brothers were grouped together because they were traveling as a family.

In Vera Cruz, a tropical fever killed Juan Rodriguez and Luis Delgado. Luis Gutierrez had been trying to leave the ship from the beginning of the voyage, because he wasn't sure he wanted to settle in New Spain. When the group arrived in Vera Cruz, he decided to leave with his family. No one knows where they went.

At Saltillo, the settlers were issued supplies. Men were given:

2 shirts	1 quilt
2 pairs of white drawers (underwear)	2 horses
2 vests with sleeves	1 cushioned saddle with stirrups
2 cravats (ties)	1 bridle bit
1 cloak	1 bridle with reins
1 short loose jacket for riding	1 horse halter with fastener
1 waistcoat	1 pair of spurs with straps
1 pair pantaloons (pants)	2 sheep skins (for bedding and saddle pads)
2 pairs of wool stockings	1 pair of boots
2 pairs of shoes	1 broad sword with belt
1 hat	1 gun with cover
1 mattress	1 shoulder belt with flask for powder
2 sheets	balls and flints
1 pillow	1 packsaddle
1 pillow case	



The women received:

- |                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 2 chemises (slips)         | 1 side saddle without stirrups |
| 2 white underskirts        | 1 bridle bit                   |
| 2 pairs vests with sleeves | 1 bridle and reins             |
| 2 handkerchiefs            | 1 horse halter with fastening  |
| 2 pairs silk stockings     | 2 sheep skins                  |
| 2 pairs thread stockings   | 1 mattress                     |
| 2 pairs shoes              | 2 sheets                       |
| 1 wool skirt               | 1 quilt                        |
| 1 flannel short cloak      | 1 pillow                       |
| 1 veil for mass            | 1 pillow case                  |
| 1 outer skirt              |                                |
| 2 horses                   |                                |
| 1 pack saddle              |                                |

For their homes, the Canary Island families were given:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| Copper cooking pots, with covers which could be used as frying pans | 2 spades                               |
| 10 big pottery dishes   | 2 cutlasses (knives for cutting brush) |
| 10 camping tents with attachments                                   | 2 crowbars                             |
| 2 axes  | 10 saws                                |
|   | 10 adzes                               |
|   | 10 chisels                             |

Each person also received 50 cents a day for spending money – quite a lot of money in 1730.



On March 9, 1731, at 11:00 a.m., the Canary Islanders arrived at the Villa de San Fernando de Bexár in the Spanish province of Texas. They found there the Mission of San Antonio de Valero and a *presidio* \* where they were welcomed by Captain Juan Antonio Pérez de Almazán. For the first few months, the men lived in tents pitched outside the San Antonio de Bexár Presidio. The women and children lived in *adobe* buildings inside the *presidio*.

Each family was given a plot of level land near the *presidio* for home building and gardening and a piece of land along the banks of the San Antonio River for pasture land and farms. Captain Almazán taught them how to plow and how to plant crops because these *Isleños* had not been farmers. They had worked on the Islands as mule-drivers, goat-hair weavers, water vendors, potters, ditch-diggers and tanners. Few of the people liked farming but it was necessary if they were to eat.

A city government was set up on July 20, 1731. Juan Leal Goras was elected the first *regidor* or city councilman by the new landowners or *vecinos*, according to Spanish custom. The following month, two members of the council were elected *alcaldes* by the rest of the council. They served as a combination of justice of the peace, sheriff and mayor. Juan Leal Goras and Salvador Rodriguez were elected.

\* *Presidio* - an army garrison



Juan Leal Jr., son of Juan Leal Goras, came from Lancerote in the Canary Islands to San Antonio when he was 30 years old. He brought with him his wife, María García de Acosta, one daughter and four sons. Domingo Leal was 7 years old when the family arrived with the others in 1731. He was described then as having a round face, fair complexion, black eyes, reddish hair, flat nose and freckly face.

This story of a day in Domingo Leal's life takes place three years after the family arrived at the Villa de San Fernando on the banks of the Río San Antonio de Padua. Like Domingo, many of the characters in the story actually lived at that time. Others are fictitious as are the conversations and Domingo's activities on the day of his life we have portrayed. However, the content of this story is based on knowledge of the people who lived and events which did or could have occurred in the Villa de San Fernando, the mission and the *presidio* of San Antonio in 1734.



# With Domingo Leal in San Antonio 1734.

A ray of morning light was spreading its way through the slats in the rectangular space that made a window in the Leals' half built new stone house. As Domingo turned sleepily on his pallet, a beam of light crossed his eyes and startled him awake.

Domingo rubbed his eyes and looked about the room. The other pallets in the room were empty.

"Manuel and Miguel must have gone to the river for water and María must be helping *mamá*," Domingo thought.

"Domingo!" He heard his mother call. He jumped from bed, pulled on his close fitting *pantalones* and headed in the direction of his mother's voice. His loose shirt flapped as he ran to the front of the stone house. The cool feeling of the morning air indoors turned warm against Domingo's skin as he bounded through the front door. Purposefully stomping into the mud puddles that had formed in the last three days of rain, Domingo splashed mud on the house and on himself.

Mother was cooking by the front porch. She knelt on the soft ground, her blue skirt covering her bare knees. María ground corn in the *metate*\* and kept a watchful eye on their youngest brother, Pedro, not yet four years old.

Every time Domingo looked at Pedro, he remembered the long journey from the Canary Islands. Pedro was born during the stop the 56 *Isleños* made in Havana. The rest of the trip through Mexico to Texas had been extra hard with a small baby to care for.

\* *metate* - a grinding stone

Domingo watched his mother as she took the *masa*\* and beat out flat, round patties between the palms of her hands. “*Mamá* does not have much time for me any more,” he thought.

“Watch that Pedro does not get too near the fire under the griddle or the one under the cooking pot,” her mother cautioned María.

“*¿Me llamaste, mamá?*” Domingo asked. “Did you call me?”

\**masa* - ground corn meal



Flipping one patty on the hot griddle, his mother waited for the other two to brown into the familiar *tortillas* before turning them over. Then lifting the finished ones carefully, she dropped them into her apron. She looked up at Domingo from her crouched position.

“¡Sí!” His mother frowned when she saw Domingo’s mud-splattered *pantalones* and feet. She sighed and said, “Your *papá* and your older brothers are already at work on our house. Before you paint it all with mud, run to the pasture and watch the cattle. Look at the garden on your way. And take a dry corn stalk with you to drive off any cows that wander into the field. They’ll damage the crops.”



Domingo scowled.

“Now do not tell me that you’re too young,” she added.  
“You’re already ten years old, big enough to help your *papá*.  
Now don’t complain, he told me to send you to the pasture.”

“Yes, *mamá*,” Domingo answered quickly. “I know *papá*  
expects me to help.” He turned and stepped into a large puddle  
of mud.

“¡Cuidado, Domingo! Be careful!”

“I’m sorry, *mamá*.”

His mother handed him a *tortilla* and motioned to the  
bubbling pot of *frijoles*.

“They’ve been cooking for some time now. You may fill your  
*tortilla*,” she suggested.

Domingo bent over the pot of beans to enjoy the delicious  
aroma, helped himself to a ladle full and wrapped his *tortilla*  
around them. With scarcely time for the beans to cool, he  
stuffed the *tortilla* into his mouth as he started off towards the  
garden behind the house.

“Mingo,”\* *María* called. “Don’t try to milk those wild cows.”

His sister was teasing again. Her large grey eyes danced in  
fun. He knew that those funny looking animals in the pasture  
were too ornery to be milked. The camels he had known back  
in the Canary Islands were ornery too but at least he  
understood them. In the three years his family had lived at *Villa*  
*de San Fernando*, he still hadn’t gotten used to the Longhorns.

\**Mingo* - a nickname for Domingo

**D**omingo headed toward the far right end of the field, walking in between rows of sprouting seedlings. He stopped at a point that his father had told him set the Leal land apart from their neighbor's lot.

He looked around. Other stone houses like the Leal house were being built around the Plaza de las Islas.\* Some of the people, however, had chosen to remain in *adobe* houses or their *jacales*\* of mud and sticks with thatched roofs, even after Captain Almazán had given grants of land to the settlers. Cattle, mules, sheep, goats and horses stood grazing on pasture land that was green from the past few days of rain.

The Leal pasture land was a choice spot, situated by the Río San Antonio de Padua. The four Longhorns pastured there were grazing quietly. Domingo found a shady spot where he could watch them. Aimlessly, he began scratching on the ground with his corn stalk.

"I wonder how my name would be written," he thought. "I suppose that Domingo Leal wouldn't be too hard to write. It doesn't sound like a hard name to write. Maybe someday I'll ask Vicente Travieso or Francisco Arocha to show me how. They're the only two *Isleños* who know how to read and write. They went to school in the Canary Islands. Too bad there's no school for us here. I'd rather learn to write my name than watch those funny looking animals. ¡*Qué tercos!* Gosh, they're stubborn!"

Finding a dry place, Domingo sat down, drawing his knees close to his chest. As he rested his head on his arms he began thinking of home in the Canary Islands.

"This is such a strange land – such a strange country," Domingo thought. "I wonder if I'll ever get used to it. I'm not sure that any of the *Isleños* like this Province of Texas. Some have been talking of leaving, mainly because of the Indian

\* *Plaza de las Islas* - present location of Main Plaza in San Antonio

\* *Jacales* - simple huts



attacks. During the three years we've been here, it seems that the Indians have been attacking the *villa* more and more. Even the soldiers of the *presidio* seem afraid. I wonder if we should have stayed in the Canary Islands. I had more fun there. I had more friends my age to play with. *Mamá* and *papá* used to take me to the market in town. I remember watching the fishermen bring in their catch. Here, all there is to do is watch cattle . . .”

A sound caught Domingo's attention. He turned just in time to see one of the cows heading towards the neighbor's pasture. Scanning the ground, he searched for a rock. He found one about the size of his hand, picked it up and moved closer to the cow, ignoring the mud that oozed up between his toes. When he was about ten feet from the cow, he drew in a breath and screamed out his most ferocious yell:

“¡AAAAAAA-YY, *váyase vaca!* Get out, cow!”

Domingo threw the rock at the cow. It startled the animal. With his corn stalk, Domingo waved the cow back onto the Leal pasture. He waited to make sure the cow was well within the boundaries of the pasture. He sat down again. Flies swarmed around him, landing on his sweaty arms. A slight breeze cooled his back, also damp with sweat. The sun, now directly overhead, made Domingo's hair feel as blazing red as it looked.

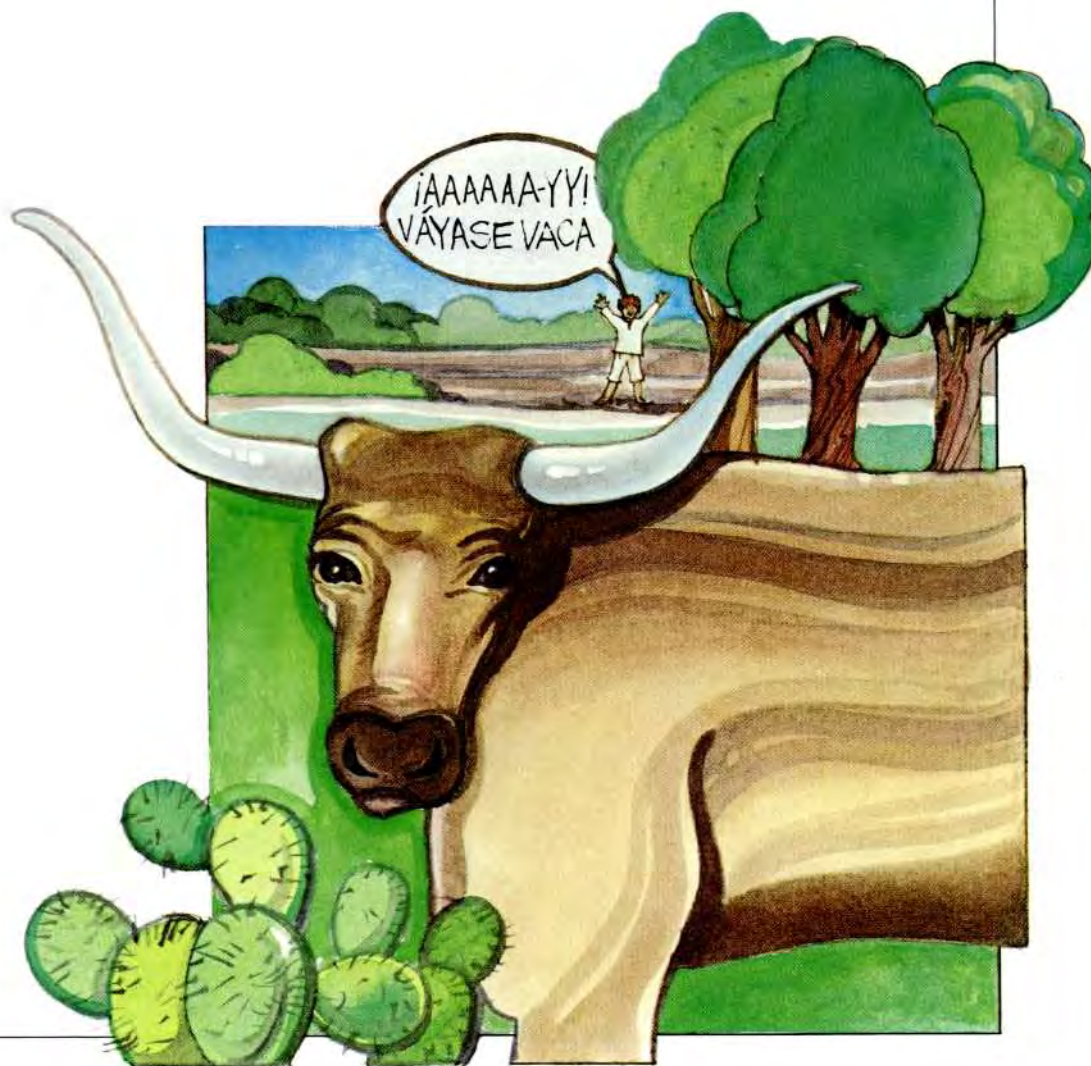
“¡*La comida*, Mingo! Lunch time!”

Domingo turned at the sound of his brother's voice.

Miguel was walking toward him, holding one of their father's tools in one hand and a cloth bundle in the other. Domingo noticed that although Miguel was only three years older than himself, his brother acted like their father. “He even walks like *papá*.” Domingo observed.

“Are you hungry?” Miguel motioned to the bundle he was carrying. “*Mamá* sent this for us. After lunch, *papá* wants you to take this adze\* to Señor Juan Banul to be fixed. See, the wooden handle is cracked. We can’t use it to trim and smooth the wood. We can’t trim the beams for our new house. You take it to the blacksmith and I’ll tend the cows. Tell him to mark the charge to our account.”

\*adze - a tool for working wood



Domingo nodded. He was pleased to have the chance to go to the mission by himself.

The two boys found a dry spot under a tree where they could eat their lunch. Their mother had sent a bowl of *frijoles* and some warm corn *tortillas*.

“What did you and *papá* do this morning?” Domingo asked, wishing he had been with them.

“We added part of a wall for a new room on the house. Then *abuelo*, our grandfather Leal Goraz, came to talk with *papá*.”

“Why?” Domingo asked innocently.

“Because grandfather’s argument with Don Felipe is still going on. Remember when Don Felipe said that grandfather plowed over his corn field and wanted to be paid for the loss of his crop? That’s why the court ordered *abuelo* kept in his house because there isn’t a jail in the *villa*.”

“That was a long time ago,” Domingo added.

“Over a year ago, but the argument still goes on. Grandfather wants *papá* to tell the *alcaldes* that Don Felipe stole a horse and mule from him on the trip here. He says that Don Felipe can’t be trusted.”

“¡*Qué tonterias!* How silly – all these bad feelings over a little bit of corn! Why can’t the *Isleños* get along with one another?” asked Domingo.

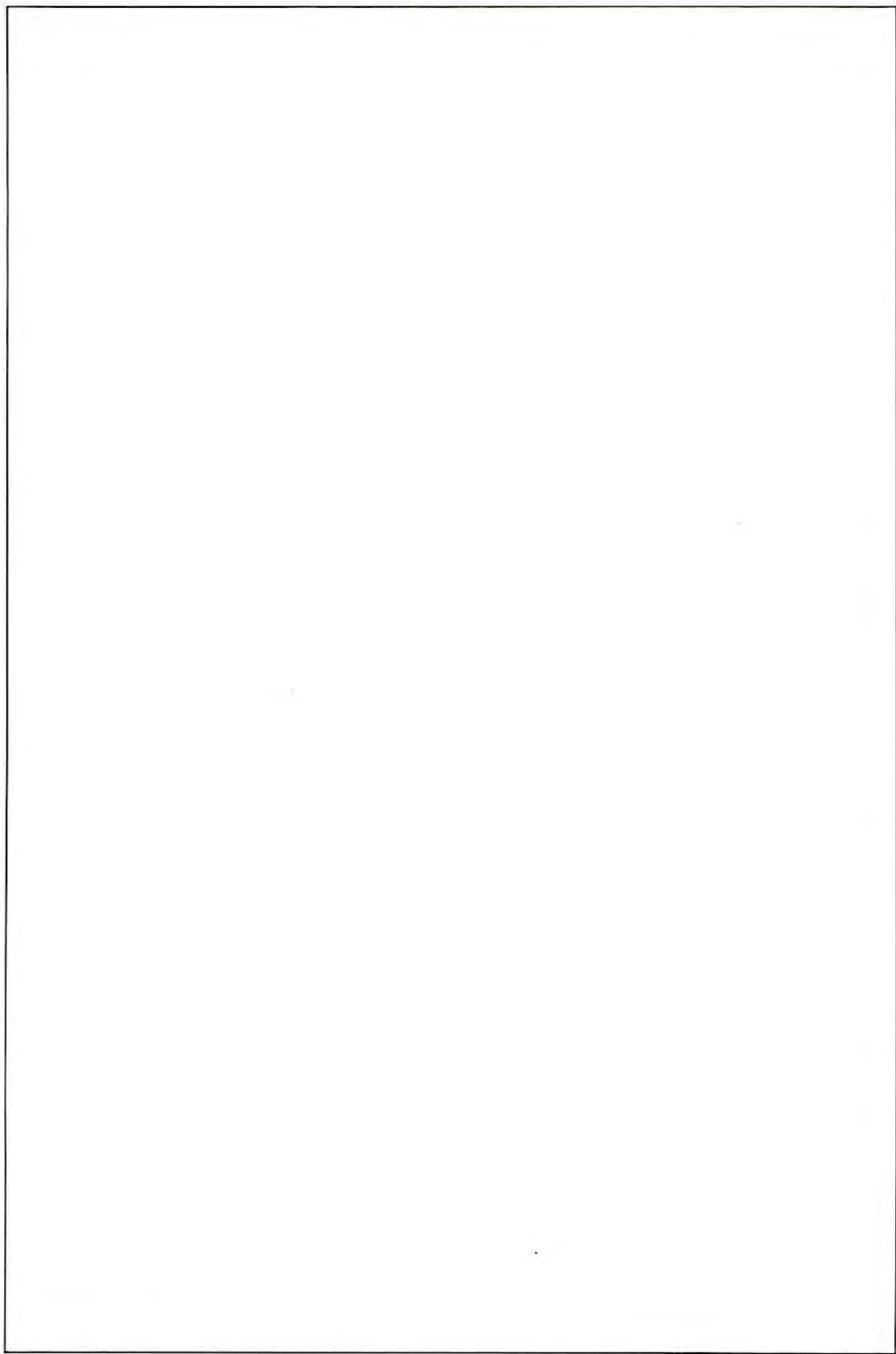
“Because grandfather likes a good fight,” observed Miguel.

Domingo burst into laughter.

Now Miguel was scolding. “Don’t laugh about your grandfather, Mingo. Run along now. This adze needs fixing.”

Domingo forced himself to be serious again, picked up the adze, mumbled “*Adiós*” to his brother and strode down the edge of the pasture, trying to walk like *papá*. When his giggles overtook him again, he quickened his pace to reach the river bank where Miguel could not hear him.





**D**omingo headed east along the river, following the route his family used to take every Sunday on the way to church at the Mission San Antonio de Valero. These days, Sunday Mass was attended at the *presidio* chapel.\* Domingo missed the Sunday visit to the mission. He remembered that *mamá* didn't like him to talk with the Indians and soldiers there. He had to stay close to the family when they went to Mass. Today he was alone. He could talk to whomever he pleased!

He broke into a run but the adze he was carrying slowed him down. To make the distance seem shorter, he played a game, tossing rocks into the river ahead of him, trying to reach the point where they splashed before the ripples drowned. Before he realized it, he was at the crude log footbridge that crossed the river. The familiar line of cottonwood trees near the mission was now in full view.

The Mission San Antonio de Valero was coming awake after the mid-day *siesta*. *Jacales* and some houses of wood dotted the area.

Indians were working on other buildings and the convent for the Spanish priests, the only stone building on the grounds. From where he stood, Domingo could see other groups of Indians working in the fields. "They do the same things I do," he thought, "tend the crops and the cattle."

The adze Domingo was carrying began to slip from his hand, reminding him of his reason for being there. Remembering exactly where the blacksmith's forge was located, he drew a deep breath and ran to the place where he knew he would find Juan Banul.

Moments later, panting and sweaty, Domingo was at the smithy. An old Indian was working the bellows which pumped air to feed the flames that leaped from the *adobe* brick forge. Juan Banul worked nearby at the anvil hammering a red hot piece of iron bar.

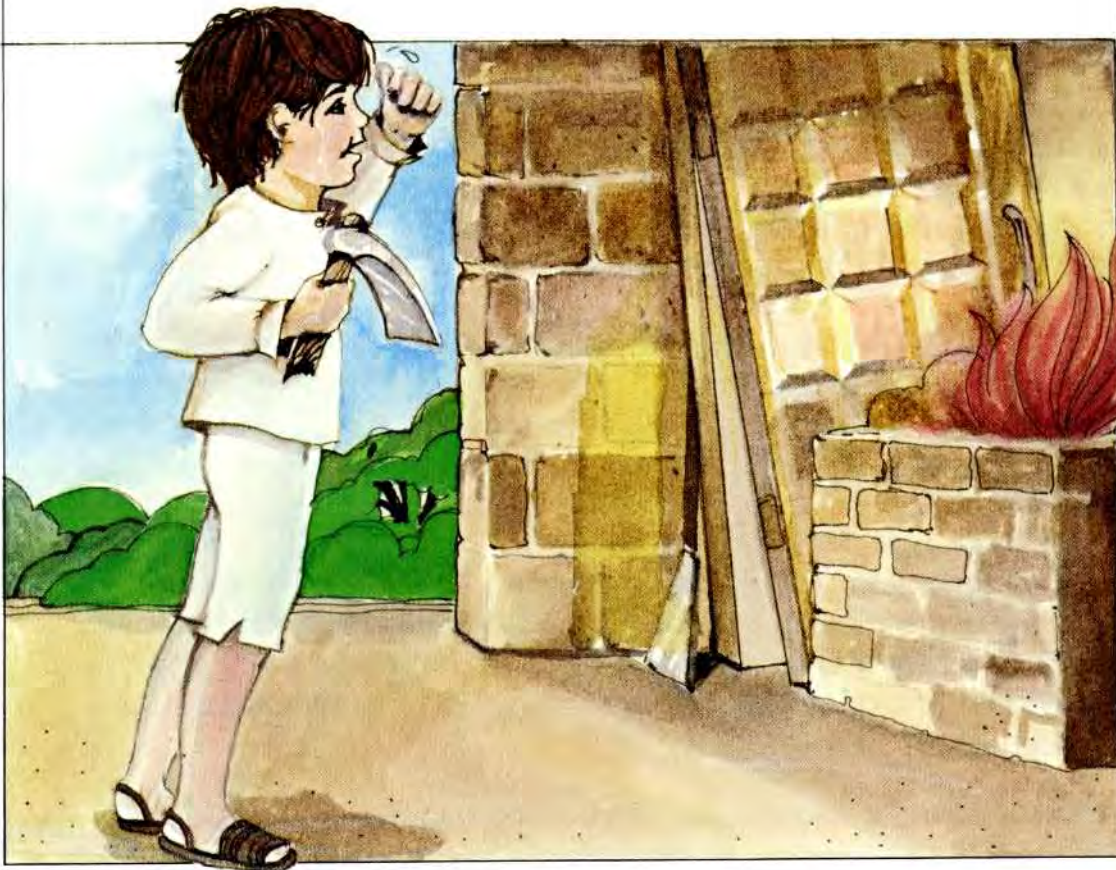
\*The *presidio* chapel was just west of the present site of San Fernando Cathedral.

“¡Hola, Domingo! Did you come to learn how to make door hinges? Watch.”

Señor Banul formed the rod into a loop and, while it was still hot, seared holes in the door with the ends of the rod. He drove them at an angle through the edge of the wooden door for a mission house.

“I hope I’ll be the one who makes the doors for the church that will be built here.”

Domingo’s black eyes grew wide. The only blacksmith in Texas was showing him how to make a door hinge! He felt very important. He now knew something Miguel didn’t know.

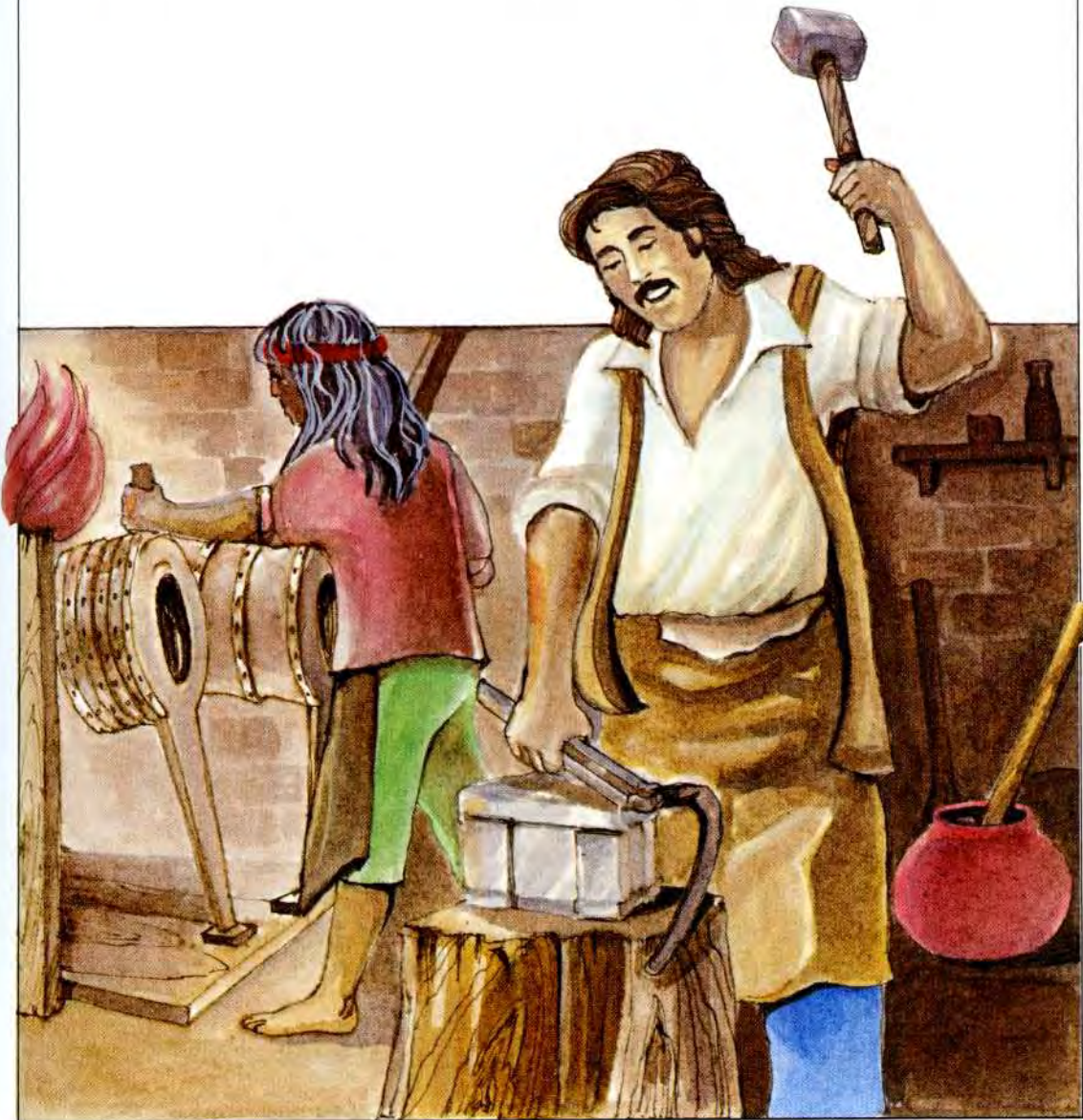


“Did you bring something for me to fix?” Juan Banul asked, looking at the adze Domingo was holding.

“Sí, Señor Banul. *Papá* asks that you fix this handle. He knows you’ll do a better job than he can. Look, it’s split!”

The blacksmith smiled. “Leave it with me, Domingo. I’ll make it like new.”

Señor Banul thrust another iron rod into the blazing forge for the second hinge on the door he was preparing to hang.





“Do you like living here any better than you did when you first came, Domingo?” he asked.

“I’m not having as much fun here as I did in Lencarote.”

“Maybe you haven’t been here long enough,” Señor Banul suggested. “I was here on this day, 16 years ago, when the *presidio* was begun, many years before you and your family arrived with the other *Isleños*. Did you know that today, May 5, is the anniversary date of the founding of San Antonio? I’ve seen the town grow since the time the Alarcón expedition\* came here. That’s long before you were born. This was wild country then.”

“Why did you come?” Domingo asked.

Señor Banul went on: “When I was a young man, I came from Belgium where I was born, to New Spain to find a new way of life and better chances to use my skills. That was almost twenty years ago. Martín de Alarcón, the governor of the province of Coahuila and Texas in 1718, founded this place near the San Antonio River. I came here with his expedition and started building the *presidio* and mission. We always thought this was a fine place to settle.

“Later the Marqués de Aguayo asked me to go and help build missions over in east Texas. The *marqués* was then governor of the province of Coahuila and Texas. He thought that the French who were in east Texas then might take over Spanish land here.”

“But there are no French people here,” Domingo added.

Señor Banul stopped working for a moment. His eyes met Domingo’s and grew bright as he told the story of the 500 Spanish horsemen he rode with to east Texas to push the French back to Louisiana.

\*Alarcón expedition - the Spanish expedition of soldiers and missionaries that founded San Antonio in 1718

“Did you know, Domingo, that it is because of the Marqués de Aguayo that you are here? He thought that Spain should colonize Texas with settlers, not soldiers, and that some of those settlers should come from the Canary Islands.”

The blacksmith finished searing the second hinge in the door, leaned it against the side of the *adobe* wall, thrust an iron bar into the flames of his forge until it glowed red and began shaping it with his hammer on the anvil.

Señor Banul called Domingo’s attention to this new shape he was making. “You see how I make horseshoes, Domingo?”

“Here, take the hammer and flatten this shoe for Captain Urrutia’s horse. Corporal Hernandez will be bringing it by soon to be shod.”

Excited by the chance to do blacksmith’s work, Domingo held Señor Banul’s hammer with both hands and pounded with all his strength. The hammer caught the bar at an angle and left a dent the size of a man’s thumbprint.

“*¡Con Cuidado!* Take it easy, Domingo! Let’s try again.”

Señor Banul reheated the bar and this time, holding Domingo’s hand, helped him feel just the right amount of pressure needed to shape the iron.

“Very good, Domingo. I think you could learn how to be a good blacksmith.”

Wondering if his father would like him to be a blacksmith, Domingo’s attention was captured by the clinking sound of spurs and the smell of horses that now seemed to surround him. He looked up to see the bulky, muscular frame of Corporal Hernandez. The horseman held his barrel chest high, shoulders back in a way that said he was proud to be a *presidio* soldier. The even tan color of his skin was outlined by a neatly trimmed black beard and sideburns. Domingo thought the corporal was the finest looking man he had ever seen.

*"Buenos dias, Señor Banul,"* Corporal Hernandez greeted the blacksmith. "Can you fix the shoe for the captain's horse now?"

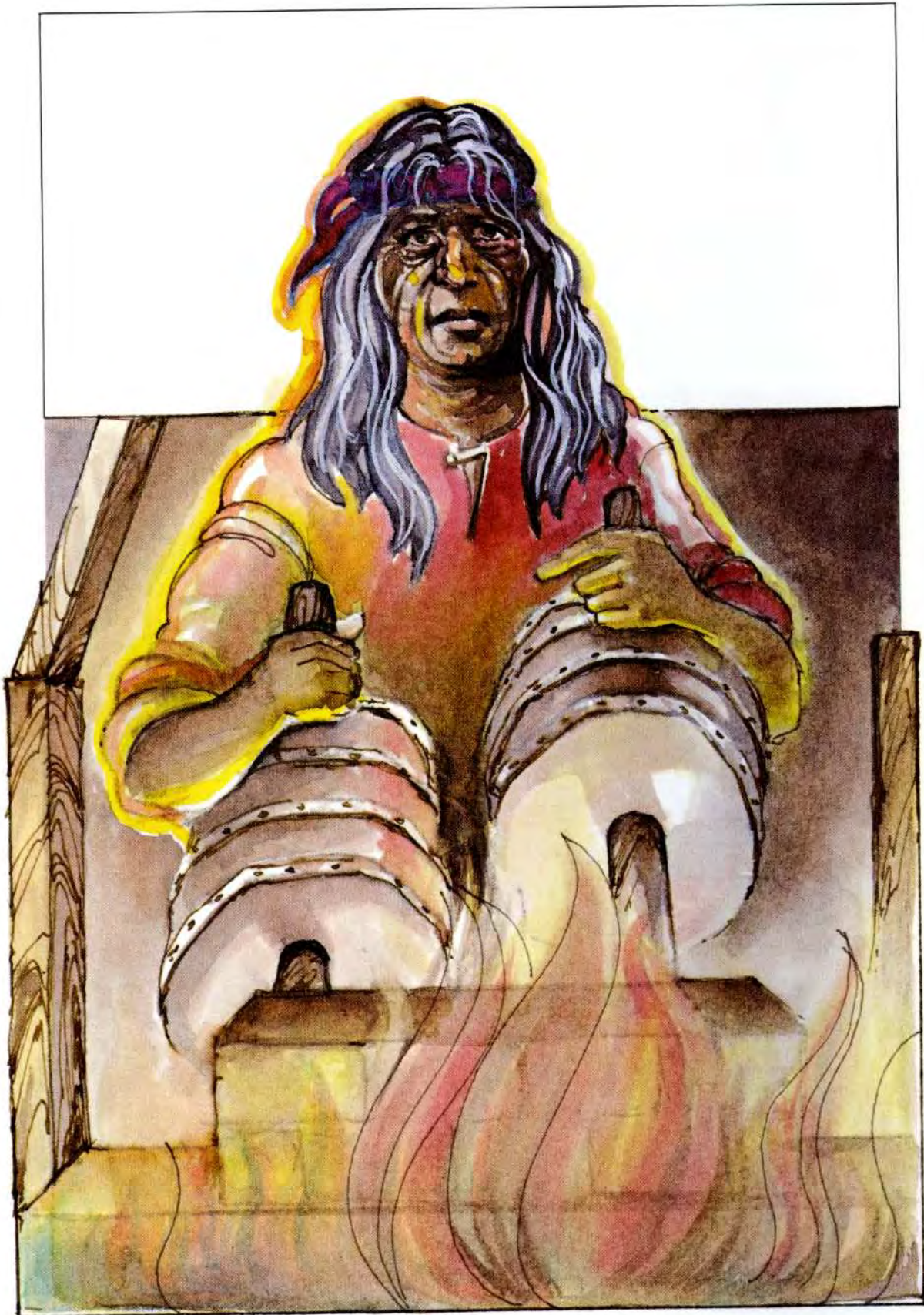
"You're just in time," Señor Banul replied. "Domingo Leal here has been helping me hammer a horseshoe."

*"Gracias, Domingo"* Juan Antonio Hernandez' dark eyes carefully examined the horseshoe Domingo had helped Juan Banul make. The corporal's black curly hair fell in ringlets over his forehead. "Perhaps you will become a blacksmith. We certainly could use another in Texas." The corporal winked at Señor Banul.

The two men walked to where Captain Urrutia's horse was tethered, leaving Domingo to look about the smithy.







**T**he old Indian working the bellows of the forge had not said a word all this time. Domingo guessed that he was old enough to have been around the mission for many years. If so, he probably understood Spanish, but Domingo wasn't sure.

A little afraid but very curious – because his mother had told the children not to speak to the Indians – Domingo moved closer to the old man. His bronze face was lined and weathered. When his dark eyes met Domingo's, there was a gentleness in his voice as he said "*No tengas miedo*. Don't be afraid. I'm a Coahuiltecan, not one of the Apache devils. The Spanish call me El Cojo because of my crippled foot."

He continued, "I lived here before Señor Juan Banul came as he was telling you. Then this place was an Indian village called Yanaguana. I came to live and work here when Father Olivares started the mission. He was a kind and good man."

"Do you like it here?" Domingo asked.

"*A veces sí, a veces no*. Sometimes yes, sometimes no," said the old Coahuiltecan. "The fathers teach us planting and building, and how to fix things and tend cattle. It's not a bad life. Every day of the week except Sunday is the same. We go to Mass soon after sunrise. Then we have breakfast and work in the fields. After our noon meal, we take a *siesta*, work some more, and attend Mass again. We end the day with story telling, singing and dancing."

"That doesn't sound very exciting," observed Domingo.

"When you're ten, you want life to be exciting. At my age, it doesn't matter as long as I know that there will be enough food and protection from the Apaches. That's why I came to the mission and that's why I stay. You can go hungry for just so long. Then giving up your freedom and the old way of life seems a small price to pay for survival."

Domingo remembered being hungry at times, but he'd never had to go without food for very long. He wondered what it would be like to be so hungry that he would go to live in a place with strange people where life would be very different from what he knew. Then he realized, "Maybe that's why *papá* came to New Spain. Perhaps *papá* knew that we might starve if we stayed in the Canary Islands!"

"Besides," the Indian added, "Father Mariano de los Dolores and the other priests treat us well. They help us elect our own council of chiefs. Instead of having a chief who gets to be head of the tribe because he's a good warrior or because his father was chief, we can elect those we want to be our leaders."

"Not all the Indians who come here stay, you know," the old man continued. "Just this morning, the soldiers stationed at the mission went after some who ran away."

"Were they caught?" Domingo asked excitedly.

"Oh yes. The runaways are usually found and brought back. They can't get very far on foot."

The thought of runaways being searched for by soldiers sparked Domingo's imagination. He wondered where he would hide if he was a runaway Indian and what he would do if soldiers caught him. "What did they do to them?" he asked.

The old Indian responded, "Runaways are usually talked to and given extra work to do, but they aren't punished in a harsh way. The fathers are strict but not cruel. They want to help us learn to like mission life. They think it's a good way to live."

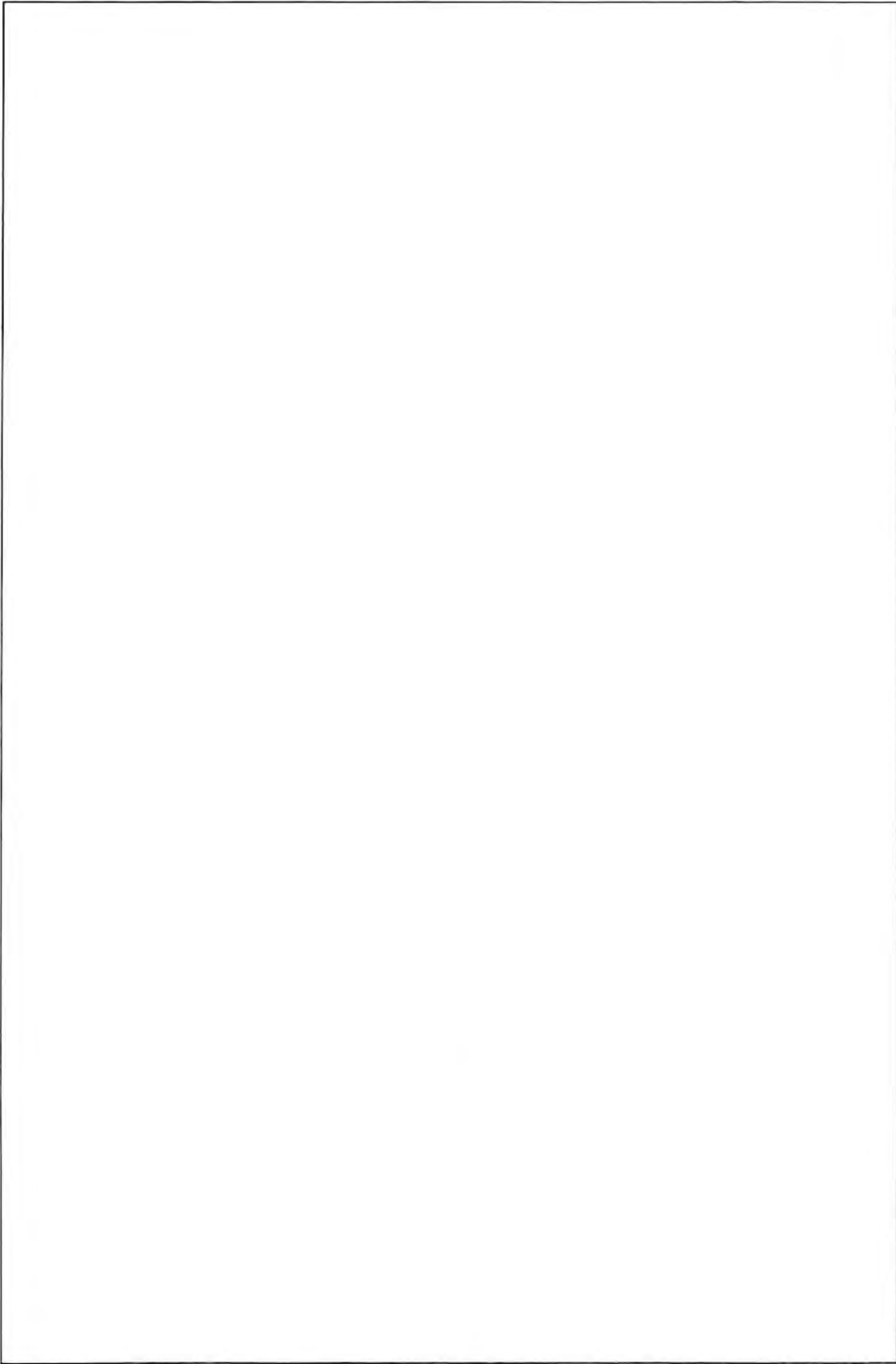
Fearing that one of the priests might walk by and overhear, Domingo whispered. "I don't think I would like it."

The Indian's face, which had been expressionless until now, took on a wry smile not unlike his own father's.

“Your life isn’t much different from ours. We do the same things you do. We’re learning your ways.”

The flash of his own thoughts earlier that day when watching the Indians tending crops and cattle returned to Domingo. “This old Indian is very wise,” he thought. His words made Domingo feel a little ashamed.





“W

ell, have you decided to become a blacksmith?” Corporal Hernandez’ deep voice came from just behind Domingo. “Or, would you like to be a soldier?”

“A soldier!” Domingo thought that would be wonderful. He could see himself in the corporal’s uniform: the white full-sleeved shirt and the close-fitting blue pants broadly striped in red down the sides. He could almost feel the short blue wool jacket with red collar and cuffs under the *cuera* – the leather jacket worn for protection from Indian arrows. Short boots on his feet would be covered by the buckskin leggings or *botas*. The soldier’s black hat would cover the long hair he would have, like the corporal, pulled together with strips of rawhide behind his head. He would grow long sideburns and a mustache – or maybe, a beard.

“I am going to visit my friend who is stationed here at the mission.” Corporal Hernandez continued. “Would you like to come with me? Señor Banul will need some time to shoe the captain’s horse and fix your father’s adze.”

Domingo didn’t need to think about that for long. He gladly joined the corporal, trying to match his very long strides. After a few steps, he settled into a more natural walk as his companion commanded his attention.

“Look at my *cuera*, Domingo. We are called *soldados de cuera* because we wear these jackets of quilted buckskin padded with cotton. They’re very good for keeping Apache arrows out of our backs and chests. They also make good ‘mattresses’ to sleep on while we’re on patrol. Notice the color?”

“It’s the color of a spice *mamá* uses – cinnamon, I think,” Domingo responded.

“That’s right. Do you know why?”

“No,” Domingo replied. “No sé. I don’t know.”

"The *cuera* is supposed to be white, the shade of natural buckskin," the corporal explained. "But we frontier soldiers in Texas and Coahuila have changed that. A light colored jacket makes too good a target at night . . ."

"And Apaches raid at night?" Domingo guessed.

"Sí, eres muy listo. You're a smart boy, Domingo. I think Captain Urrutia would like to have you join the *soldados de cuera* – when you're older, of course. We can use smart men at the *presidio*."

Domingo was seeing himself more and more as a soldier. "Sergeant Domingo Leal," he thought as he pretended he was one of the captain's men.

"*Buenas tardes, padre.*" The corporal's greeting to Father Mariano brought Domingo back to the real world of the mission.

"*Buenas tardes, Domingo and Corporal Hernandez,*" the *padre* responded. "Have you come to inspect the soldiers' work here? You know, Corporal Hernandez, the two soldiers that are here are doing well. They help us organize the work details of the Indians, chase after Indian runaways and they protect us from Apache raids." He waved his arm toward the mission's unfinished buildings in a manner that reminded Domingo of the Sunday blessing.

"There are still Apache raids outside the *presidio*," the corporal explained. "We've been using more men to guard the horses, especially at night, and to keep the *presidio* secure."

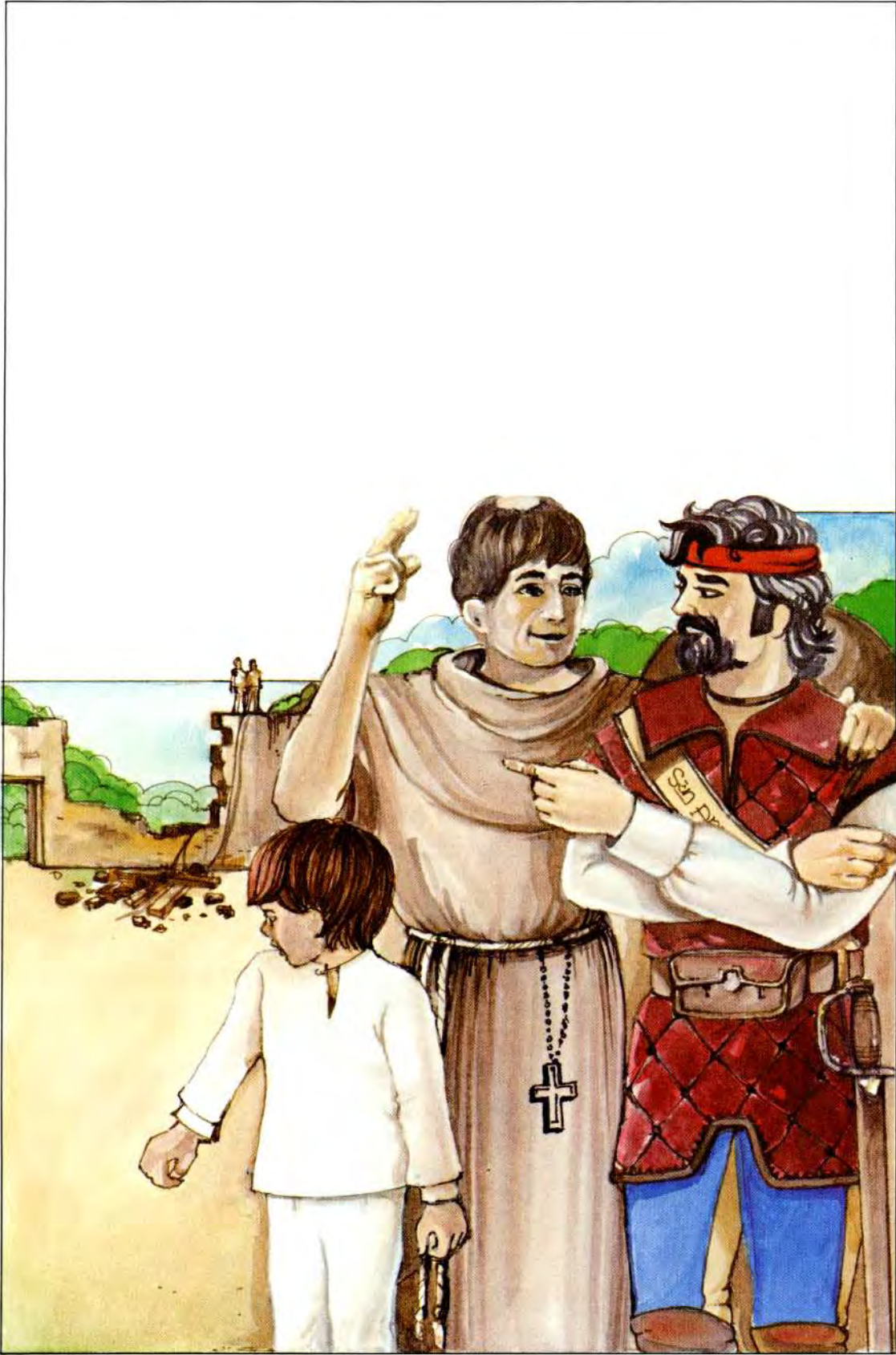
"I'll remember them in my prayers," Father Mariano said in a comforting tone. Turning to Domingo, he asked, "How are your parents, my son?"

"*Mamá and papá* are well, *padre.*"

"And your little brother, Pedro?"

"*Está bien, gracias,*" Domingo responded remembering how his mother had asked all the children to watch over Pedro when the fever made him sleep for many days and nights. Even though he was a little jealous of Pedro because his mother gave him so much attention, Domingo had worried about him when he was sick.

"It is God's will that your brother is alive," Father Mariano observed. As he made the sign of the cross over Domingo and Corporal Hernandez, the *padre* bid them "*Vayan con Dios,*" then folded his hands in his robes and solemnly moved in the direction of the mission chapel. Domingo liked to watch the sweeping motion of the *padre's* Franciscan robes. It reminded him of the holy days when the fathers wore colorful vestments which moved gracefully to and fro as they turned to bless the people who lined the path of the procession.



**T**

he corporal called to his friend who was watching a group of Indians at work building a new wall on the convent. “¿Jacinto Treviño, *como está?* How are you?”

“I want you to meet someone who thinks he might become a *soldado de cuera* someday. This is Domingo Leal, grandson of Don Juan Leal Goras.”

“Ah, ha,” Private Treviño exclaimed. “If he is like his grandfather, he will make a lot of trouble – for the Apaches.”

Domingo understood the private’s wink. Grandfather Leal Goras had a reputation for being a trouble-maker.

“Talking about Apaches,” Treviño grew serious, “they still give us trouble. The mission Indians fear that a big attack will come any day now. We are constantly going after groups of mission Indians who run away looking for a safe place to hide.”

“You can’t blame them,” Corporal Hernandez responded. “Apaches are still raiding our horse herds outside the *presidio*. Remember when we thought the raids were over. When the Apaches came to town to trade, they seemed to want peace and friendship. Then, just last year, that awful thing happened.”

“¿Sí? One of the soldiers found stripped of his flesh was my friend,” Private Treviño said as he made the sign of the cross.

A chill went through Domingo’s body. “Stripped of his flesh!” he thought. He shot a quick glance over his shoulder and scanned the boundaries of the mission wondering if Apaches might be hiding somewhere out there, waiting to attack.

Corporal Hernandez noticed Domingo’s face and cautioned, “Be alert, Domingo, but don’t allow your fear of Apache raids to overcome you. A good soldier must keep his mind clear no matter what happens.”

"I heard *papá* and *mamá* talking about the soldiers who were killed," Domingo recalled, his voice shaking. "But I don't know how it happened."

Private Treviño told the story: "Three Apache warriors and a squaw had come to the Presidio de San Antonio to trade. When they were ready to return to their tribe, three of our soldiers escorted the Apaches out of the *presidio*, as is the custom. We were giving them protection. After all, we had a peace treaty with the Apaches. As the party was riding to a small hill overlooking the *villa*, one of the soldiers spotted a herd of buffalo. Thinking that all was well because there was a peace treaty, the soldier returned to the *presidio* to get help to hunt the buffalo. The other two soldiers continued toward the hill with the Apaches. Suddenly, 24 Apache warriors appeared on horseback. They trotted toward the soldiers who waited for them, not thinking that the Indians would attack. The Apaches came at them in two groups, knocking them off their horses and killing them. The rescue party found the remains of the two soldiers' bodies."

"We can't trust the Apaches," the corporal added. "We're on guard, day and night. Not long ago, two settlers from the village were kidnapped by Indians. We weren't able to save them. I am glad that Capitán Joseph de Urrutia was appointed by the viceroy to command the *presidio*. He is an experienced Indian fighter, about as old as your grandfather, Domingo. It is because of the captain that we have more soldiers stationed at the *presidio* now than we did when that Apache attack took place."

"The captain thinks that Chief Cabellos Colorados is the leader of the Apache attacks," Private Treviño added. "They say he has red hair, like yours, Domingo."

"We probably wouldn't have a settlement here any longer if it weren't for the captain," the corporal went on. Domingo could tell he liked the captain very much. "After the soldiers' bodies were found, many people wanted to leave. The captain helped calm them down. He's a wise man and an excellent Indian fighter. He understands how the Apaches think!"

The corporal's words made Domingo feel better. His heart wasn't beating as fast as it had been. He could feel the muscles in his body relax.

Just as he was feeling like himself again, a thunderous noise beat his ears, rocks flew about him, dirt rained on him and the screams of the Indians Private Treviño had been watching filled the air. Domingo dived for the ground. He thought that this must be the Apache attack.

People scurried around him. He didn't dare raise his head which he had buried in his arms when the rocks and dirt started flying. He wondered if Corporal Hernandez and Private Treviño were still there. Thoughts flew wildly through his head: "Had the Apaches killed them already? What were the mission Indians doing? What about the *padres* and Señor Banul?" Then he recalled Corporal Hernandez' words: ". . . don't allow your fear of Apache raids to overcome you. A good soldier must keep his mind clear no matter what happens."





Curiosity and a little bit of courage caused Domingo to peek out from under his arms. There were no Apaches standing over him. No dead bodies were strewn on the mission grounds. Looking toward the convent, he saw Corporal Hernandez helping a mission Indian who was holding his head. To his right was Private Treviño, talking to the other Indians. And off to the side, shaking his head in displeasure, was Father Mariano. Domingo jumped up and ran toward the corporal.

“You see, Domingo, what happens when work is not done properly?” the corporal said as he heard the boy approach him. “The new convent wall has caved in. The stones weren’t fitted together properly. Just one slipped and all the others came tumbling down.”

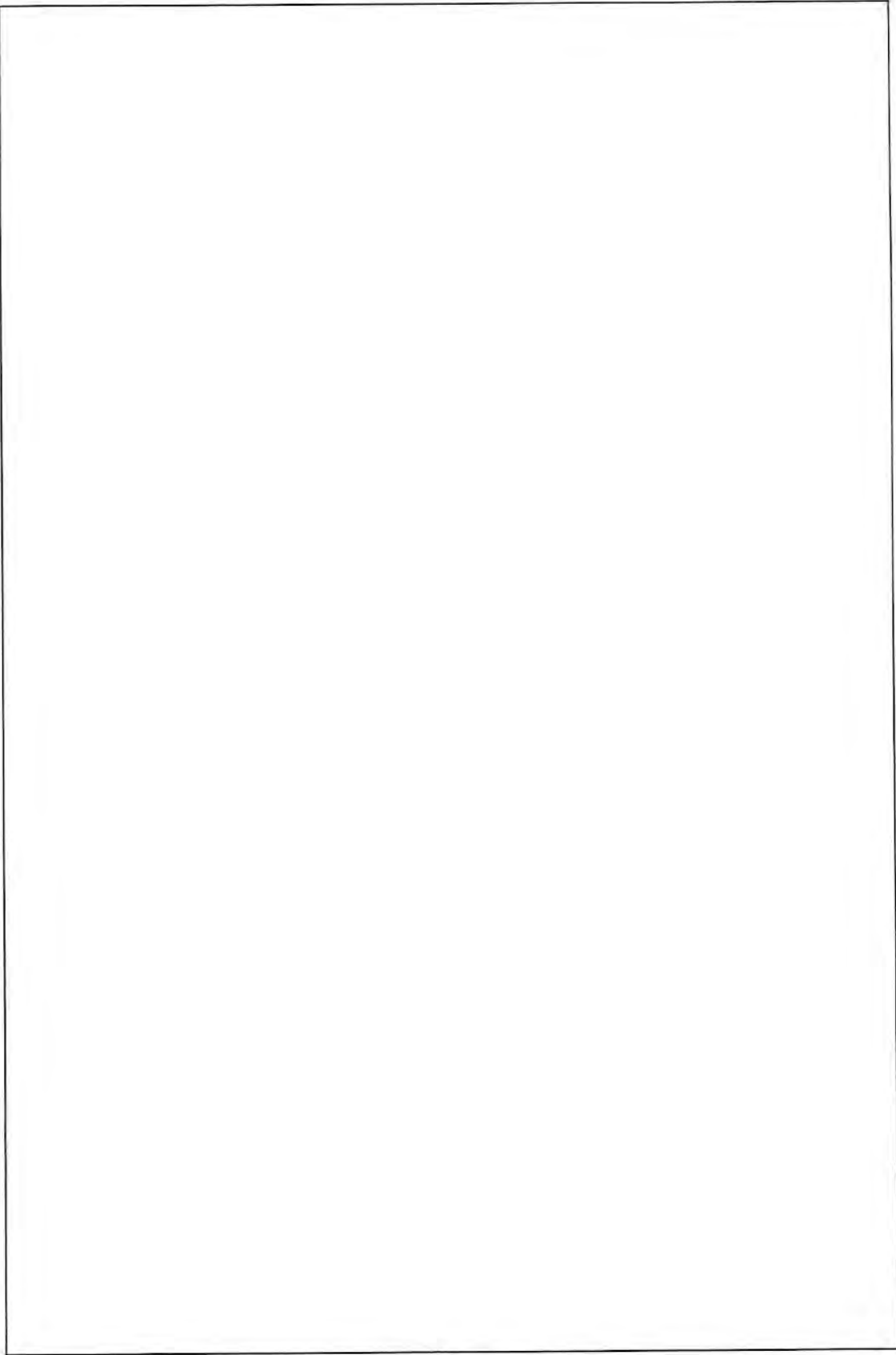


“A frontier soldier’s life is never dull,” Private Treviño chimed in. “If the Apaches aren’t attacking us, mission Indians are running away or walls are falling down. Maybe Father Mariano would like some advice about training the Indians to build walls. See his scowl,” Treviño cast a glance at the *padre* who stood, arms folded in his robes, head shaking in disgust at the sight before him.

“I had better talk with the *padre* before he complains about you to Captain Urrutia,” the corporal teased Treviño. Turning to Domingo, Corporal Hernandez spoke in a normal tone of voice, “You’re in good hands, Domingo. Private Treviño will show you some of his things. I have business to attend to here.”

The corporal started off toward the *padre*, stopped and called back to Treviño, “Send the boy back to Señor Banul when you’ve finished showing him some of your gear.”





**P**riate Treviño waited while Father Mariano started the Indians working on the wall again. He paused to mop his brow with the kerchief he wore as a bandana under his hat. Domingo noticed that his dark skin glistened in the heat of the day.

“Private Treviño looks like some of the Indians,” Domingo observed. He’d heard his mother and father talk about the soldiers being of mixed blood. They’d used the word *mestizo*. Domingo wasn’t sure what that meant.

Before he knew what he was saying, Domingo blurted out, “Are you a *mestizo*?”

Private Treviño looked up in surprise. No one had ever asked him that question. He looked hard into Domingo’s innocent eyes wondering why the boy had asked it. Realizing that Domingo didn’t know the meaning of the word, he answered in a matter-of-fact way, “Yes. My mother was Indian. My father is a *criollo*, a Spaniard born on the Mexican frontier. He and my grandfather before him were soldiers. I was born in the Presidio del Río Grande.”

The corners of Private Treviño’s mouth turned up in the glimpse of a smile and his expression softened as he remembered, “When I was your age, no more than eight years ago, I never thought of becoming anything but a soldier. Come on, the work on the wall has started again. I’ll show you some of my gear in the barracks.”

It was only a short walk. The ground was drying from the heat of the sun but a few puddles could be found here and there. They were a temptation to Domingo. He would have splashed in one if he’d been alone. But he thought the private would think that was a childish thing to do and, at this moment, Domingo wanted to act like a man.

“Did the corporal tell you about the *cuera* we soldiers wear?” Private Treviño asked.

“Sí,” Domingo answered. “He told me that the *cuera* is like armor, protecting the soldiers from Indian arrows.”

“That’s right. We also use this *adarga*, a bull hide shield to ward off arrows. The soldiers on patrol sling it over their left shoulders where they can easily reach it when they need it.”

He carefully lifted a smooth, slender wooden shaft almost twice Domingo’s height. It had a double-edge iron blade at its head. Private Treviño said with feeling, “This is my lance. It’s my most important possession. I’ve named it Teresa.”

“Why do you call it that?” Domingo asked.

The soldier smiled. “Because it reminds me of a girl I knew in Saltillo. You see, I think of my lance as a friend. Besides,” he added with a chuckle, “the Teresa I knew had a sharp tongue.”

“This rawhide loop attached to the middle of the lance shaft fits around my wrist when I am using it,” Private Treviño continued. “The loop is also large enough to sling over my right shoulder when I am on patrol.”

The soldier gently leaned the lance against the barracks wall in a way that reminded Domingo of his mother putting little Pedro to bed.

“My second favorite weapon is my *espada ancha*, my broad sword,” Private Treviño continued. I carry it on the left side of my saddle. When I am dismounted, I carry it in this leather scabbard which is attached to a bandolier I wear across my shoulder and chest.”

“I’d like to wear a bandolier like that,” Domingo thought as he traced the letters on it which the soldier told him spelled “San Antonio de Bexár,” the name of the *presidio*.



"Do you use guns too?" Domingo asked. He had heard his father talk about how the Apaches fight. He had said that they get their guns from the French, and that they don't stay in one place and fight. So, Domingo reasoned that lances and swords weren't of much use for fighting Apaches. He wondered why Private Treviño talked so much about his lance and sword.

Private Treviño raised his eyebrows with a slight tilt of his head in a look that told Domingo the soldier didn't think much of his guns.

"Each soldier," he said, "is supposed to have a musket, but mine doesn't work. Supplies aren't very good these days. It will be a few months yet before the paymaster travels to San Luis Potosí. He makes the trip twice a year, to receive the *presidio* payroll and get us needed supplies. Now, only my pistol works. I wish I could get a French gun from the Tejas Indians in east Texas. They work better than these with Spanish-style locks."

"How does the pistol work?" Domingo asked.

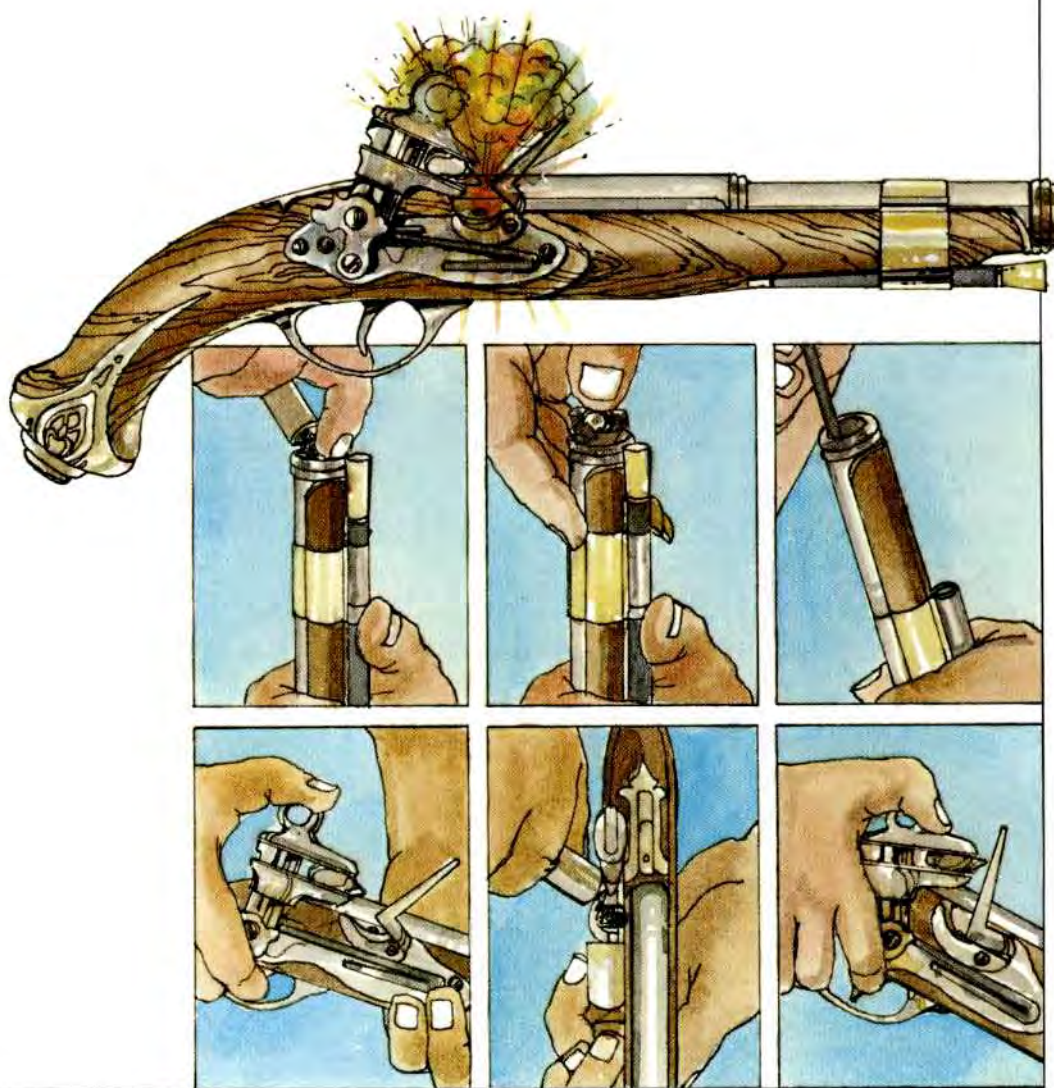
"I can't fire it for you," Private Treviño said. A gun shot will make everyone think the Apaches are attacking. Besides, we only get three pounds of gunpowder each year. If we use more, the cost is taken out of our pay. But I'll tell you how it works. In the cartridge box I am wearing around my waist, I carry nineteen paper cartridges. The bullet is molded lead. It's wrapped with some gunpowder in a piece of paper, cut in the shape of a triangle. I even have to pay for each piece of paper I use too."

"This is how I load the pistol," said Private Treviño. "To prime it, I place the hammer at half-cock and open the frizzen. I bite off the end of this cartridge and sprinkle some powder into the pan," he continued. "I close the frizzen and put the rest of the powder with the molded lead bullet down the barrel. Then I use a ramrod to tap the bullet and powder down tight into the barrel of the pistol. Then the pistol is ready to fire."

"How do you fire it?" Domingo asked.

Private Treviño continued his description of how the pistol worked. “The hammer is pulled back to full-cock. As you pull the trigger, the flint in the hammer strikes the frizzen, sending a spark into the powder in the pan. This ignites the gunpowder which makes a small explosion to shoot the bullet.”

Domingo noticed that Private Treviño handled the gun cautiously but without the same care which he gave his lance.





"It gets very expensive to use the pistol," Private Treviño reminded Domingo. "And they break a lot. This pistol is one of the few that's still working. That's why I rely on my sword and lance." As he said this, the soldier pointed to a corner of the room where his riding gear was laid over a bench. "Look at the right stirrup on my saddle."

Domingo inspected the wooden stirrup. He noticed a small cup-shaped object attached to it.

"When I'm riding, I rest the shaft of my lance in that cup. See how perfectly it fits," the private said as he carefully placed the end of the lance shaft in the stirrup cup.

"What are these?" Domingo asked, gingerly touching two long pieces of cowhide which were attached to the saddle horn.

"Those are *armas*.\* They protect my legs from the rough brush I must often ride through. The wooden peg on the wall holds the *anquera*, the seven panels of leather which I place on my horse's hindquarters to protect him from thorns and arrows.

"This bridle," Private Treviño continued, "is made of split rawhide. The iron bit goes into the horse's mouth. I guide his head by holding the reins in my left hand, leaving my right hand free to use my weapons."

Domingo was only half-listening. He had found a lariat.

"I see you like *la reata*, Domingo. If you can rope Longhorn calves and wild mustangs, perhaps you would like ranching."

"Do soldiers ranch too?" Domingo was amazed.

"We don't get paid very much money, Domingo," Private Treviño explained to his eager listener. For instance, privates are paid 290 *pesos* a year. That averages to about 1/4 *peso* each day for spending money. The rest is put in my account to

\**armas* - These leather flaps were the forerunner of cowboy chaps.

purchase the things I need. I must buy my horses, uniform, weapons and all my other equipment. Every month, I'm also paid 2-1/2 bushels of corn, 1/2 a cow, 1/2 a hog and an amount of sugar worth 1/4 *peso*. This may seem like a lot to you, but it doesn't add up to much when you have a family. Even though the paymaster keeps 20 *pesos* from my pay for each of the first five years of my enlistment to put into a retirement fund, my retirement pay will not buy everything my family will need. Prices are high. A bushel of corn is 5 *pesos*. A hundred weight of flour is 25 *pesos*. Cattle are 16 *pesos* a head. A skirt for my wife costs 3 *pesos*. Copper kettles are 10 *reales*\* per pound, not to mention shoes, cloth, saddles and other equipment. Blankets are sometimes as high as 12 *pesos* each if you want good quality. The one hundred *pesos* in my retirement fund will not go far. So, you see Domingo, the best thing I get as a soldier is not money but permission to farm ten acres of land. I can raise some wild cattle there and keep a garden. To do this, soldiers have to know about ranching and farming as well as how to fight Indians and guard the mission."

\**reales* - Eight *reales* made a Spanish *peso*.

"I don't think I could learn to do all those things," Domingo was losing some of his enthusiasm.

"Yes you could – if you had to," Private Treviño assured him. "You learn to be a soldier from the older soldiers. Four years ago I made the sign of the cross on the paper that said I was joining the *soldados de cuera*. Since then I've learned to do many things I didn't know how to do when I enlisted. In the six more years remaining of this enlistment, I hope to learn to do much more. Perhaps, I'll be promoted. I'll probably re-enlist because, as a soldier, I can improve my station in life. And I don't have to worry if I need a doctor either. I can always use the military hospital in Coahuila. I have life insurance to help my family if something happens to me. If I'm wounded in the king's service, I can wear my uniform even after I retire."

All the benefits the private was talking about didn't mean much to Domingo. He wanted to explore the barracks to see more interesting things. Looking around the room, Domingo found a small rawhide bundle that was sitting on a shelf. "What's this?" he asked.

"You have found my *eslabón*, my strike-a-light. Open it. What do you see?"

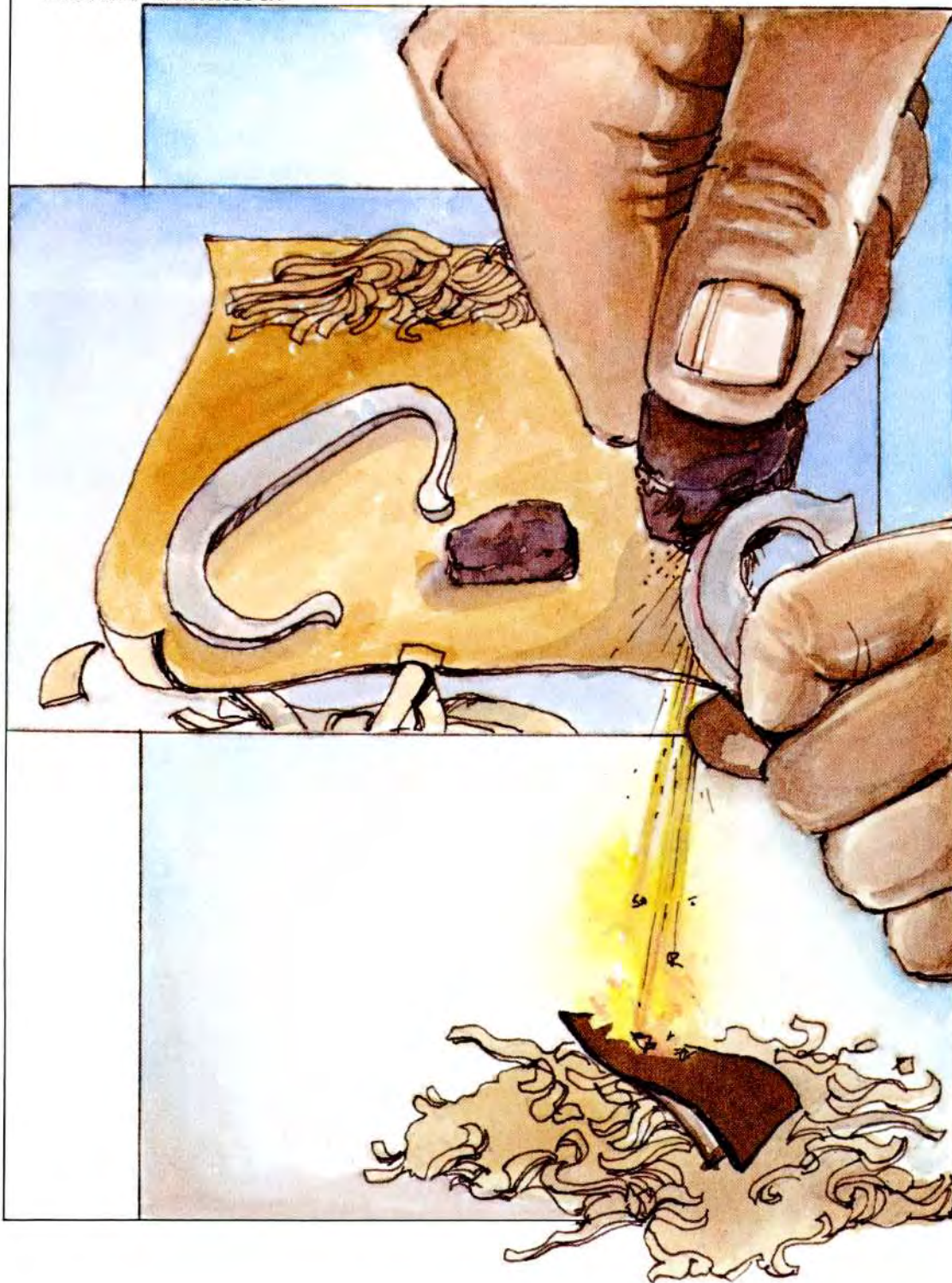
Carefully, as if expecting something to pop out at him, Domingo unwrapped the bundle. Inside he found a small horseshoe shaped object, a piece of flint and some strips of shredded cloth.

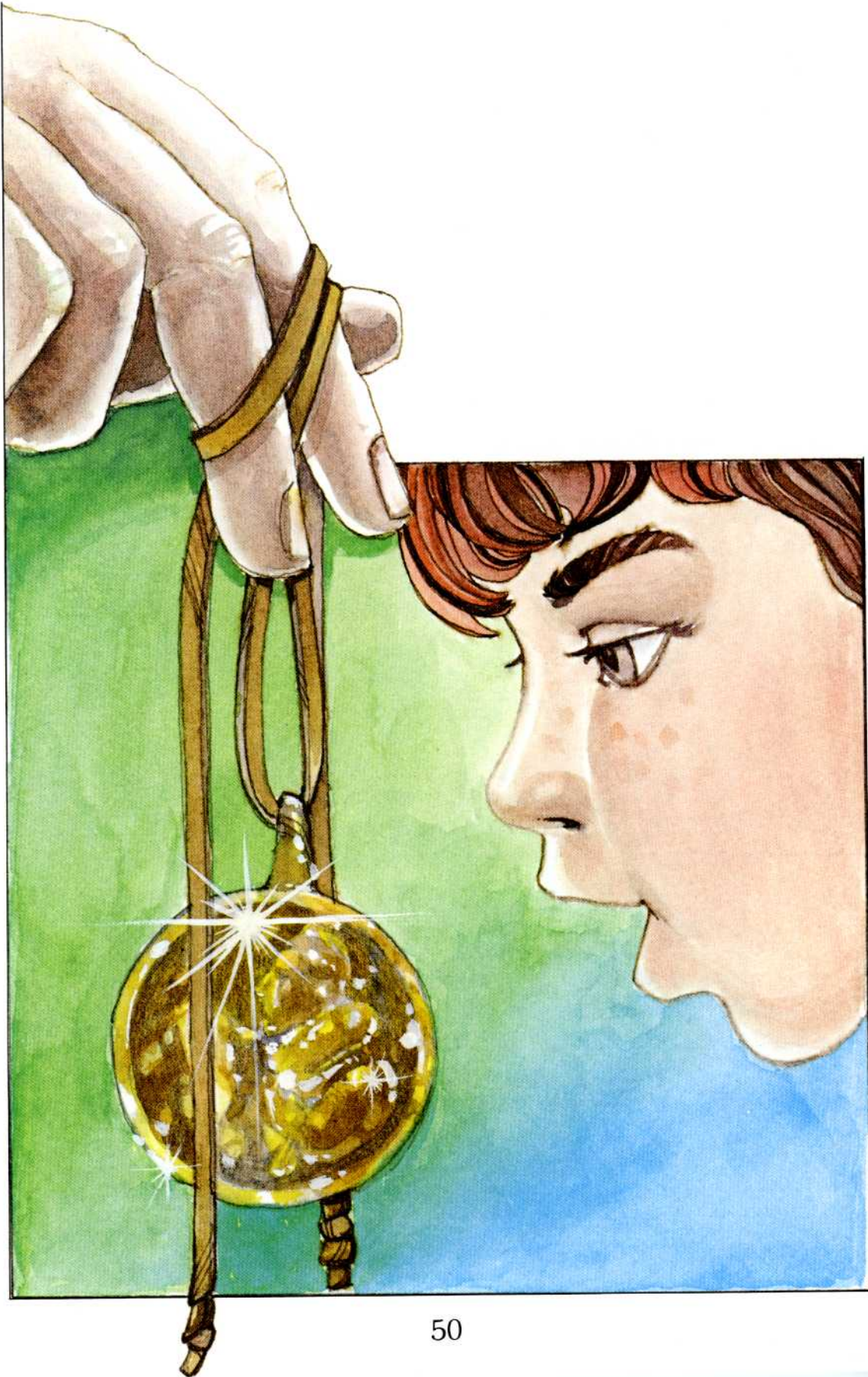
"That," the private continued, "is something I'm sure you've seen. Your father must use a strike-a-light to make fires for your mother's cooking pot. You must have seen him make a small pile of the shredded cloth or tinder and holding the horseshoe shaped object in his right hand, strike the flint he holds in his left hand over the cloth pile. Then, what does he do?"

"*Papá*," he answered, "blows on the sparks that enter the pile of cloth. He blows for a very long time until the sparks catch

fire. Once he has a small fire going in the cloth pile, he adds kindling wood. It takes him a long time to build a fire big enough for cooking.”

“Well, it takes me a long time to start a fire too,” Private Treviño admitted.





“**N**ow I must go back to work and you must return to the smithy. I think the captain’s horse must be shod by now. Before you go, I have a favor to ask. Do you know where Corporal Lopez’ adobe house stands?”

“Sí, Private Treviño,” Domingo nodded. “I have played with his son, Tomás, near there.”

“My wife lives in the *jacal* west of the Lopez house. I’d like you to take something to her.”

Private Treviño rummaged in a box and pulled out a small round brass object suspended from a rawhide thong. “See the figure of St. Anthony on this side and St. Francis on the other?” the private asked as he turned the medal between his thumb and forefinger. “I promised my wife I’d send her a holy medal to wear. Tell her that this one was blessed by the bishop in Querétaro. Father Mariano brought it with him when he came to San Antonio de Valero.”

“¡Qué lindo! How pretty!” Domingo admired the bronze medallion as he ran his finger over the profiles of St. Anthony and St. Francis. He thought that surely Señora Treviño would feel protected when she wore the medal.

“When you give it to her,” Private Treviño added, “tell her that I will have a short leave in a few days. I just found out today. It won’t be long before I’ll be home.”

Domingo was pleased. Respectfully, he said, “I’ll be happy to tell Señora Treviño the good news and take her the medal.”

“Gracias, Domingo,” the soldier expressed his thanks and handed the medal to the boy. “I’ll see you again, perhaps?”

“Sí, Private Treviño. I’ll come see you the next time I’m at the mission.” And, Domingo thought that he would find a way to come back to the mission before long. He wanted to find out more about being a soldier.

“The corporal and Señor Banul must be waiting,” the private said. He waved to Domingo as he stepped outside the barracks door and headed in the direction of the Indians who were still working on the crumbled convent wall.

**T**he afternoon was half over. Domingo suddenly realized that he had a lot to do. He ran toward the smithy. How important he felt to be asked to deliver the message and a medal blessed by a bishop. Maybe he would be able to find Tomás Lopez and play for awhile. He liked Tomás even though he had been told not to play with the boy. “*Mamá* and *papá* surely would like Private Treviño because he’s such a nice person.” Domingo thought. “And, if his neighbors are as nice as he is, why wouldn’t they like them too? I wonder if *papá* doesn’t like them because he’s a ‘Don’ now and they aren’t?”

“Well, Domingo,” Corporal Hernandez called to him as he approached the smithy. “Captain Urrutia’s horse is ready to return to the *presidio* and I believe Señor Banul has repaired your father’s adze. Did you have a good time visiting with Private Treviño?”

“Sí, Corporal Hernandez,” Domingo smiled his thanks. “The private told me about what soldiers do and he showed me his lance. I want to learn more about being a soldier.”

“*Bueno*. Good.” The corporal was pleased. “Come see me at the *presidio*. There are men there who have been soldiers for many years. They’ll tell you lots of tales.”

“*Gracias*, Corporal Hernandez.” Domingo suddenly felt that life in the Villa de San Fernando might not be so bad after all.

Domingo moved quickly to one side as the end of a huge log, carried by two Indians, brushed his arm. Other Indians were carrying timber to the smithy. Señor Juan Banul was trimming and smoothing the wood with an adze that looked like his father’s but had a much longer handle.

“I told you I’m a carpenter as well as a blacksmith, Domingo. Now you can see for yourself. I’m preparing this oak for the houses we’re building at the mission.” He propped the long handle of his adze against a pile of timber. He walked to a place under a tree where he found the Leal adze among some other



pieces of work finished that day. "Here's your father's adze, Domingo. It now has a strong, well shaped handle. Be careful how you use it. The handle will last if it's used carefully."

Domingo admired the new handle. "Señor Juan Banul is a good carpenter," he thought.

"Mark our account for the cost of repairing the adze," Domingo said to the blacksmith, recalling his brother's words.

Señor Banul chuckled, "That's what Corporal Hernandez said too when he came for the captain's horse. Tell your father that when the crops come in, we'll settle the account."

"Gracias," Domingo replied. "I'll tell him." Domingo was feeling very important now that he had so many messages to deliver. He hoped that he wouldn't forget them. "I wish I could write," he thought, "then I wouldn't have to memorize things."

"Adiós, Domingo," he heard Señor Banul say as he continued trimming the wood.

"Adiós, Señor Banul," Domingo answered. With his father's adze in one hand and Señor Trevino's medal in the other, Domingo started off toward the mission gates.

Outside the protective wall of the mission grounds, Domingo cast a wary look around him for Apaches. The stories the soldiers had told him made him very cautious. A familiar voice reassured him.

"I don't see any Apaches, Domingo. Your route is clear." It was Private Treviño who was now on sentry duty, walking along the roof of the buildings behind the mission wall.

Domingo looked up in time to see the soldier wave. He waved back and headed for the river.

The log he'd used to cross the river earlier that day was still in place. Domingo crossed it more carefully this time. He didn't want to lose the medal which he clutched in his right hand. He

also knew his father wouldn't like the wooden adze handle to get soaked by a dunking in the Río San Antonio. Crossing the river without difficulty, Domingo began to run again. The sun was moving westward and he wanted to play with Tomás Lopez before the Angelus bell reminded him to go home.

Taking the narrow path to Private Treviño's house in long strides, Domingo soon came to the Lopez property. As he passed the corporal's *adobe* house, he wondered where Tomás would be.

The Lopez garden looked green and alive from the rains. "They'll have a good crop," Domingo thought the words his father used whenever he saw healthy green vegetable growth.

Señora Treviño was rocking a small bundle in her arms in front of the *jacal*. The vertical sticks which formed the one room dwelling looked damp. The corn stalks that had been used as a filler between the sticks reminded Domingo of the one he had used to try to scratch the letters of his name on the ground in the pasture. He looked up at the thatched roof, made from tall grass that grows along the river. "It's much nicer to live in the stone house than in the *jacal*," he said to himself. "Now we don't have to worry about animals digging under the wall," he thought as he noted the rocks piled around the base of the Treviño *jacal*.

Shyly, Domingo approached Señora Treviño. "*Buenas tardes, Señora Treviño. Me llamo Domingo Leal.*"

"*Buenas tardes, Domingo Leal.*"

"Private Treviño asked me to bring this to you," Domingo continued. He held out his right hand, carefully opening the fist he had clenched around the bronze medal. He exposed the now sweaty profile of St. Anthony to the drying air.

"Ah!" the *señora* exclaimed. A gentle and very pleased expression brightened her young face, reminding Domingo of María, his sister, when she received a present.

Señora Treviño lifted the rawhide thong from Domingo's palm and held the medal in a bright ray of light where she could examine the figures of the saints.

"It was blessed by the bishop in Querétero," Domingo continued. "Private Treviño says that it was brought here by Father Mariano."

"See what your *papá* has sent us, José," Señora Treviño whispered to the bundle in her arms. She dangled the medal above what Domingo now saw was a small baby. She turned to Domingo, "Little Joseph was born on March 19, St. Joseph's Day. He is too young to understand about holy medals but I talk to him about the things his *papá* does because he doesn't see his *papá* very often. Someday he will understand."

"I was born on St. Dominick's Day." Domingo knew that most people were named for a saint, especially if they were born on that saint's day.

"Thank you for bringing the medal." Dolores Treviño smiled at Domingo. "Was there any other message?"

Domingo had almost forgotten about the private's leave. "Oh, yes, *señora*," he answered, his face turning red with embarrassment. "Private Treviño said to tell you that he will be home on leave in a few days."

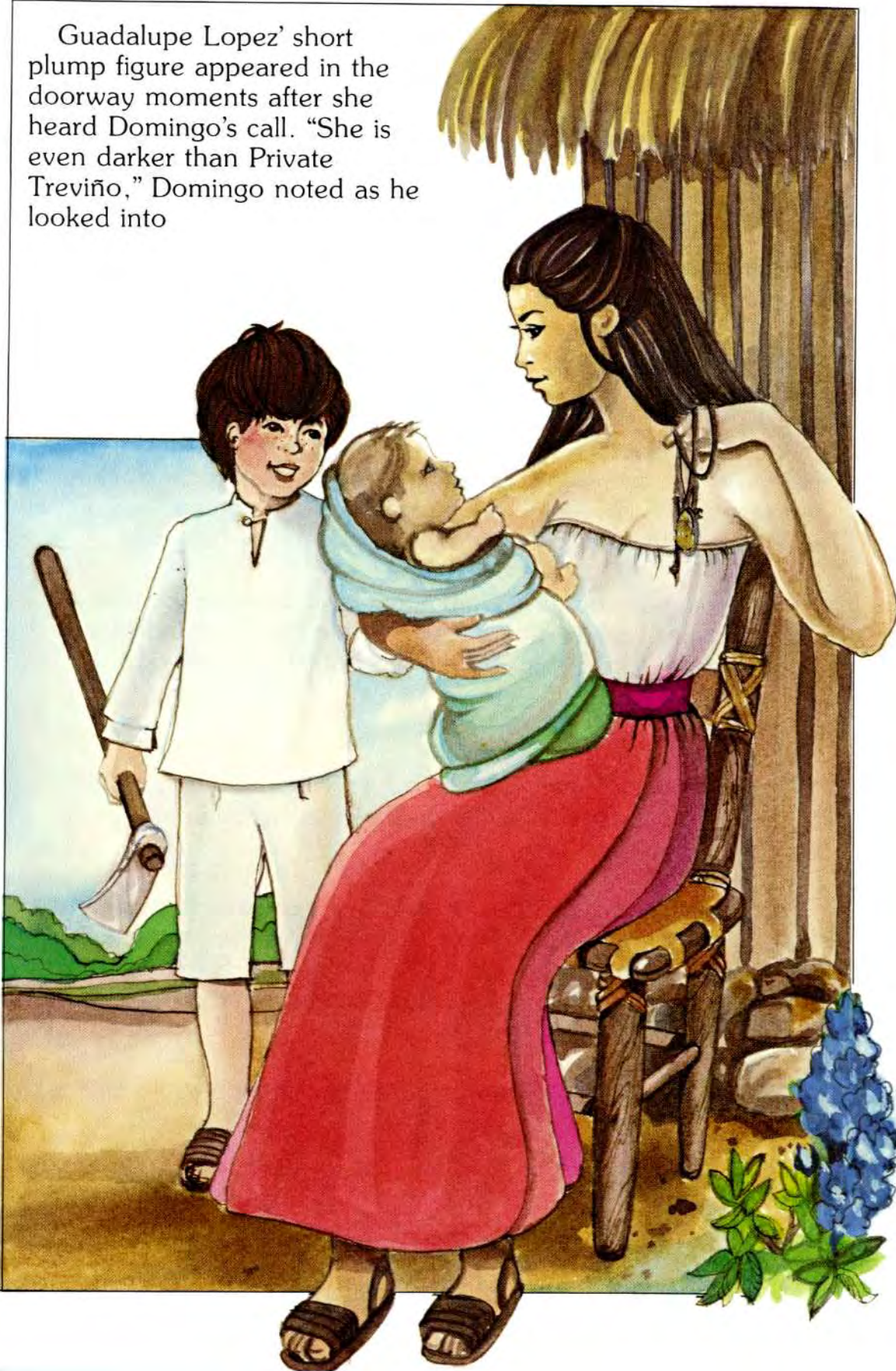
"¡Qué buenas noticias! What good news!"

"Adiós, *señora*."

"Adiós, Domingo," the private's wife called to him as he turned toward the Lopez home to find Tomás.

Passing the Lopez garden again, no one was in sight, not Tomás, his brothers and sister or Señora Lopez. He stopped at the door of the house and called Tomás.

Guadalupe Lopez' short plump figure appeared in the doorway moments after she heard Domingo's call. "She is even darker than Private Treviño," Domingo noted as he looked into



Señora Lopez' kindly black eyes. Her bronze skin against her long dark hair showed her Indian origins.

"It's good to see you again, Mingo," Lupe\* Lopez remarked. "You must be looking for Tomás." she said.

To be polite, Domingo began talking about the weather – something his father always did when starting a conversation with someone whom he hadn't seen in a long time. "How do you like the rain we've had?" he asked, using the same words his father had used the other day when a neighbor came to the Leal house.

Señora Lopez looked surprised at the question. Then realizing that Domingo was trying to converse as an adult, she smiled and responded cordially, "It's good. Look how green the garden is. The weather we've had lately reminds me of home."

"Where is your home?" Domingo asked. He thought that Señora Lopez had lived near the Villa de San Fernando for many years – even before he and his family had arrived.

"Do you know Tlaxcala?" she asked.

"I haven't been there, *señora*, but I remember hearing the name when we were traveling on the road to Quautitlán," Domingo answered.

"It's near Mexico City," Señora Lopez went on. "The weather there is not as hot and dry as it is here. In all the time I've lived here, I still haven't gotten used to this climate." She thought a minute and added, "For you it must not be as hot here as it was in the Canary Islands."

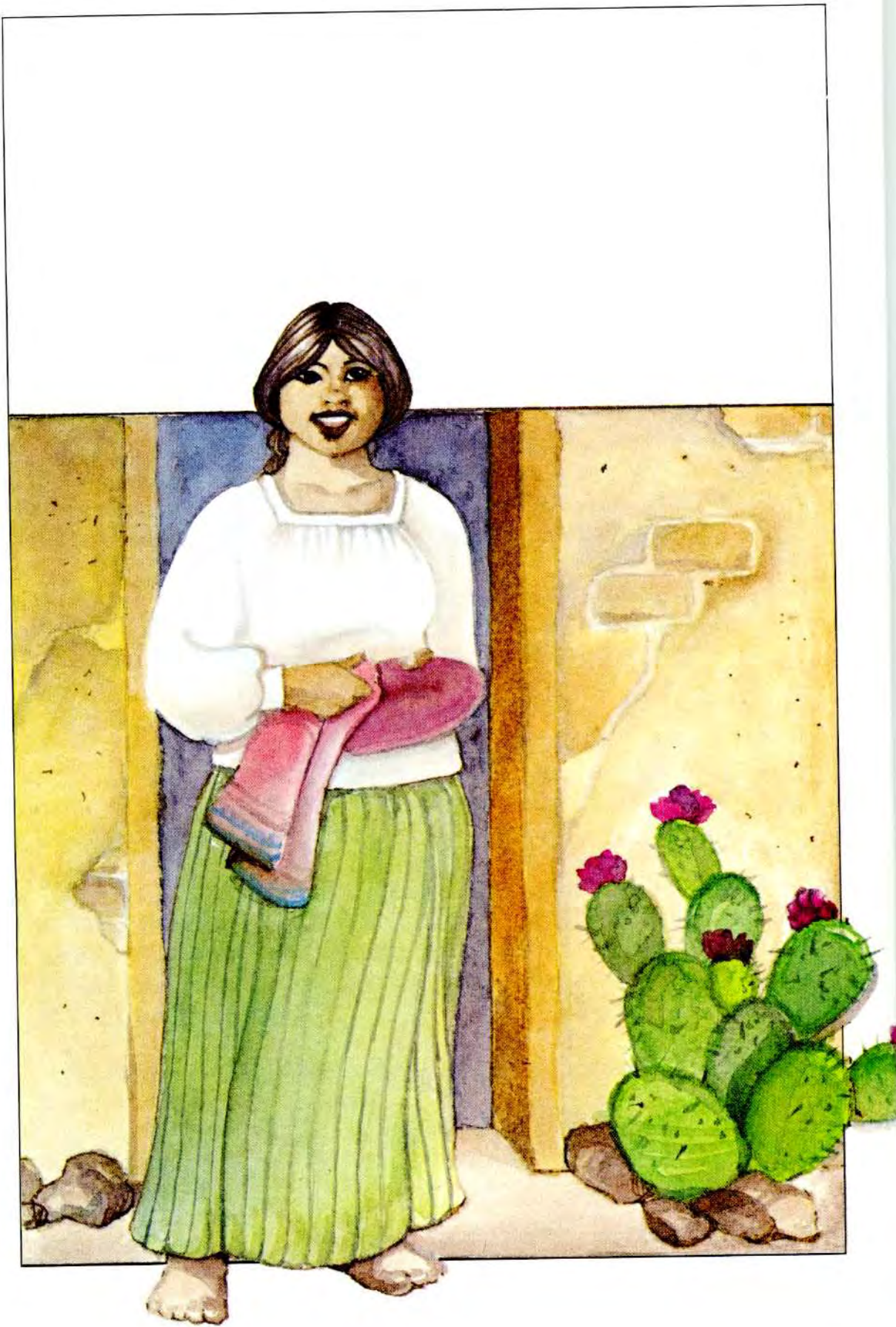
"Sí, *señora*." Domingo had run out of things to say about the weather. "Where is Tomás?"

\*Lupe - nickname for Guadalupe

Señora Lopez nodded her head as if to say, I knew that is who you wanted to see. "He's at the river, by the dam, fishing."

"*Gracias, señora,*" Domingo said. He turned and ran a few steps then stopped, thinking that he had been rude to Tomás' mother. When he turned back, he saw her understanding look. This gave him the courage to apologize, "*Lo siento.* I'm sorry, *señora.* I want to see Tomás before it's time to go home. The sun is getting lower in the sky."

"*Está bien.* It's all right, Mingo. Go find him. Tomás will be happy to see you again."



**I**n less than five minutes, Domingo was at the river bank close to the dam where Señora Lopez said Tomás was fishing. “Tomás,” he called. “¡Tomás Lopez!”

A small dark face, topped with tousled black hair peered around the low growing broad-leaf ferns which grew along the bank.

“¿Mingo?” Tomás’ voice rose in pitch with surprise.

“Sí, *amigo*,” Domingo answered. “Your *mamá* said I would find you here. Have you caught any fish?”

“Some. See!” Tomás lifted a string of perch he had spent the afternoon catching to help feed his mother, two brothers and his sister.

“Can I fish too?” Domingo asked.

Tired of fishing, Tomás ignored Domingo’s question and pointed to the small island just west of the dam. “Let’s go over there,” he suggested.

Domingo was pleased with Tomás’ idea. He had wondered about that island and, besides, this would give them a chance to swim. Domingo felt hot and sweaty.

Quickly, the boys shed their clothing and dived into the cool water of the Río San Antonio. A short swim brought them to the green island. Pecan, cottonwood and willow trees were growing among the ferns which brushed their bodies as they scrambled ashore. A frog hopped before them, starting the boys on a merry chase. Unable to catch him, they tumbled, laughing, into a sunny spot where they stretched out to enjoy the feel of the late afternoon sun on their wet bodies.

The frog chase had brought Domingo and Tomás much closer to the south bank of the river – the side furthest from the



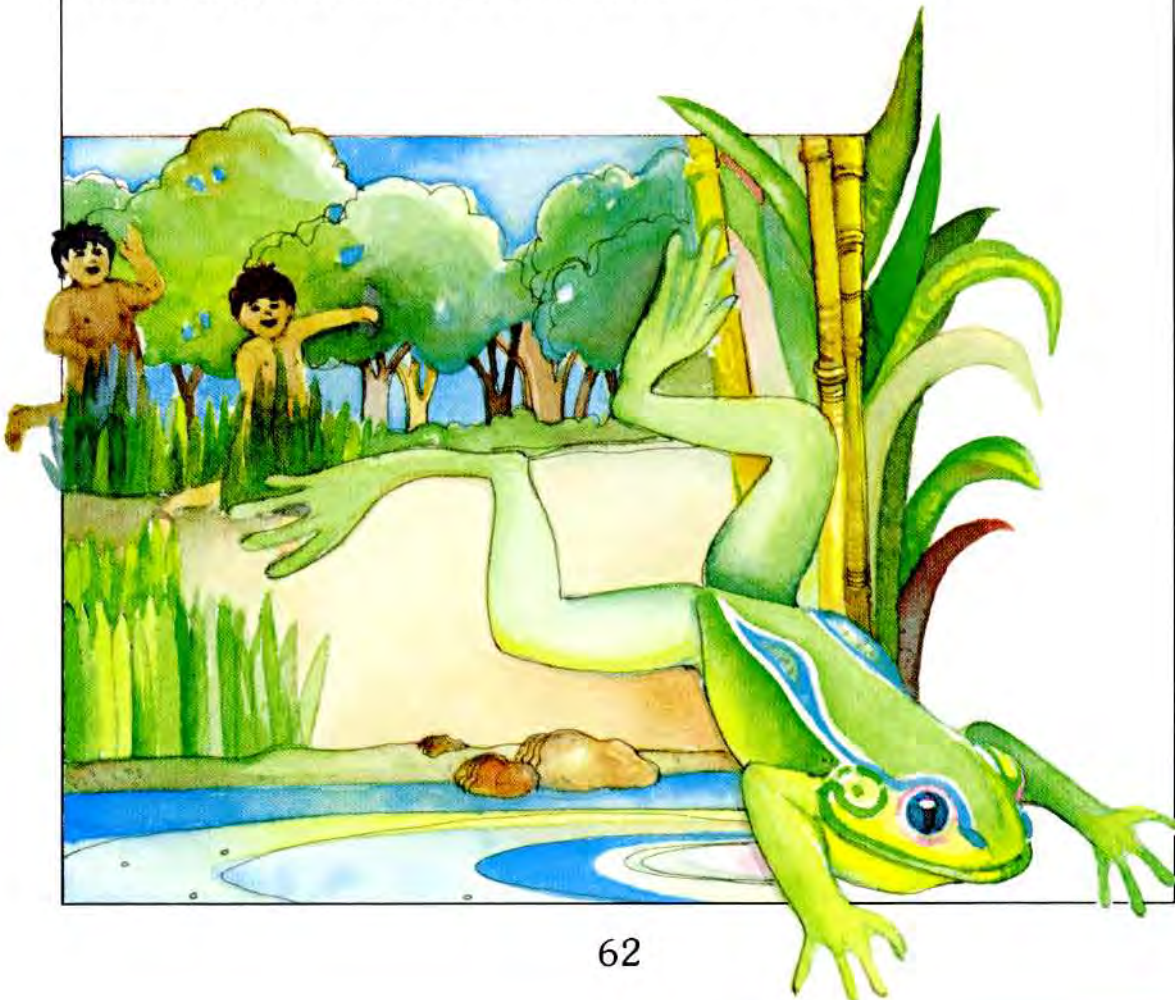
settlement – than they had realized. Domingo felt relaxed and almost sleepy laying in the late afternoon sun and sheltered by the greenest cottonwood he had ever looked up into. His eyes traced the lines of the branches overhead. He studied the many shades of green leaves as they flickered in the sunlight. The fear of Apache raids Domingo had felt earlier in the day had been forgotten. Then, suddenly, a horse's snort brought it back.

“What was that?” he whispered to Tomás.

“No sé. A horse?” Tomás was alarmed too.

Quickly but quietly moving out of the sunny spot, the boys dashed for a dense growth of fern. Hiding behind it, they scanned the river bank.

In clear view, to their left, Tomás spotted a horse drinking the river water. He nudged Domingo. “Look,” he whispered. “See that blanket over the saddle. That's an Indian's horse.”



The hair on the back of Domingo's neck bristled as the meaning of Tomás' words became clear. At the same moment, another horse appeared, led by a warrior.

"Be still!" Tomás whispered firmly, as Domingo gasped.

Domingo had not seen an Indian warrior this close before. He was frightened but he had to keep himself from making any sound that might tell the Indians that he and Tomás were hiding in the island's foliage. If he got out of this safely, he thought, he would want to tell his parents. He made the sign of the cross and began pretending he was a soldier scout. He studied the Indian from head to foot.

The Indian's long black hair was tied with a ribbon in a braid behind his back. Red spots were painted on each bronze cheek. A red stripe ran across his chin and above each eye. His chest was bare except for the strap which held a bow and arrow quiver to his back. A silver band around his upper arm caught a ray of sunlight now and then, like a mirror. A loincloth hung to his knees from the string around his waist. Buckskin leggings ran from his thighs to the low moccasins on his feet. The other Indian returned and joined the first. He looked the same with one difference – he carried a musket.

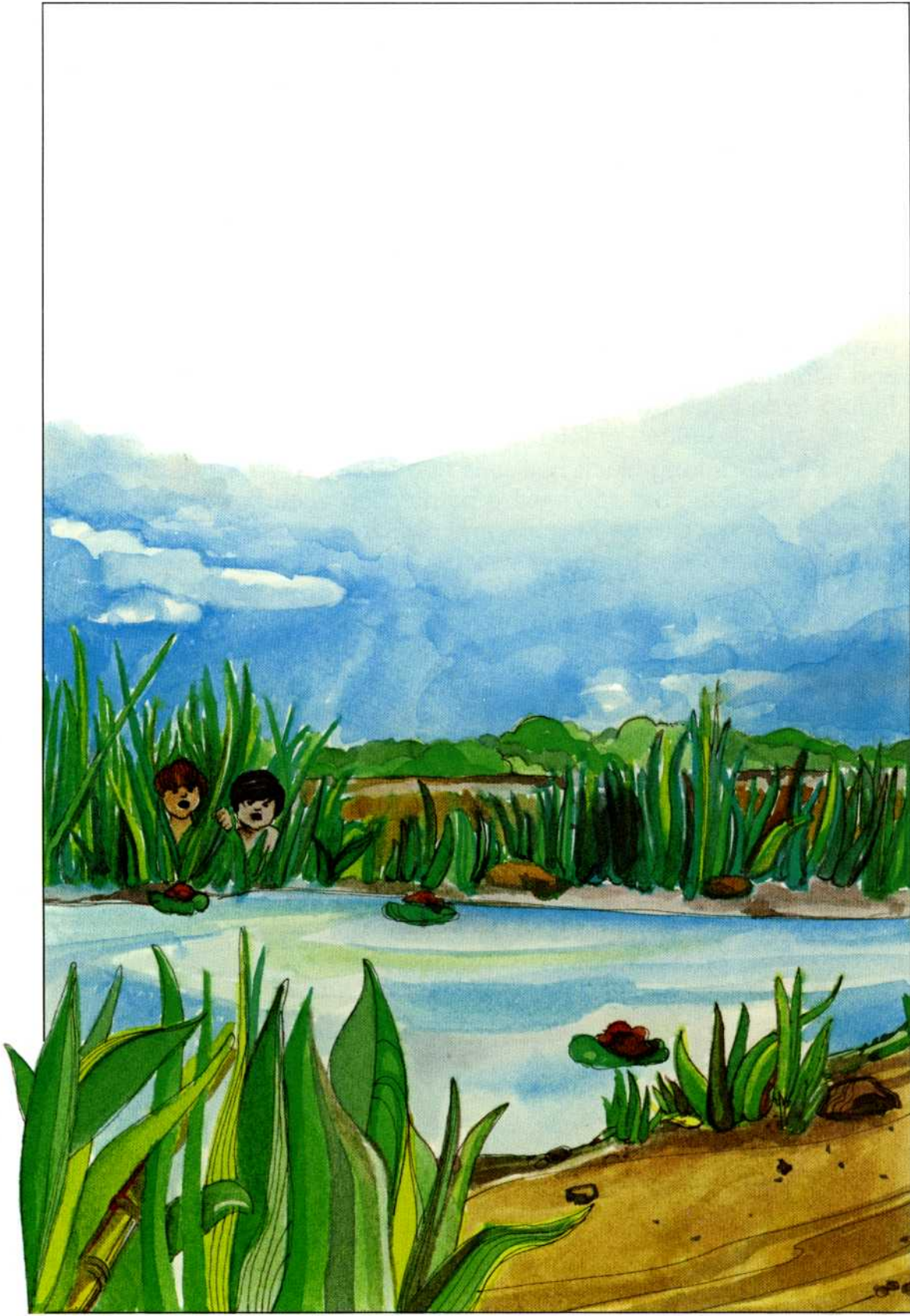
"That musket looks strange," Domingo whispered to Tomás.

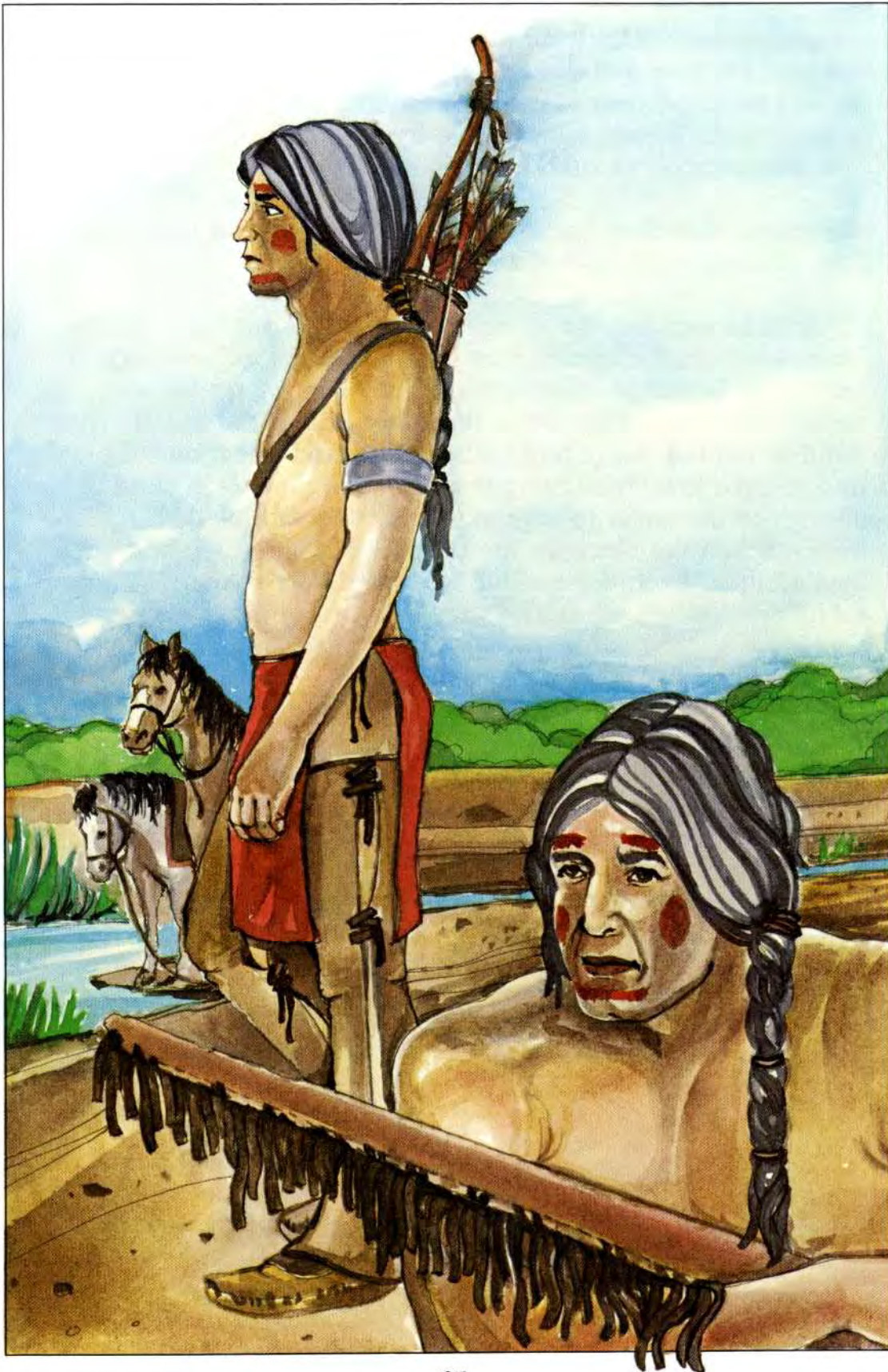
"My *papá* says that Indians carry their muskets in buckskin covers. That must be what the Indian has on his musket," Tomás reasoned.

Although only five minutes had passed since the boys had spotted the Indians, it seemed like hours as they watched, crouched behind the ferns.

"Will they attack us?" Domingo asked.

"Not if we're quiet," Tomás reminded him.





Domingo's muscles were twitching from being in the same position. His fear and discomfort made him whimper. Tomás clasped his hand over Domingo's mouth. "Shh!" he commanded. "If they hear us, we may not get out of this alive." That was enough to keep Domingo quiet.

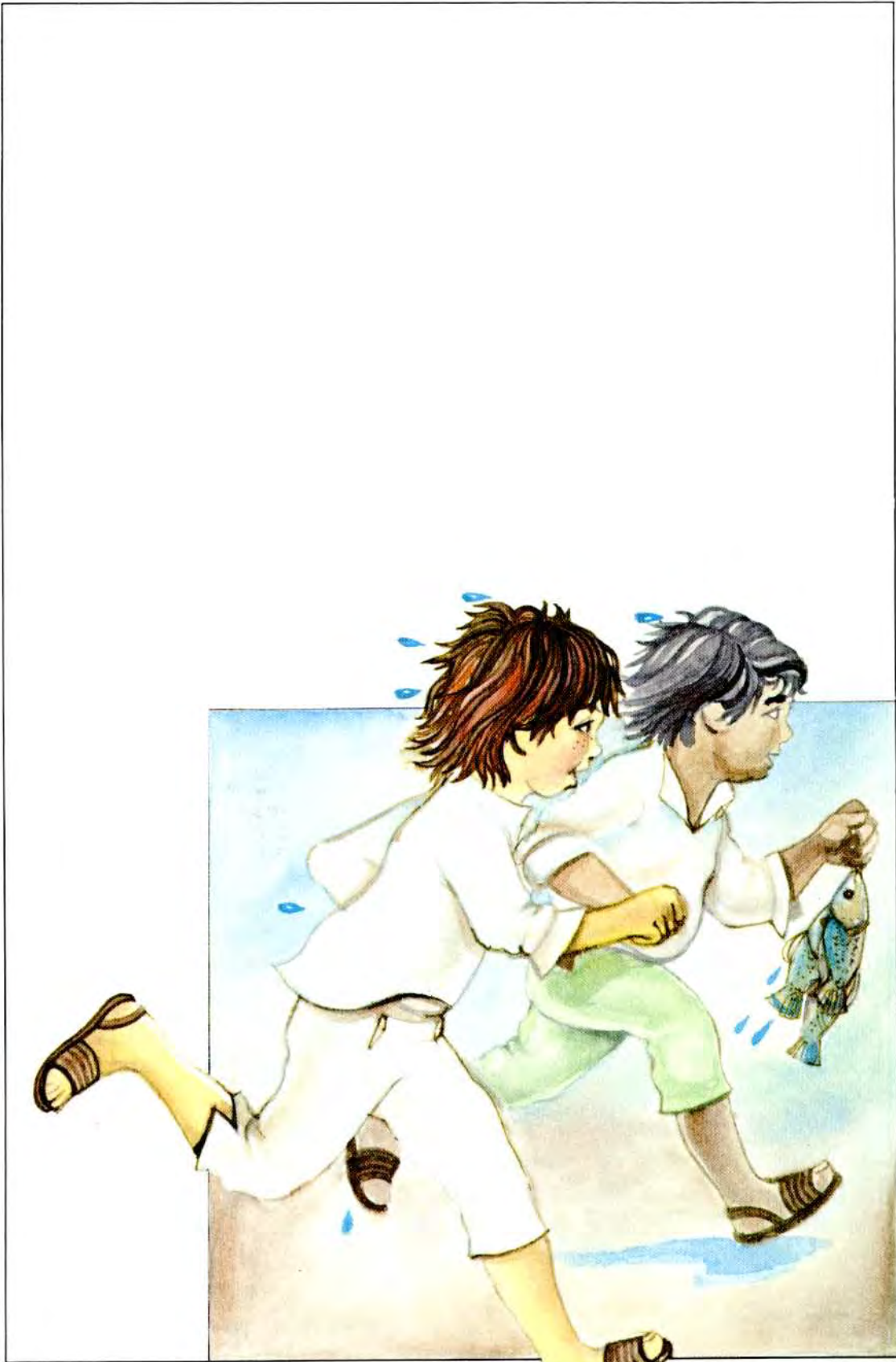
Satisfied that their horses had been watered, the Indians led their mounts away from the river bank.

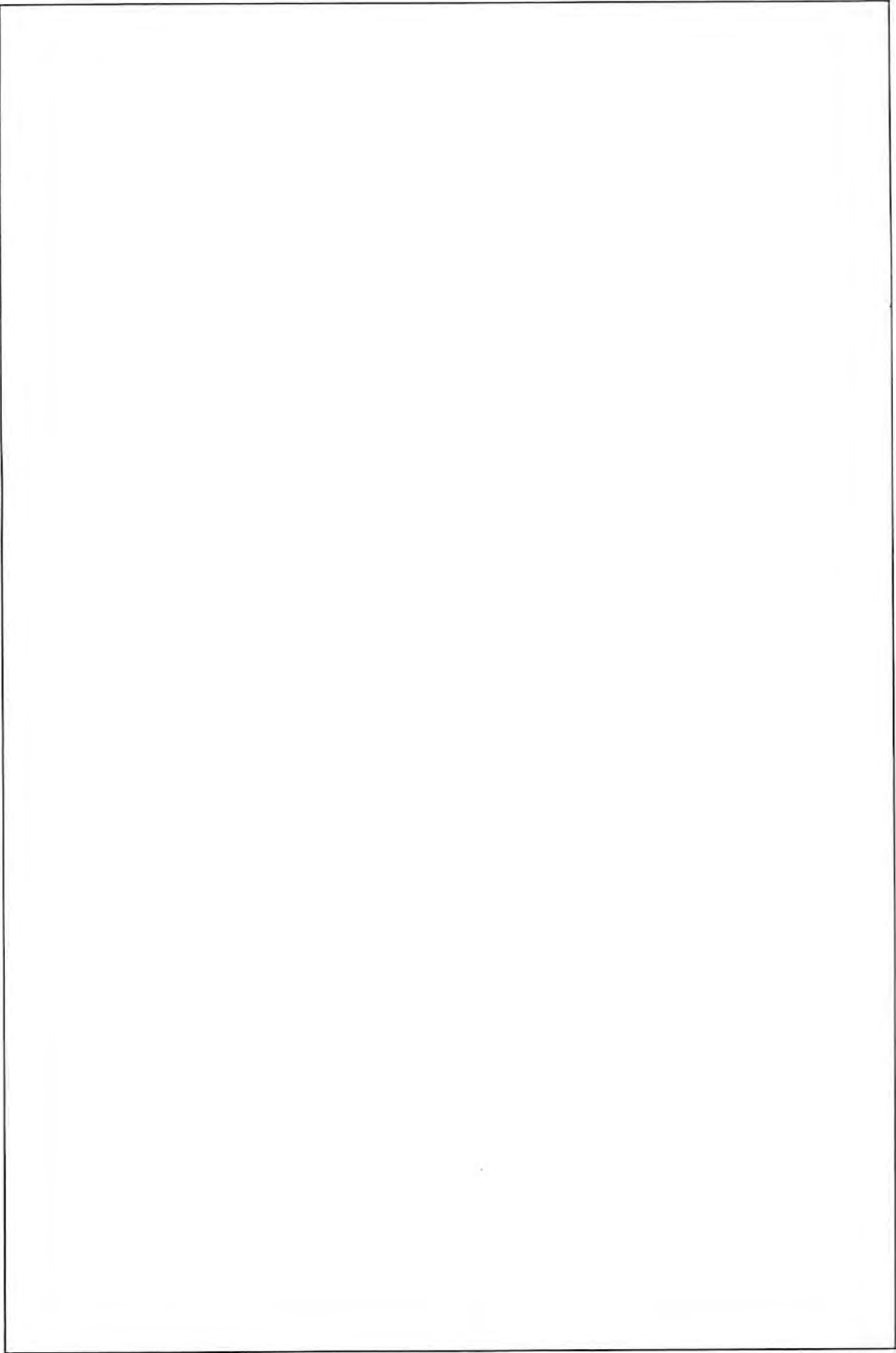
"We'd better warn the village," Tomás said out loud, pulling Domingo from the crouch that seemed almost to have locked his knees. Domingo stumbled but Tomás broke his fall and pulled him in the direction of the other side of the island. They ran through the damp fern beds and around trees, ducking under some low limbs along the way until they were close enough to the water to dive in. Swimming with all their might, they reached the place on the river bank where they had left their clothes. Each dressed hurriedly and, like soldiers, scrambled to the path where they could run more easily.

"Wait!" Tomás yelled. "My fish!"

Forgetting their haste to warn the village of an Indian attack, the two boys scrambled back to the river bank, grabbed the string of fish and started out for help again.

"You head west, toward the *villa* and I'll go warn *mamá* and Señora Treviño," Tomás said. "Give me my fish, Mingo. ¡*Vaya con Dios!*"





“I can be a hero,” Domingo thought, running faster now. He was almost at the Plaza de las Islas when a soldier on horseback approached.

Domingo pulled his running body to a halt, waving his arms to call the soldier to him.

“What is it, Domingo?” the soldier asked, pulling his horse up just in time to prevent a collision with the boy.

With sweat pouring down his face and body, Domingo panted, “Indians . . . Indians!”

“Catch your breath,” the soldier ordered. “Now, slowly tell me more.”

Domingo thought the soldier sounded like someone he knew. He looked up into dark eyes he had seen earlier that day. “Corporal Hernandez!” Domingo exclaimed, excited and relieved to find a friend.

“Tell me about the Indians,” the corporal reminded him.

Domingo began telling the corporal about the Indians he and Tomás had seen. He described them in detail – from the tops of their heads to the tips of their toes. The corporal was impressed.

“Come on, Domingo. Get up behind me. We’ll ride to the place where you saw them.” With that, the corporal pulled his foot from his stirrup so Domingo could place his foot in it. Grasping Domingo’s hand, he pulled the boy to a seat on the horse’s hindquarters, just behind the saddle. “Put your arms around me,” he commanded. They were off!

Domingo could feel the horse’s gallop quickening underneath him as he sat astride the animal, clutching the corporal’s middle. The *adobe* houses and *jacales* of soldiers’ families on the left seemed to rush by as they passed. The wind cooled Domingo’s skin which was hot from running and imagining Indian attacks.



A splash of water told Domingo that they had reached the river. The corporal's horse dashed across the ford, then jumped the *acequia* \* in perfect stride. They galloped along the far south bank of the river.

"There," Domingo yelled to the corporal, pointing to the place where he had spotted the Indians.

Corporal Hernandez pulled his horse to a jolting stop, dismounted and wrapped the reins around a tree branch.

"Stay where you are, Mingo," he ordered.

"He called me by my nickname!" Domingo thought with pleasure. Domingo watched the corporal move swiftly and quietly through the brush. Then he was gone. A chill went through the boy. He felt very alone.

In a few minutes, the corporal emerged from the brush that had seemed to swallow him. "All clear, Mingo," he said. "Maybe the sight of you was enough to scare the Indians off." He chuckled, patted Domingo's leg and mounted.

"I'll take you home," the corporal offered. "Hang on!"

The corporal headed their horse in the direction of the ford. They crossed the river again, galloping behind the government buildings which bordered the Plaza de las Islas and turned toward Domingo's house. The corporal drew up his horse at the far end of the Leal property. Grasping Domingo's hand, he helped the boy dismount, turned his horse back toward town and waved goodby.

\**acequia* - an irrigation ditch used by the missions

**D**omingo rushed toward the house. “*Mamá, papá,* I saw Indians,” he shouted as he burst through the front door.

“Hush, Domingo,” his mother scolded. “You’ll wake up Pedro.”

“But I saw Indians!” Domingo insisted.

Without hearing his words, his mother frowned at him, commanding, “Calm yourself. It’s time for dinner.” She added, “You’re late. If you’re not quiet, I’ll tell your father that you didn’t come when the Angelus bell rang.”

“But, *mamá* . . .” Domingo tried to speak but his mother’s frown and his own excitement made that difficult. His father, with Manuel and Miguel, arrived just in time.

“What’s all this yelling?” his father asked.

“It’s Domingo,” his mother answered. “He’s overexcited.”

Turning to Domingo, his father’s voice was quiet but stern, “What’s the matter?”

“I saw Indians. And Corporal Hernandez went to look for them. I rode on his horse. We couldn’t find them, though. I thought they might attack the *villa*.”

“You have a good imagination, Mingo,” Miguel commented.

“Wait,” his father said to Miguel. To Domingo, he said, more gently now, “What did they look like?”

Just as he had done for Corporal Hernandez, Domingo carefully described everything he could remember about the Indians – the paint on their faces, the clothing they wore, the weapons they carried, the way they moved and even the designs on the blankets thrown across their saddles.

“Mingo has seen Indians,” his father announced.

Feeling now that his father believed him, even if the others didn't, Domingo was content to sit at the table. He sat erect, feeling very important. “I sure wouldn't like one of those arrows sticking out of me!” Domingo commented. For his sister he added, “They make you bleed a lot.”

“*Mamá*,” María complained. “Make Mingo stop talking about those Indians.”

“Mingo,” his mother's tone of voice was more gentle now that his father had accepted his story. “No one wants to be reminded about Indian attacks. You mustn't frighten your sister.”

“*Lo siento*. I'm sorry, *mamá*,” Domingo apologized.

“What are Indians?” little Pedro asked, not understanding what the family was talking about.

“Hush. It is time to say grace,” his mother directed.

Father made the sign of the cross as did his mother and the children. He led the family in giving thanks for the food on their table. Then his mother served each one beans and freshly made *tortillas*, serving first her husband, then Manuel, Miguel, Domingo, María, Pedro and herself.

“The price of things is very high,” his mother changed the subject. “I've been keeping track of things we need to ask the *presidio* paymaster to get from San Luis Potosí when he makes his next trip. The children need new shoes, but even cheap ones are 8 *reales* these days. I also want to buy some cloth to make new clothes. The Indians weave good cloth on their looms at the missions, and it's cheaper than that at the store. We can't afford to purchase skirts at 3 *pesos* each and *pantalones* and shirts at who knows what price now.”

“If we have a good crop this year,” his father observed, “perhaps we’ll be able to get the things you want.”

“It’ll have to be better than last year’s crop,” his mother said with some anger in her voice. “It is not fair that María Rebaina de Betencourt has so much and we so little.”

“Now, *mamá!*” her husband scolded, “you’re angry because Madam Betencourt inherited 1000 pesos, jewelry, paintings and silverware and that she did not choose to marry my father, Don Juan Leal Goras. Even if she had, she wouldn’t have shared her wealth with us.”

“She wasn’t nice to grandfather,” Señora Leal complained. He would have made a good husband and what does she do?



Return the beautiful silver pendant he sent her by sending it back around the neck of an armadillo in a wicker basket. Then she married Don Martín the next day! That's not a nice thing to do – and she calls herself a lady!”

“That was a long time ago, *mamá*. Forget it,” advised her husband. “Grandfather is many years older than the *señora*. She had a right to choose the younger Don Martín if she wished. Enough of that!”

“Speaking of expenses,” father turned the dinner table conversation back to money matters, “how are our accounts?”



“We owe for a *comal*,\* a plow blade and, today, for the adze as well,” Domingo’s mother reported.

“Ah, the adze,” his father remembered. He turned to Domingo. “Did Señor Banul repair my adze, Domingo?”

“Sí, papá,” Domingo answered, the color suddenly draining from his cheeks.

His father looked hard at him, suspecting something was wrong. “Where is it?” he asked.

*\*comal - an earthenware griddle*



"I left it on the river bank when I ran from the Indians," Domingo was being as honest as he could be. He didn't mention Tomás because he knew his parents' feeling about soldiers' children.

"Oh, Mingo," María chimed in. "How could you forget."

"If you saw Indians, you'd forget too," Domingo snapped at his sister.

"Quiet – the two of you," their father demanded. "Tomorrow, at sunrise, I want you to go back to the spot where you left the adze and bring it home immediately, Domingo."

"*Sí papá*. I'm sorry I forgot it." Domingo was angry with himself for forgetting the adze he had been so careful with all day long. His big black eyes told his father how sorry he was.

I understand, Domingo," his father reassured him. "I'm glad nothing happened to you, but tomorrow you must find it and bring it home. I can't finish the woodwork on the house without my adze."

The candles on the table flickered, casting long shadows now that dusk had given way to the darkness of night. Domingo watched them, his eyes growing heavy. He was very tired.

"A piece of chocolate for each of you," he heard his father say. He savored the treat that his father had bought from a wagon that had come all the way from Saltillo. His father had been saving the chocolate for a time when the children were good. "*Papá* must think we've been good," Domingo hoped as he enjoyed the delicious taste.

"It's time for bed," their father said.

Obediently, the children, each in turn, kissed their father goodnight. María took Pedro's hand, leading him to the room

where all the children slept. Manuel, Miguel and Domingo followed. Their mother was close behind them. She would lead them in their evening prayers.

María in her chemise and the boys in their long shirts knelt, bowing their heads in prayer.

“Remember grandfather, your uncles, and our neighbors and friends in your prayers,” their mother reminded them.

Domingo mentioned all the people in his prayers that he had met that day, especially Corporal Hernandez.

“Get into bed, now,” Domingo heard his mother say and though he wanted to stay up, his eyelids were getting very heavy. He was tired out from the day’s adventures.

The pallet beneath his body felt good. Better still, was the touch of his mother’s hand as she caressed his forehead. It was good to be home.

Half asleep now, visions of the day flashed through his mind. There was Señor Juan Banul at his forge, and the old Indian pumping the bellows. Father Mariano, Private Treviño and his wife. He thought of Señora Lopez, then of Tomás and their escape from the Indians at the river bank. Especially, he remembered Corporal Hernandez and their exciting ride. “So many different kinds of people are here,” Domingo thought. “And there are so many more to meet, to talk with – lots of friends to make.”

Domingo turned on his pallet and buried his head in the pillow. A last thought flickered through his head as his body relaxed and a deep sleep overtook him: “This place by the Río San Antonio is now my home. I think I’m going to like growing up here.”







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