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Blue

By Ronald M. Cohen

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This food is not cooked, Soledad.
Mine has too much salt.
Silence. Speak to your mother with respect.
Soledad is Xavier's mother.
She is my mother.
Who remembers?
I have many sons. And many sons
should have many mothers. Is logic.
Also more enjoyable.
Now go to the whore Inez
who you will not remember.
I have sons here who are sons.
We must honour this harlot.
She's famous in the world.
One time in the capital,
she serviced a whole military prison.
On a Sunday.
Azul, the woman wishes you first.
Come to her, Azul.
I've lit her fires for you.
I do not understand.
This Azul will kiss the lips
of the Captain of the Police...
but he will not kiss Inez.
Has he not heard of my fame in the capital?
We do not use our knives
to kill our brothers.
Now shake the hand.
You will make peace with my son.
A gringo is your son?
This one is no gringo. No more.
He has become my son. As you are, Xavier.
You will shake the hand.
I have ordered it!
There's a sweet smell in the night,
Carlos, but you wear a sour face.
Go away.
You are a fool, Angel.
It is good for young boys to fight.
It turns them into men.
You've learned little of this life,
my brother.
I have learned to be a leader of men.

You're a leader of bandits...
teaching the one who is not your son
to be the same.
I am a leader of revolutionaries...
and if I choose Azul above the others...
it is because Azul is worth more
than my blood.
He's more like me than my blood...
and one day, will be a leader as I am.
For the cause, Carlos.
- We do not fight for the cause anymore.
- Take care, old man. You provoke.
I will provoke if I wish.
I'm older than you.
Do you think your men are not tired
of the way that we live?
They do not wear sour faces,
but behind their faces they doubt now.
They question and they wonder.
You say we must destroy the French
and the Spanish...
and the rich Yanquis who devour Mexico
and swallow her bones.
And yet we do not attack the French
and the Spanish.
And the rich Yanquis, if they are rich...
stay on their side of the river.
No, my lovely brother.
We only play games, children's games...
or the games of madmen.
What is the day today?
A Thursday. The third day of July.
So I believed.
We will do something new tomorrow.
In the north.
The land across the river
belonged to the people of Mexico...
before the gringos took it for their own.
Now, on the day these Yanquis call
their Day of Independence...
we go back for land.
And what our regular armies
could not keep for us, we take.
Azul...

and Xavier will lead.

I know what you think,

that this is the land of your people.

But they are not your people now.

You are one of us.

They celebrate the Day of Independence

as I had thought.

- Look at your boy.

- Look at him.

- Mighty fine boy.

- Mighty pretty gal.

Save your energy for the wedding, Jess.

I reckon you and Doc will have to start

putting up a wedding soon, Abe.

If our crops are good, God willing,

maybe so.

But that's for the young folks to decide,

wouldn't you say, Doctor?

You and Manuel. If there are people...

It sure can tire a girl, dancing with Jess.

Yes, miss.

Do you want to dance out

the rest of your life with him?

Well, I admit he doesn't exactly

hang the moon for me.

I like him. If I have to, I'll settle for him.

Do you really have to settle for anyone?

Now look, miss...

I don't want to hold you here

like I held your mother.

I belong here, Pa. This is my home.

Come on, I wanna talk to you.

Charlie!

- Doc!

- Coming.

- Make way for the Doc.

- Let me get through.

- What happened?

- He fell out of that tree.

Let me take a look, Charlie.

My bag's home.

Here now, you take this thumb

and this thumb...

and press them hard together.

- Joanne, I'll come with you.
- Tarnation, Jess!
You fuss and fret too much over me.
I can look after myself.
It's nothing serious.
Let's get back to dancing.
Nobody upstairs.
No women, nothing.
Nothing nowhere. Rich Yanquis.
Come, Azul, there's nothing there!

GREASER:

Please.
No!
Come on, let's go get them!
- Let me get on!
- No, Doc, no more room!
I've got to get to my daughter!
My daughter...
Find Azul and Manuel.
We will wait by the river.
Come on.
- He said for you to come.
- Leave the gringo.
Come, Azul, with me.
Leave him.
Come!
That's Joanne's buggy. Let me off.
Come on, get them!
Come on, men, hurry up there!
Come on, boys, let's go!
Come on, let's get him! Over here!
Pa, don't do that.
If it hadn't been for him...
They'll kill him, Pa.
Fair skin, blue eyes.
Now, how did he come to be with them?
We wait.
There is no use for more waiting.
It is too dangerous.
You do not understand.
Four sons are missing.
Antonio, Manuel, Xavier.
- Azul?

- Yes, all.
If they're alive, we find them. We go back!
The gringos killed Antonio.
- And the others?
- Manuel was murdered.
By Azul, for attacking a gringo woman.
You are lying. You lie, Xavier.
We go back!
To kill him or to save him?
Which, my father?
We go back, but to Mexico.
We cross!
Pa had to work hard
putting you back together.
We both undressed you.
I've been a doctor's daughter all my life.
I've seen more than one grown man
in his natural state.
The spectacle holds no surprises for me.
Are you up to my asking
a few pertinent questions?
What's your name?
I asked for your name, boy.
Now look, son, I don't expect gratitude
for saving your life.
But I have a hunch you're strong enough
to do some talking...
so I'd like you to talk.
Where are you from?
We know you're not Mexican, boy.
Where do you belong?
I see. It's not that you can't talk,
it's just that you won't.
Pa, it's not the time.
All right.
I'm not gonna force you now.
But later you're gonna tell me
everything I want to know.
Here, you come along, miss. Come along.
Let's give him a while
to think things over a bit.
Should my tears forever flow
Should my zeal no languor know
All for sin could not atone

Thou must save, and thou alone
In my hand no price I bring
All I'm saying is the Governor
ought to be made aware of the matter.
How do we know raids like last night
ain't taking place all along the border?
There is no master plan in Mexico City,
if that's what you're thinking.
The war's over, Jess.
A band of outlaws just crossed the river,
so let's not make any more of it.
Well, I'll wager they never crossed back
over the river.
I wager a few of them
are still hanging around.
If that's so,
we'll just have to take our chances.
Hell, I don't think
we ought to take any chances.
Doc, Joanne.
If you're bound and determined to clear
out of here, I'm not gonna stop you.
As a medical man, I may not advise it,
but as a member of this community...
I'm sure not in favour of you staying.
So if you want to go, just go right ahead.
Well, what's holding you?
Sit down, boy. It's wiser.
Since it's obvious that
you have to put up here for a spell...
accept that fact and answer
those questions I asked you earlier.
Don't try me, boy.
Just because I patched you up doesn't
mean I can't let others string you up.
There's no point in saving a life
if it's not worth saving.
- Where you going, miss?
- Chores, Pa. Possess yourself.
You're hell-bent on putting me
to the test, aren't you?
All right. You're gonna get satisfaction.
You're gonna get it right now.
What's all that for?

Hush, Pa, no need to make noise
for two. Excuse me.
Have you gone plumb crazy?
I just want to examine
this wild man's face.
Easy, boy.
At this moment, I'm stronger than you.
Lather him up.
- Do as I say, Pa.
- Yes, miss.
I think you should know I'm not
a woman of minor achievement...
and I add to my list daily.
I cook, sew, undertake all
the normal female activities.
And then in addition,
I handle a plough as well as a piano...
split a log in record quick time and...
I'm just about as good as any man, huh, Pa?
Did I hurt you?
I'm fearfully sorry.
But with all my accomplishments, I have...
Now, did I do it again?
How can I apologise? Except to say that
I've never shaved a man before.
So if my hand should falter
and my fingers slip...
- I'll do it.
- The walls of silence have crumbled.
My God.
Hungry?
The wild man doesn't have
very civilised eating habits, does he?
In time, Pa.
Infants crawl before they can walk.
- Now...
- Doctor, you to home?
You damn fool.
Another sound like that
and they'll be up here.
Give me that gun.
I'm no hero, boy. The gun's empty.
What is it now, Jabe?
Alma's convinced

she's got complications again.
I'm sure there's no cause for alarm.
Go right in.
You must be hungry.
You know, it's mighty awkward for me
to still not know what to call you.
I can't go on calling you "sir" and "boy."
My name are...
My name is...
Azul.
That's Spanish for "blue," isn't it?
It's not my real name.
It's a kind of...
Nickname?
Yeah, nickname.
Put your shirt back on.
I'm all right?
All right? As much as most
and more so than some.
Want a swig of
some honest to goodness brandy?
I can go?
I asked if you wanted a drink.
It mightn't do you any harm
to stay on a few extra days.
No, I figure I'll leave before sunup.
Whatever seems fair.
Since you haven't told us
where you're from...
I don't imagine you'll let on
where you're going.
Have you made any plans, Blue?
I see.
Right back where we started.
Before you go...
I think there's something
you might wanna have.
We found this on you that first night.
It might be stolen goods,
but I have a sneaky hunch it's not.
Your mother's?
Dead?
Where's he looking off to?
South.

Mexico, I guess.
Well, I reckon he feels
they are more his people now.
He can't go back to them, Pa.
He killed one of them.
He's got nowhere to go.
No, miss.
What he does has to be his decision.
Leave him be, girl.
- Pa!
- Blue!
Pa, come down here quick!
- What is it?
- Something's happened!
What happened?
What? Where is he?
What in damnation...
He's talking, Pa.
- He's saying he wants to stay and work.
- That's talking?
He's gonna have to be
a little less subtle to suit me.
Pa, use your senses.
We need a hand around the place.
We always needed someone.
- Have you forgotten what he is?
- Was, Pa.
You're always going on
about giving a man a fair chance.
That's all Blue's asking for.
If you aren't the damndest...
most ornery, most blackmailing daughter...
Yes, Pa.
That's why you love me.
Now I'm gonna tell Blue
how delighted you are to take him on.
They're coming.
I sure do wish I'd never invited anybody.
Have a do, expect some doings.
Possess yourself, miss.
We can't hide him from people forever.
The good Lord and my daughter's
needle sure work miracles.
Yes, sir, you look splendid.

My suit fits.

It fits splendid.

You are gonna do just fine.

Just stand tall and smile, and you'll win them over with your charm.

- Charm.

- Charm, yeah.

Hi, Jim.

- Hi, Jess.

- Evening.

I'm sure glad you could all come to our social.

Sure is nice seeing y'all again.

Looks more like a military drill than a social.

Might as well come prepared, Doctor, after what happened last time.

How you doing, Joanne?

Come on now, let's not dilly-dally.

Let's get in here

and get this party started.

Yeah, charm.

I see you've finally gotten somebody to help you around the place.

He's come here to help us out.

You and Joanne can't farm this place alone.

Especially after what's been going on around here lately.

It's sure been nice talking to you, Mr. Blue.

"The attention of every lady was soon caught by a young man...

"whom they had never seen before...

"of most gentlemanlike appearance...

"walking with an officer

on the other side of the way.

"The officer was Mr. Denny...

"and he bowed as they passed.

"All were struck with the stranger's air.

"All wondered who he could be.

"Mr. Denny addressed them..."

We don't have many strangers come this way.

Last one was Mr. Saunders.

Stayed with the Corralls

about five years ago, ain't that right?
Yes, all of five years ago.
You good at games like this, Mr. Hamilton?
I used to be.
That's my boy Jess.
- He's real good at games.
- Yeah, I can see that.
Come on and join us in a hand.
Think we'd all like to see
just how good you be.
"He had all the best parts of beauty...
- "a fine countenance, a good figure..."
- What are you, reformed, Mr. Hamilton?
You could say.
"...determined if possible to find out,
led the way across the street..."
Just stretching my legs, Pa.
That's a mighty special rig you got there.
That's Mexican, ain't it?
"...turning back,
had reached the same spot."
Pick them up.
I've seen a couple just like it
on some outlaws.
Mexicans.
Doc tell you about the trouble we had
not long back?
He's heard about it.
He hear about the stealing?
You tell him about the killings?
- What are you getting at, Jess?
- Nothing, Pa.
I'm surprised to see one of us
outfitted like one of them, that's what.
Blue's from El Paso.
It's common enough to pick up
Mexican goods in a border town.
How many?
Yeah, that's for true,
and the point is why bother?
Unless a body happens to be partial
to bean eaters.
You partial to them?
Mexicans are no worse or better

than anybody else.
Listen to that, folks.
He is partial to them after all.
I wonder if he don't shoot
the way them greasers do...
seeing as how he takes so to their gear.
I have a busy day ahead of me.
So if you'll excuse me, good night.
It's a crying shame.
I was gonna ask him to show off
his shooting techniques to us.
And he says he's got a busy day ahead.
There mightn't be some other reason
you're leaving our company?
There might.
I'm tired, Mr. Parker...
particularly of you.
Well, are we playing or not?
Your deal.
What's gonna happen?
I guess there'll be some whispering
and wondering...
and a little speculating.
But it'll all die down soon enough.
They'll come to accept Blue.
What in damnation was that for?
If we're in it, we're in it,
and we might as well see it through.
- He knows.
- He only suspects.
Nobody pays Jess any mind.
They can't forget.
Why should they?
I don't belong.
It can't work.
You do belong.
I guess I was brought out here...
about the time your kin
settled this spread.
What was it took them to Mexico?
What takes hold of most people
who keep on the move...
if that's the kind they be?
A place that sounds like it's the answer,

I guess.
My folks settled in Mexico when I was...
How old?
Five? Maybe six.
There was no trouble
with the Mexicans at first.
Of course, in those days
it was all one country, you know?
It was just their kind of people
and our kind of people...
living side by side.
Ranching, farming.
Till the war came.
The war with Texas, that is.
Then one night...
a group of nice people from the village
paid a call on us.
Said we'd have to clear out by morning.
My pa stood up to these nice people...
and he said to them:
"You'll have to burn me out to make me go."
So the next day, they did just that.
They burned him out.
Burned him...
and Ma when they wouldn't quit the house.
When it was over...
there was this smell...
and smoke.
And I just walked out of there.
Just walked...
walked right out to the prairie...
where another kind of Mexican...
a bandit named Ortega found me.
Then he took care of me...
brought me up
to be just like one of his own.
Let's go.
Jess here says
his sister's come down with the fever.
I'm gonna stay on a piece
and talk to Joanne.
Would you care to honour me
with your company?
Don't be too late.

We should be back in time for supper.
Come on, boy.
Now, there's a mighty fine piece
of farmland...
just waiting for someone
to lay claim to it.
He's one of them. I know it. You know it.
For you and your pa to hide him here
and try passing him off...
You've no proof of anything,
Jess Parker. Not a damn bit of proof.
I'll wager you and Doc
heard some sobbing tale out of him.
That's what I wager you heard.
I wager you two think
you can change him over...
just by snapping your fingers.
People do change, Jess. They can.
That's the wondrous thing about people.
They change.
Jess, what are you aiming to do?
I haven't said a word
you can honestly pin to him.
Please, Jess, leave him be.
I swear to you he's good.
- I swear to you that he's...
- Changed?
I wonder about that.
I really wonder about that.
And I maybe reckon to find out if it's so.
Jess, please, leave him be!
You comfortable squatting like that?
- You know how you're sitting, don't you?
- You tell me.
That's how a greaser sits.
You're sitting like a greaser.
- What is it you want?
- I don't like you.
- What's that gonna prove?
- What sort of person you really are.
- Which is what sort of person?
- One who ain't changed.
Don't prod me, boy.
Make sure she takes her quinine

and she'll be up in a day or two.

- Jess!

- No, Pa.

Are you gonna get yourself killed
for some crazy, damn fool notion?

Don't forget the quinine.

It has been a long time, Azul.

These people saved my life.

Permit me to thank you...

for saving the life of my son.

It will be good to have you back with us,
Azul, as before.

Things have changed. I have.

Azul is no more.

Then I have lost three sons here...

not two.

Azul was murdered...

as Antonio was...

and Manuel.

You did not save the life of Azul.

You took his life from him.

Why?

Leave him alone.

It's all right, Blue.

I can look after myself.

You?

You can look only after dirt because
that is what you are, nothing else.

And that is what she is: Dirt.

Yanqui dirt!

No, we do not kill him.

Not this way.

So finally it is you who defies me.

All right, defy me then, and with the fist.

Yours against mine.

I don't wanna fight.

Have they turned you into a coward...

as well as a traitor?

Fight me, I said.

Fight!

This business between us is not finished.

I will be back with all my men.

I will avenge the murders...

of Antonio, and Manuel...

and Azul.
And in their memory...
I will put the torch
to each building and farm here.
I will burn out the murderers of my sons!
Look, clear out.
Clear out while there's still time.
Waiting around to be slaughtered,
it's stupid.
I don't see we have any choice but to wait.
There's only one choice
that makes any sense...
and that's to live and go on living,
and not to die.
I can't say I disagree with you.
But where do you want to do your living?
Don't you feel you belong here now?
Maybe I do, maybe I don't.
But I'm tired of hearing, thinking...
worrying about where I truly belong.
Whether I'm one of you, or one of them,
or one of anybody.
Maybe I just belong to me.
No, Pa. Let him go.
What do we know about fighting?
I'm a farmer and so is my son.
You're asking me what should be done?
I just don't know.
But to my way of thinking...
we'd all stand a better chance of it
by sticking together...
instead of each one of us
trying to make it alone.
That the only choices we got, Abe?
Why wait to see them set fire
to our crops and houses?
I'll be damned if I leave my claim
to some greaser to burn down!
I came out here alone,
and I fought Indians alone!
- I'm with Jim!
- You ain't fighting a few Indians!
Those Mexicans are like an organised army.
Some of us once fought

a real, organised Mexican army.

- You're no match for it.

- Abe's right! Let's get out!

- Maybe we should get out.

- If Abe goes, he goes without me!

I'll tell you one thing.

My husband never would've given up.

Maybe he should have.

Then he'd still be alive!

Hold on!

Quarrelling is not gonna get us nowhere.

We need to find a way to stand up to them!

I still say we should be back home

defending our farms...

instead of heading down to the river.

You argued that back at the meeting,

and then we all agreed to go his way.

Agreed, hell.

You all agreed, but I'm still asking.

Why is he heading us down to the river?

Did you hear him talking

as if he was the Lord Almighty himself?

"I'll lead you if you do what I tell you to...

"when I tell you to, and how I tell you to."

Why are we trusting him?

He could be leading us into a trap.

And he could have killed my boy Jess

when he had cause.

No, Alma. I say we trust him.

Who called a halt?

I thought we could use a minute's breather.

It wasn't called.

- The heat.

- A breather's not gonna hurt anyone.

You'll do your breathing

when I tell you to. Now move on.

You, too! Move on!

Take them wagons back to the canyon

and hide them.

Most of you, stay here.

The others, cross over.

Jess, take the men across.

Start digging holes.

Dig them deep and brush them over.

All right, get those tools and follow me!
We start doing the same on this side.
Women, too.

BLACK POWDER:

Cover it.
When you light them,
how quick will they fire?
Come on, fellas.
You're in your own line of fire.
Fill them in and start over. Up there.
Hey, Jess, he says this hole ain't right.
Jess, move your men back over the river.
I figure if we come
through this tomorrow...
you and him will...
I no longer reckon what will be, Jess.
So much has happened.
You love him a lot, don't you?
I guess...
Good luck, Jess.
I want every gun cleaned and oiled
right away.
So get to it.
Now we've gotta be fair with him, miss.
He's gotta be hard.
You're thinking of them, aren't you?
Blue, I know how hard it must be
to have to kill those you once loved.
I still love them...
in spite of what's happened.
And what will happen tomorrow.
But hard as it is for me...
it's easy for me to kill also.
You saw these hands
the night I was choking Ortega.
You saw how it pleased me.
It pleased me. I took pleasure in it.
Like I always did, like I always will.
I could never change, Joanne.
It's not possible...
if it ever was.
Blue, I've lost you, haven't I?
Everybody, out of sight.

Xavier.

Signal.

It is too late for you
to change face, gringo.

My father will not take you back.

Signal.

Careful. Head your horses into the current.

Go back!

Let's go back!

Come back!

Come back!

Cowards!

Hold your fire.

You have fought well,
as a true leader should.

Ortega honours you.

Let me die on my side of the river...

Azul.

The End