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The Tale of La Llorona as Told by Consuelo Chavez

By

JOSÉ CASAS

Dramatic Publishing Company

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The Tale of La Llorona as Told by Consuelo Chavez was commissioned for the Amplify BIPOC Short Play Series at First Stage (Milwaukee) and premiered on Oct. 30, 2021.

CAST (featuring First Stage Young Performers):

CONSUELO Stephanie Santoyo-Bustos
ANGEL Abigail Montie
LISA Lina Singh
CHUY Thomas Bastardo
MICHAEL Carson Pressley
TAYLOR Augie Poppert
NARRATOR Zach Church

PRODUCTION:

Artistic Director Jeff Frank
Director David Flores
Composer Frank Pahl
Stage Manager Carrie Johns

This play is dedicated to J. Casey Lane,
who has supported my work throughout the years and who
selflessly continues to share his love of theatre with students.

The Tale of La Llorona as Told by Consuelo Chavez

CHARACTERS

CONSUELO CHAVEZ (w): 13 years old. Chicana. The caregiver who is super smart and mysterious.

CHUY GUILLEN (m): 13 years old. Chicano. The lovable goofball with a crush on someone.

MICHAEL TURNER (m): 13 years old. Black. The athlete.

LISA SMITH (w): 13 years old. Any ethnicity. The popular one. Angel's twin.

ANGEL SMITH (w): 13 years old. Same ethnicity as Lisa. The pessimist. Lisa's twin.

TAYLOR TAYLOR (a): 13 years old. Any ethnicity and gender identity. The indecisive one.

NARRATOR (a): 13 years old. Any ethnicity and gender identity. An inspirational homage to Rod Serling of *The Twilight Zone*, even down to the black suit. Can also be a recorded voice if needed.

TIME: The present; a stormy Halloween night.

PLACE: The living room of the Chavez household.

“If you take myth and folklore, and these things that speak in symbols, they can be interpreted in so many ways that although the actual image is clear enough, the interpretation is infinitely blurred, a sort of enormous rainbow of every possible colour you could imagine.”

—Diana Wynne Jones

“Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart.”

—Eleanor Roosevelt

The Tale of La Llorona as Told by Consuelo Chavez

(The stage is dark, except for a spotlight downstage. In that spotlight, we see the NARRATOR. Beat. The theme music for The Twilight Zone, or something similar; begins eerily playing in the background.)

NARRATOR. “You’re traveling through another dimension—a dimension not only of sight and sound but of mind which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. And ... within it lies a door where you will unlock the key of imagination. You’re moving into a land of both shadow and substance, of things and ideas. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition.”

(The music fades away with the NARRATOR’s last words.

The lights come up onstage. It is Halloween night, a time for candy, costumes and good times. However, on this cold and rainy night, the prospects of trick-or-treating, laughter and making memories are in doubt. There is a large window upstage that allows the audience to see the dire weather conditions. A group of six friends are gathered, dressed in costume and ready to go. They are all eighth graders at Lincoln Junior High School. They are frozen. The kids and their costumes are as follows:

CONSUELO CHAVEZ: Dressed in what seems to be a very dusty old wedding dress, but we will discover later on in the story that it is much more.

CHUY GUILLEN: Dressed as “Buddy the Elf” from Elf.

MICHAEL TURNER: Dressed as Giannis Sina Ugo Antetokounmpo, a.k.a. the “Greek Freak,” a player on the Milwaukee Bucks basketball team.

LISA SMITH: Dressed as Wonder Woman.

ANGEL SMITH: Dressed as an angry biker zombie cheerleader.

TAYLOR TAYLOR: Dressed as Harry Potter.)

NARRATOR (*cont’d*). It is All Hallows’ Eve. In front of you, we see a close-knit group of friends awash in sadness and melancholy. Mother Nature has cast down her wrath on this Halloween, going out of her way to ruin their magical gathering, keeping our young friends locked up in their own personal prison. (*Beat.*) I introduce to you: Consuelo Chavez, in Spanish, *Consuelo* meaning solace. She is the leader of this hodgepodge group of youngsters. She is the one who takes it upon herself to be the mother ... the nurturer. Alongside her is Chuy. Lovable, loyal and goofy. (*Pointing.*) Michael, an athlete with dreams of being the next (*Air quotes.*) “Greek Freak.” (*Pointing.*) Lisa, the sarcastic gossip girl searching for her version of truth. (*Pointing.*) Angel, who is tormented by her lack of patience and empathy. (*Pointing.*) And, finally, Taylor, the indecisive one who always wants to be on everyone’s “good” side. (*Beat*) These best friends are waiting for the tears in the sky to stop falling. These best friends are connected to one another by a lifetime of childhood memories. (*Beat.*) They have just stepped into an area that we call “The (*Beep.*) Zone.”

(NOTE: For legal and comedic reasons, covering the space where “Twilight” would be with a beep or other sound effect is recommended.

The NARRATOR crosses the room past the frozen children. The NARRATOR opens the door; takes a last glance at the kids, then exits. The instant the door closes, the kids unfreeze. They are angry, frustrated and bored. They had their hearts intent on trick-or-treating, but the weather is not cooperating. Heavy rain can also be heard and seen. It has been raining all day with no signs of stopping. The children are still dressed in their Halloween costumes, still clinging on to the last shreds of hope. ANGEL and LISA are transfixed to their phones as they check their Twitter accounts. MICHAEL is playing with a Nerf basketball setup connected to the wall. TAYLOR is listening to music with headphones on. CHUY is looking out the window, noticing the weather and hoping it soon stops. CONSUELO is looking at the scene in front of her; disappointed that the group of friends all seem to be disconnected and in their own worlds.)

ANGEL. I can't take this anymore!! This wasn't supposed to be the plan! (*To LISA.*) I blame you! You jinxed us! You said it looked like it was going to rain, and I told you not to say a word, but noooooo—you had to open your big mouth! Now look!

LISA. Don't blame me! I didn't know it was going to pour cats and dogs!

TAYLOR. Can someone please explain to me why we didn't go to Monica Leon's Halloween party instead?

CONSUELO. Come on, everybody. The night isn't over yet. There is still time left.

CHUY. That's right. Don't be such Debbie Downers.

MICHAEL. Tonight is a complete malfunction. What a waste!

CONSUELO. Don't say that! Haven't you ever heard the saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade?"

MICHAEL. Whatever. I don't drink lemonade.

TAYLOR. Angel's right. Let's just call it a day. Or not, I don't know.

CONSUELO. But ... we're together. That's something. Isn't it?

CHUY (*puppy dog*). Yeah ... together.

MICHAEL (*to CHUY*). Nobody asked you, elf boy!

TAYLOR. At least we can say we tried to—

LISA (*to ANGEL, sarcastic*). What do you want to do?

ANGEL (*to LISA, equally as sarcastic*). I don't know. What do you want to do?

LISA (*still sarcastic*). That's intriguing. I'm not sure. What do you want to do?

(The next series of lines are said quickly, one on top of the other, basically repeating the same lines as before, but now with over-the-top English accents—a response to CONSUELO's ill-conceived optimism.)

LISA (*cont'd, to MICHAEL*). What would you like to do?

MICHAEL. Oh, my dear, I haven't the slightest idea? (*To TAYLOR.*) What would you like to do?

TAYLOR. What are we to do? (*To ANGEL.*) What would you like to do?

ANGEL. Goodness gracious. (*To CONSUELO.*) What would you like to do?

(CONSUELO doesn't reply. CHUY stands there as well, not saying anything. ANGEL, LISA, MICHAEL and TAYLOR continue repeating, "What would you like to do?" This goes on for a few more moments, increasing in sarcasm.)

CONSUELO (*angry and hurt*). Enough!! I get it!! This sucks!! You've made your point!!

(Everyone goes silent. Beat.)

CONSUELO *(cont'd)*. You all act like I planned this ... as if this is what I wanted for us. *(Beat. Dejected.)* You know where the door is. No one is stopping you.

(The rest of the group is silent. A reminder that the Halloween they envisioned is nowhere to be seen and of the guilt they're experiencing with CONSUELO's words.)

TAYLOR. What do we do now?

(No responses.)

LISA. I mean ... it's not like we really have anyplace else to go at this point. We might as well do—

CONSUELO *(nerdy excitement)*. Board game night! Not what we planned, but we've always enjoyed—

(Once again, the kids express negative reactions. Beat.)

MICHAEL. You can't be serious?

TAYLOR. If it were any other night, possibly, I suppose.

ANGEL *(defeated)*. I hate to sound like a broken record, but this night is ruined.

LISA. I didn't get dressed up just to—

CHUY *(to the group, annoyed)*. Any of you have any better ideas?

(No responses.)

CONSUELO *(trying to be convincing)*. It'll be fun. Trust me. *(Trying to be convincing and nostalgic.)* Chutes and Ladders. Operation. A little bit of Monopoly.

ANGEL & LISA. We're not little kids anymore.

MICHAEL. We're teenagers.

TAYLOR (*agitated*). Practically adults. Or haven't you noticed?

CONSUELO. Maybe, I don't want to notice. Maybe, just maybe, I want to hold onto these memories for as long as I can ... our memories. (*Beat.*) All I wanted to do was make this night not so bad of a night. Do you even realize that we have spent this night together every year since we were in first grade? Halloween has always been our special night. (*Beat. Quietly.*) There is no way I could ever think of this day without you all being a part of it.

(*CONSUELO's words hit a chord with the group.*

Extended beat.)

TAYLOR (*realization*). The funky electronic witch in front of Mr. Owens' Haunted House.

ANGEL (*fondly joking*). She's been out there since my mom was trick-or-treating.

LISA. I'm going to miss that old hag.

CHUY. I heard Mrs. Gonzalez was going to give out regular-sized Snickers this year.

MICHAEL. Shut the front door!

CONSUELO. The Sanchez family handing out *pan dulce*.

CHUY. Mexican sweet bread. The best bread. The take-me-to-Heaven bread!

LISA. Mrs. Jackson's homemade brownies.

ALL (*closing their eyes, smelling*). Mrs. Jackson's brownies!

ANGEL. Remember that one Halloween when Chuy dressed up like Charlie Brown, and we convinced all the houses in the neighborhood to give him rocks like in the cartoon?

(Everyone except CHUY bursts into laughter.)

CHUY *(annoyed)*. That was not cool. Not cool at all!!

(Everyone, except CHUY, continues to laugh hysterically, enjoying the memory.)

CONSUELO *(lovingly changing the subject, to ANGEL)*. All night, I've been wondering. Who are you supposed to be?

ANGEL. I like angry bikers. I like zombies. I like cheerleaders.

CONSUELO *(perplexed)*. Uhm ... OK.

ANGEL. You don't think it looks the part?

CHUY. If you say so.

MICHAEL. TBH.

TAYLOR. Honestly.

LISA. I thought you were Harley Quinn.

CONSUELO *(jokingly, trying to be supportive)*. But ... angry biker zombie cheerleader works for you.

CHUY *(curiously, to CONSUELO)*. Who are you supposed to—

MICHAEL *(frustrated)*. It doesn't matter.

(The amusement of this moment spills into a moment of sadness for an evening that will never be—a missed moment, at least, in the eyes of these barely new teenagers.)

MICHAEL. This year was supposed to ... *(Beat. Sadly.)*
never mind.

LISA. This was going to be our last Halloween night together.

ANGEL. Isn't that what we're all thinking?

(No responses.)

CONSUELO *(in the most sincere way)*. Hey!

(Extended beat.

Extended beat.)

CONSUELO (*cont'd, a hopeful smile on her face*). Remember when we used to sit around the fire during summer camp?

(Amazingly enough, the group acknowledges CONSUELO's remarks. She's hit on a common memory, but they do so begrudgingly.)

CONSUELO (*cont'd*). Those delicious s'mores tasting so good with the chocolate dripping down our faces.

CHUY. Graham cracker crumbs on my lips.

MICHAEL. The crackle of the flames and noticing how many stars there were up in the sky.

ANGEL & LISA. No parents.

TAYLOR. My first kiss.

ALL (*except TAYLOR, silly shock*). Whaaat!?

(Everyone stares at TAYLOR. Beat.)

TAYLOR (*attempting to erase the previous statement*). I actually meant ... my first time away from home.

(A quiet, awkward, funny and nice silence fills the room.)

CONSUELO. What I remember most were the stories we used to share.

CHUY (*reminiscing*). We did used to love telling stories. (*Fondly pointing to the group.*) Don't deny it.

(The kids begrudgingly and lovingly agree with CHUY's comments.)

Extended beat.

Extended beat.

CONSUELO slowly goes to the light switch on the wall. She dims the light in the living room to almost total darkness, creating the perfect setting for a storytelling session. The group sits down and forms a circle, the same type of circle from the camp adventures. Nobody says a word, but there is the silent agreement that stories are about to be told, old memories coming back into play. CONSUELO turns on the flashlight app on her cellphone and places the cellphone in the center of the circle. Beat. CHUY follows and does the same. TAYLOR follows CHUY. MICHAEL follows TAYLOR, and, finally, ANGEL and LISA do the same. The collection of lit-up cellphones creates their own personal funky campfire. It is silent and appears that the group is waiting for someone to speak. After a few moments, eerie subtle music begins underscoring CHUY's story.)

CHUY (*cont'd*). There's a creature known all over the Americas. He's called *El Chupacabra*. The Goat Sucker. (*Beat.*) It first appeared in *Puerto Rico* before our time in the not-so-distant past. The attacks took place in the darkness of the *Boricua* sky. Goats, sheep and other wild animals were killed and their blood drained so that there was nothing left but skin and bones. At first, police thought that it was wolves or maybe coyotes, but the locals ... they knew better. They knew that evil was in their midst, and I'm talking the movie rated "R" Jason and Freddy Krueger type of evil. (*Beat.*) Before you knew it, one dead animal turned into hundreds of dead animals, then thousands of dead animals, and now ... who knows how many more.