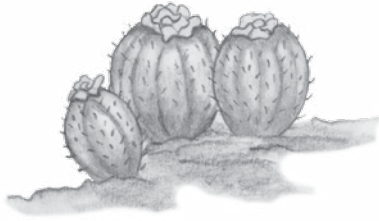


# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	“A Coyote Is Going to Eat You” .....	1
<b>2</b>	Tortilla Trials .....	5
<b>3</b>	Pig Problems and Whistles .....	11
<b>4</b>	Howls in the Night .....	21
<b>5</b>	The Honey Man .....	27
<b>6</b>	Tornado Tales .....	31
<b>7</b>	Milk Mess .....	35
<b>8</b>	Miss Mefibosheth .....	39
<b>9</b>	Scrapping Corn .....	45
<b>10</b>	Dreamy Disappears .....	49
<b>11</b>	“Fire!” .....	53
<b>12</b>	Lalita .....	59
<b>13</b>	Making Cheese .....	67
<b>14</b>	More Missing Chickens .....	75
<b>15</b>	Heber Pays a Visit .....	81
<b>16</b>	Real Robbers .....	87
<b>17</b>	More Mysteries .....	91
<b>18</b>	Don’t Worry .....	97

<b>19</b>	The Cheese Route .....	101
<b>20</b>	Beans, Beans, Beans .....	105
<b>21</b>	Pride Problems .....	109
<b>22</b>	The Third Round .....	115
<b>23</b>	Who Pounds Faster? .....	121
<b>24</b>	A Restless Night .....	125
<b>25</b>	Swing Struggles .....	129
<b>26</b>	Too Many Tortillas .....	133
<b>27</b>	Little Indian Girl .....	137
<b>28</b>	Rattlesnake Meat .....	143
<b>29</b>	Baler-Twine Belt .....	149
<b>30</b>	Flood! .....	153
<b>31</b>	Church at Uncle Fred's .....	159
<b>32</b>	Don Salomón .....	163
<b>33</b>	Day of Disappointments .....	169
<b>34</b>	The Slop Behind the Sink .....	175
<b>35</b>	Bugs and Obedience .....	181
<b>36</b>	The Way It Feels .....	185
<b>37</b>	Selling Corn .....	191
<b>38</b>	“We’re Rich!” .....	195
	A Note to Parents .....	199



## Chapter 1

# **"A COYOTE IS GOING TO EAT YOU"**

"Dad, Lupe is here, and he has his boy along!" Seven-year-old Keith burst into the shop, his face sunburned from the direct, Mexican sunshine.

"He probably wants some cheese," Dad answered slowly.

"*Queso!*" Lupe called, without even getting out of the truck. "Do you have cheese for sale?"

"We sure do." Dad set down the hoe he had been trying to put a new handle on, and walked over to Lupe.

"How much per kilo?" Lupe asked, pulling his large frame out of the truck and taking a huge bite out of a candy bar. Lupe's little boy hopped out of the passenger's seat and trailed behind Lupe.

"Sixty-five." Dad turned to lead the way to the cheese room, which was in a corner of the shop.

"Your boys would like a dog, right?" Lupe asked unexpectedly. "I brought one along that they can have."

"Did you hear that, James?" Keith nudged his ten-year-old brother, who was hunched over on the floor of the shop,

deeply engrossed in trying to invent a contraption to catch jack rabbits.

James looked up and nodded his head, his brown eyes sparkling eagerly.

“Well, let’s take a look at it before we weigh the cheese,” Dad suggested to Lupe.

James and Keith ran to Lupe’s truck, unable to hide their boyish enthusiasm. A light brown dog yawned and stretched lazily on the back of the truck. When it saw the boys, it stood up and licked Keith’s outstretched hand.

“You can have it,” Lupe urged Dad when he saw him hesitating. “We have enough dogs around the place, and I knew your youngsters have been wanting a dog.”

“Well, thanks,” Dad answered.

James and Keith grinned triumphantly and wasted no time in giving it a welcome.

“Here, doggy, jump down!” Keith coaxed. He reached out his hand and patted her sleek coat. “Just what we wanted! Let’s take her out to the haystack after we’re finished here and see how well she can hunt rats!” His eyes sparkled.

Dad carefully weighed the cheese, while Lupe, in his usual jolly way, told one story after another, his raspy laugh echoing through the shop.

James and Keith stood outside the door stroking their new dog. They watched longingly as Lupe paused every few sentences and took a long slurp of Coke. He always seemed to have a can of Coke—and often a candy bar.

“I want some cheese,” Lupe’s young son whined, reaching out his dark hand toward the wheel of cheese Lupe was holding.

“Not right now,” Lupe snapped.

“Right now! I want some right this minute!” he insisted, jutting his lower lip out in a sulky pout.

"Listen, when we get home you can have some cheese!"  
Lupe answered impatiently.

"No. Now!" the boy pouted, and when Lupe ignored him, he flopped onto the floor and began howling loudly, "I want cheese! I want cheese!"

James and Keith watched quietly. Lupe turned to his boy and yelled threateningly, "Be quiet, or I'll throw you outside tonight and the coyotes will gobble you up!"

Keith choked in astonishment and looked quickly into the little boy's face. Surely the boy would stop crying instantly, but instead, he kept right on howling as if he hadn't even heard his dad.

Keith fidgeted nervously. Would Lupe really put his boy outside when it was dark and leave him by himself? Would coyotes really eat little boys? He shuddered.

Finally Lupe picked up his squirming boy, and with his cheese in the other arm, he trudged out to his truck.

"Dad, did you hear what Lupe said he's going to do to his little boy? Will he really throw him outside to the coyotes tonight?"

"No," Dad answered. "He said that to try to scare his boy so he'd quit crying."

"That's a lie, then!" Keith exclaimed.

"I know," Dad agreed.

"But why didn't he stop crying? If you'd tell me something like that, I'd be terribly scared. I wouldn't dare cry anymore!" Keith shuddered at the thought.

"Lupe's boy didn't stop crying because he knows his dad didn't mean what he was saying," Dad explained.

"Lemonade!" a cheery voice called out, and Karina scampered into the shop, her pigtails flouncing behind her, and a jolly dimple in each cheek. She held out the jug of cold lemonade to Dad, and then stared in

surprise. "Where did that dog come from?" she asked warily.

"It's ours! Lupe gave it to us," Keith answered hastily.

"Don't you like her?" asked James.

"She doesn't look very smart, but I guess as long as she doesn't pester Daisy, Dreamy, and Mefibosheth she will be all right."

"Your cats can look out for themselves!" Keith laughed. Karina was as protective of her cats as a mother hen.

"Anyway, this dog is smart! I can tell it by the intelligent gleam in her eyes," James declared loyally.

"Well, maybe. But I think she looks like a . . . well, like a peanut!" Karina laughed. "Why don't we name her Peanuts?"

James and Keith looked at each other. Karina was right between them in age, but always acted rather motherly toward them, and they usually took her advice. Besides, Karina's specialty was dreaming up names for anything from animals to trees on the ranch.

"I guess I don't care." James shrugged his shoulders.

"It's time for chores, boys!" Dad interrupted their chatter. "I sent Wayne with the machete to chop some corn for the cows, and he's probably ready for some help with feeding and milking the cows."

"Come on, Peanuts!" Keith whooped. "Let's go find Wayne!" Wayne was fifteen, the oldest in the Martin family, and Keith's hero.

"I wish I could help with chores," Karina sighed wistfully, "but Mom said I'm supposed to help Luanda make tortillas for supper."

"Go help your sister, Karina. There will be plenty of chances to play with Peanuts later," Dad assured her as he walked out the door.



## Chapter 2

# TORTILLA TRIALS

Karina turned and ambled slowly toward the house. She could already hear Peanuts' lively barking as Dad and the boys headed beyond the shop to the corrals where the cows and pigs were. "They're probably rolling bales of hay to see how well Peanuts can hunt, while I have to help make tortillas. I wish I'd be a boy so I wouldn't have to do such boring jobs," she grumbled. "And on such a gorgeous day too!" she paused and gazed dreamily at the vast expanse of blue, blue sky. Not a cloud was in sight, and the only thing that broke the blueness of the sky was the black specks of several turkey buzzards, soaring lazily around and around, ready to drop to earth at the sight of a dead animal.

Karina's eyes swept the sky and lingered on the ring of mountains that surrounded their valley like a massive, protecting hedge. She knew the names of some of them, like Corona (Crown), with its sturdy ring of rocks crowning its tip. Farther south was Pelón (Bald), which earned its name because only a few straggly trees grew on it. Karina had even given special names to her favorite mountains. *There's Prince Charming; tall, handsome, and strong, and Don Panzón with the lopsided lump that looks like a sagging belly, and—*