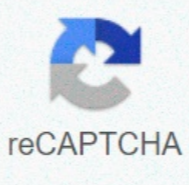


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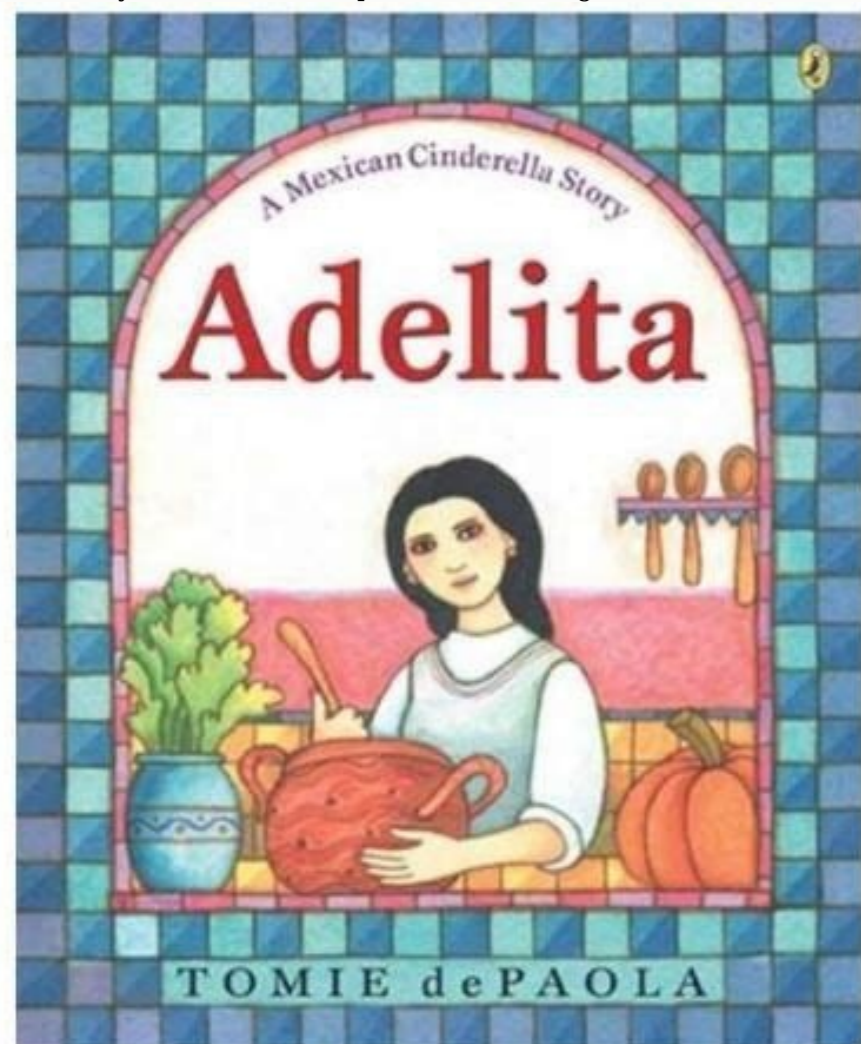
Written and illustrated by de Paola, T. Había una vez, en México, —once upon a time, in Mexico— there lived a kind and prosperous merchant and his wife, Adela. One day she shared the joyful news that she was expecting a baby, and her husband Francisco said, “ Me hace muy feliz saberlo—I am so happy.” He sent for his nursemaid, Esperanza. Her name meant hope, and she had taken care of Francisco himself when he was small. The kind old woman arrived shortly and all seemed well. Then tragedy struck: soon after Adela delivered a healthy baby girl she died. Francisco was heartbroken, but he and Esperanza raised the child.



They named her after her mother, calling her Little Adela, or Adelita. The years passed and Adelita grew up and “La casa de Mercado se llenó de alegría—the Mercado house was full of happiness.” At least for a while.

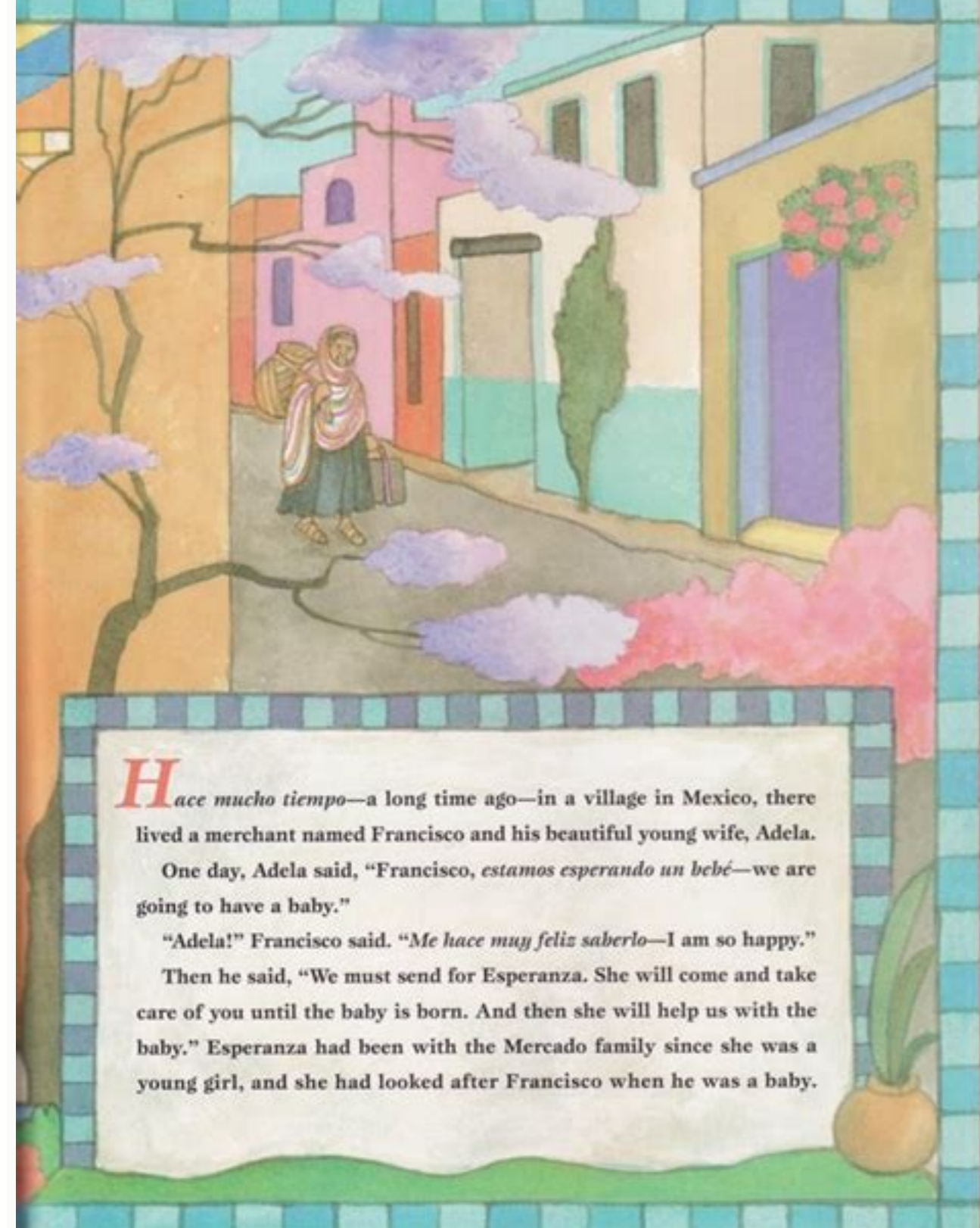


There came a day when Francisco spoke with his daughter and her maid, telling them, “Les tengo noticias—I have some news for you. ” He told them that he was going to remarry, and that the lady’s name was Señora Micaela de la Fortuna. Those of her daughters were Valentina and Dulce, and they were close to Adelita’s age.



The girl was happy at first, but after the new stepsisters paid their first visit, Esperanza said, “Que frios son—they’re cold ones.” ¡And the names of Valentine and Candy surely did not fit their temperaments! Nonetheless, the wedding took place and the new family settled down. Time were different but Adelita’s father still found time for “ importantes momentos juntos—special moments together. ” Still, Esperanza worried.

She did not like the way the stepmother always favored her children over her new husband’s daughter. But Adelita told her, “ Es natural—it’s natural. ” But tragedy struck again. Francisco caught a chill, and before anything could be done, he died. And now the spiteful Señora showed her true colors. Adelita was sent to a room in the attic, and her clothing now taken by the other girls. Valentina and Dulce mocked her constantly, with no care for her feelings of loss. She retreated to the kitchen, and Esperanza. “Because she knew that Esperanza loved her, her heart stayed warm as the fire in the hearth. ” Soon she learned to cook as well as Esperanza, and, as the elder lady moved more slowly, Adelita took over much of her work. To her horror, the cruel Señora noticed this, and saw a way to save money.



Declaring that since Esperanza was too old to work, and Adelita now old enough to take over the job, so it would be. With that, she threw Esperanza into the street, deaf to her cries. But Adelita had little time to grieve. The sisters, Valentine and Candy blossomed into a pair of vicious bullies. For Adelita, they seemed to take on new names, “ maldad y vinagre—meanness and vinegar.” And so the grim and dreary years went by until one day, la Señora announced that an invitation from the wealthy neighbors had been issued. “Una fiesta en su hacienda—a party at their ranch—to celebrate the homecoming of their son, Javier.” And that was not all. “Se rumora—rumor has it— that he will be looking for a wife!” My, how those three conniving women began to plan, and my! How busy they kept Adelita. Finally, the night of the fiesta arrived. Adelita, alone at last, was overcome by her misery. She wept all the tears for all the sorrows she had endured. And that’s when she heard a “soft knock at the door. “Who is it?”Adelita asked. “Soy yo—only me.” It was Esperanza! “ She told the girl that she had come because of a dream she had, un sueño about the long dead Adela. She hurried over to a corner of the store room behind the kitchen, and pointed: there, hidden behind the pots and pans, was a trunk. “ The key is behind the crucifix” Adelita unlocked the trunk. Inside she found an old fashioned, beautiful white dress. Under the dress was magnificent rebozo —shawl—embroidered with birds and flowers. “ Oh, mi mamá—my little mother”, Adelita whispered. “ While the girl washed and changed, old Esperanza brought her cart around to the front door. But the girl was terrified of what would happen should the cruel Señora recognize her. “Don’t worry. She never will recognize you. ” Esperanza told her, ¡Now vamonos!—let’s hurry!” So they did. The fiesta was in full swing when they got there, but “ the room fell silent. Who was this stunning young woman?” When Señor Gordillo asked her name, the girl said, “I’m in disguise. ’ with a twinkle and a sweet smile. ‘Just call me Cenicienta—Cinderella!” He was enchanted, but his son, Javier, was positively bewitched. All evening he doted on her, bringing her refrescos in between the dances. But suddenly, as midnight drew near, the panicked. How could she explain who she was? Her stepmother would beat her and the guests would laugh. She ran swiftly out the door, and was gone. Esperanza had waited for her, and together they flew home and hid the dress. Adelita was asleep when la Señora looked in on her. But in the morning, shouts roused the girl. Her stepsisters and their mother were discussing the news that Javier was looking high and low for the mysterious girl from the fiesta. “Just like in the fairy tale!” sneered Valentina, only there was “no zapatilla de cristal—glass slipper” to help Javier find her. But he was on the way, and would be in town “hoy misisimo—this very day.” said Doña Micaela. That’s when Adelita had a great idea. She ran to the attic and, taking out her mother’s rebozo from under her mattress, she hung it out the window, and ran back downstairs, quick as a wink. When Javier rode down the street that afternoon on his horse, his heart leapt with joy! He dismounted and knocked on the door. Doña Micaela was waiting hopefully. “Ah, Señor Javier! Pásale, por favor—come in, please.” she said. And Javier swept in and begged to see the beautiful girl. “Valentina, Dulce, come here! Señor Javier would like to meet you. ” she sang out, and in walked the sullen sisters. But Javier took one look and asked if there wasn’t another girl in the home. “ There’s no one else here, Doña Micaela said. ’ Yes there is, ’ a voice said. “Are you looking for me, Señor?” And Javier recognized her at once, not only as his Cenicienta from the night before, but as Adelita Mercado Martínez, a childhood friend. “ I am so happy to have found you again!” he declared, and asked for her hand from Doña Micaela. The selfish spinster longed to tell him no, but she was cowardly as well as cruel, and whispered, “ We shall be honored, Señor Javier. ” And so Javier and Adelita were married, and Esperanza came to care for them. Javier looked at his beautiful friend, who was now his wife, and said, “ Just like Cenicienta and her Prince—her prince—we shall live muy felices por siempre—happily ever after—too!” And they did. “Notes: This is a fun, bilingual book with just enough Spanish to give the flavor, and translations side by side, so that even if you don’t speak a word of Spanish, you get it! I remember the first time I learned the Spanish phrase for ‘Once upon a time, (Había una vez...) while working as a substitute teacher in the Dual Immersion Spanish-English program at Cragmont Elementary in Berkeley. I found it one of many wonderful children’s books in Spanish in the classroom. That was my introduction to the joy of reading a familiar story in a new language. I have continued to read children’s books in Spanish, and highly recommend A Series of Unfortunate Events, en Español. The setting translates delightfully to a sort of Gothic Barcelona, and the vocabulary opportunities are delicious, in English or Spanish. Adelita: A Mexican Cinderella Story by Tomie de Paola, is easily available at the Berkeley Public Library, and the Multnomah County Library in Portland,OR and likely others. ♦It is listed for sale at \$55 on Amazon. Could it be out of print already? The book is identified on the front flap as a Cinderella story that “draws upon” traditional Mexican tales, including Cenicienta. This story is noteworthy for several things. 1. Although the girl does not have a living animal helper, once again we find birds. The first is a white bird in a cage above Francisco and Adela, on page 1. The 2nd is the one embroidered on Adelita’s rebozo. 2. The amusing reference to a glass slipper by one of the spiteful sisters lends this tale an air of reality, as though no one is expecting magic. 3. The childhood friendship as a basis for the love that follows shows us that love itself is magic.



The inclusion of a mourning scene depicting Adelita kneeling and weeping before her father's coffin is, to say the least, unusual for a children's book. It may frighten some children (including ones I know) and so I have marked it with a black square and a black circle indicating this. Also, it has pumpkins! This is such an emblematic Cinderella vegetable that we may be surprised to remember how central the pumpkin, and its seeds, are in some Mexican recipes. Montessori Connection 6-12; Comparison of Two Countries, India and Mexico. 1. Read Adelita, and Bopaluchi, from 1-31-11. You will need the real books because you must be able to see the illustrations. 2. Find India and Mexico on the globe. 3. Age nine and up: look up each country in an atlas, and record the basic demographics in your geography notebook. How many people live in each country? What is the size of the country? What hemisphere is each country in, and how does each country's position in relation to the equator affect its climate? 4. See if you notice similarities in choice of color in illustrations. 5. Compare the clothing worn by people in both books. How is it the same? 6. Try cooking a recipe from each country that is similar, and compare them. For Indian and Mexican versions of rice pudding, try these books: A Young Chef's Mexican Cookbook (I'm the Chef), and The Amazing World of Rice, link below.