

EL ROSARIO E:

Catastrophe

and in the morning the catastrophe happens  
the El Rosarians wake up  
to their earthquake  
the whole of the day  
is spent repairing the catastrophe  
then they go to sleep again

Lord Arthur and his friends found they had to rush  
back to El  
Rosario to give what help they could  
News had reached them by lunch time  
What had happened was  
at dawn  
an earthquake had torn El Rosario apart  
it was crushed  
destroyed  
swallowed up by the ground  
the El Rosarians so knew and loved  
The villagers sleep off the previous night's  
celebrations  
All the grasses short dried and brittle tremble  
Not to the sun nor to the wind

But to the breaking of the ground the cracking of  
the earth

The sun as ever beams and burns the land

Whilst the wind roused and swirled

Seems to escape the village gusting through alleys

The fissures race along to collide and join

Buildings crumble collapse confused out of  
existence

In the house of Santiago and Lupita

Chito wakes

Rises from his bed and jumps through the glass less  
window

Curling as a ball he rolls and leaps up

Calling the name Chita Chita

Conchita

Wheels turning moving propel bodies

Pre-Hispanic Mexico survived without the wheel

As Chito ran his legs lifted and turned

His feet pushed the ground and round and round

Went his body parts causing him to advance

Towards the Hacienda del Rosario

As if his whole frame and mind

Were one enormous rotating wheel

To Chita he dashed

His heart speeding to supply blood  
Jumping over collapsed walls  
Leaping across chasms  
Rushing towards her  
He had to save her first  
Above all others above himself  
People were hurrying to safety  
Everyone was helping everyone  
No one stopped Chito's flight  
For he felt in air  
On wing  
Focusing his mind on the correct route  
There ahead the wall to the ranch  
Over that and up to the house  
He sped  
Santiago had hurried Lupita out of their house  
And Chito had spotted this as he  
began his race towards Chita  
The shopkeeper & his family are stacking  
goods on the stable ground  
The three women rush to save each  
others' friends  
Father Rickard carries Podger Gelding out into  
safety

Hepe & Jose & boys all run around looking  
to rescue people animals

Griselda is lifted out of a crevasse

Syeno is rescuing Marietta from their collapsed  
bedroom

And Chita is trapped under her bed

Chito rescues Chita

Syeno's men save themselves & round up horses  
and cattle

the state of Luis' mind

his mind could not take it

he had killed the wrong person

he had killed his friend

the innocent the visitor Cesar

worse he had missed his foe

his mind blew up

exposing to him the error

he had let his selfish desires

cause him to kill

this was too much

he seemed to have broken the law of life

the law of death

he must die so he flew off the canyon  
but even then evil clutched his mind  
he took the necklet from his pocket  
(the necklet he had stolen for purpose of  
incrimination)

and held it in his right hand  
so Santiago may be implicated  
may be thought guilty in both murders  
his own and Cesar's  
therefore he could still destroy the cause  
the one who stole his love Lupita  
even in his death Luis could not  
free himself of malevolent intent  
what pity there can be for Luis  
and the state of his mind

Santiago had been up when the earth quaked. His heart was still trembling from the result of the previous day's ordeal. How had he endured the uncertainty? He was a cool guy. He always created a relaxed and jaunty atmosphere about him. Quiet and not too serious.

He was in the kitchen area when he felt the tremors and heard the crunching sounds. Through his window, he saw the ground heaving, and buildings tumbling in swirls

of dust. He ran to Lupita and scooped her still sleeping frame into his arms, and rushed to the main door of the house. He flung the door open, and staggered into the open, just as the house collapsed, moments after Chito had leaped through his window.

Santiago was agitated in his mind, but he made his physical self remain calm, as he looked around to assess what was happening.

Chito had called out the name of Chita, glanced over to his parents, nodded to them, then charged off in the direction of Chita's home, the hacienda del Rosario. How he managed through the dust and the chaos is remarkable. He centered his mind on the direction he knew, and the avoidance of dangers as he saw them. There were fires on the way, mostly from exploding calor gas bottles. Cracks in the ground made things awesomely difficult. He had to anticipate and avoid. All the time, he thought of how the girl was in danger, and that he had to save her.

He passed the shopkeeper who was rescuing what goods he could from the debris of his shop. The shopkeeper's wife was helping him, but she was so distressed that the shopkeeper had to stop his work to take hold of her, and shake her into a calm condition. Her

thoughts were panicked into fear and anticipation of the worst. "How could this be happening to us in El Rosario?" she thought. "What were they all to do? Would they be happy ever again? When the world collapses around you, what is there you can do to stay sane, to keep happy? How can life be worthwhile now?" But her husband was busy, and his actions spoke to her of "we have to press on, and make good of this.

It is just a trivial event of drama. It is nothing. We are able to save and rescue. Don't lose heart, my sweet one, my companion of love and life." So on his thoughts flowed, and he worked even harder, looking to see if neighbours had need of his help. His wife becalmed put her feelings aside, as she too beavered for their shop and their friends.

Indeed, the three old women were engaged in their area of the village saving themselves and their neighbours. The first old woman was calm and stoical as she moved through the crushed houses, picking up friends and pets. The second woman was delirious with the excitement of the tragedy. She rescued souls with shouts of laughter. She pushed them into the open, and gave them cloths to protect their mouths from all the dust. The din was very loud. There seemed to be much screaming and yelling and sobbing amidst the flames and dirt clouds. The third

woman was staggering against a wall of her house. She held her head as it hurt, but she moved into the open until she found some land, a stone, on which she could sit. There she settled, looking around, seeing little, feeling her head was easing, there was no blood, and then on realizing she was safe and well she smiled and began to laugh quietly to herself, a smirk sneaking across her face.

Through the swirling clouds, there appeared a man, stumbling forward, carrying another man. The outline of the two figures was ghostly. They were dressed in dark clothes which silhouetted them against the rosy colours of flames behind them. They were Father Rickard carrying Podger Gelding from the collapsed rubble of the priest's home. The Bishop placed his feet on the ground, grasped the priest's shoulder and raised himself upright. Father Rickard was feeling so weak he collapsed, and Bishop Gelding bent over him, and was glad that they were both safe from further tremors and disasters.

In another part of the village, the boys were running excitedly to save people and animals. Hepe and Jose could hear a squealing that could only be their beloved Griselda; but where was she? No one could see. They split up and searched. Then Manny found himself teetering on the edge

of a big gap, a chasm. He placed his hands on the edge as he knelt down, and he peered into the depths. It was dark and dusty, but he thought he could hear the gruntings of Griselda. So he called out to the other boys, and soon Hepe and Jose came to his side. Yes, they decided. Griselda was down there. One of the boys rushed forward with a strong rope. He tested how deep the crevasse was with the rope, and realizing he could climb down, he entered with his rope. Griselda nuzzled up to him, and he placed the rope under her belly twice, and threw the ends up to the other waiting boys. With them above pulling, and with him below pushing, they were able to help Griselda scramble to the edge of the cleft, and thrust herself safely into the arms of Hepe. The boys laughed and yelped, as they rubbed her coarse back and assisted in her general revival. It was decided the rope should be tied around her neck to make a safety leash for her for the time being. So they carried on their search for survivors with their pig "bloodhound" to aid them.

Syeno Dagos, is rescuing Marietta from their collapsed bedroom. Outside the Hacienda, there is the chaotic noise of men and animals, mingling with the sounds of the earthquake's screeching rumbles and falling stones. Marietta struggles to breathe, but she is unhurt. Syeno has

his arm around her shoulder as he struggles to take her to the door. His mind is in turmoil over the possible damage to their estate and to the village, whilst Marietta's mind screams out for her children. "Felipe! Conchita!" From the other side of their bedroom door, Felipe calls back he is safe, and tries to guide them to safety. The door is badly jammed by fallen rubble, but he claws with his hands to free up the space so that the door can be opened. He has no time to think of anyone else but the safety of his parents. Even his sister Chita is far from his thoughts.

But someone else is concerning himself with the sweet girl. He is making his way through the appalling debris, and is now staggering to the side of the house where he knows Chita's bedroom to be. He tears off the shutters to her window. Shutters that still cling to the wall despite the devastation. They are no problem to Chito. Soon he is peering into the darkened room, and makes out a terrible sight. The ceiling has shattered onto the bed, and at first he fears dreadful things for his friend. He scrambles into the room and rushes to the crippled bed. He pulls at the bedclothes, and throws them on the floor. But no Chita is there. Relief. He was frightened she had been crushed. His mind freezes. He is upset, he wants to panic, he wants to rage and scream, he wants to cry, but he says no.

Instead, he stills his body, holds his breath, calms his thoughts, and waits. He is aware of something moving. It seems to be a scurrying sound. Something alive. Like an animal. An animal in the field between the maize. Scraping the ground. It stops. But as he waits, it starts again. He tries to tell where the sound is coming from. Below? At his feet? To the left? No, to the right. There the bed angles to the floor. He bends, looks underneath. Instantly, he straightens himself, and seeks the best way to lift the bed. His hands burn with the strain, as he raises the heavy wooden frame enough for Chita to slide from underneath, into the choking air. She stands slowly, coughing her throat clear from its blocked state. Chito drops the bed frame with a huge bang that makes them both jump into each other's arms. Now they struggle to the window, and climb through to the open air of the outdoors. They are received by Syeno, Marietta and Felipe. All safe. All just happy.

Around them in the corrals and stables, Syeno's men save themselves, and round up the horses and cattle. The noise feels as if it will never cease. Those moments of intense dramatic panic give out a permanent yell to the world.

Surely everyone will hear them.

San Miguel is soon responding. And Lord Arthur and his companions are there by lunch time supervising rescue and help for the injured. Amazingly, the only serious case is Faunio. He was trapped in his house, and had to be dug out, but his injuries are severe. Santiago, who discovered the old man, and helped in his rescue, asks to accompany him to the hospital in San Miguel that Lord Arthur has arranged. The ambulance tears back to town, its sirens clearing the way for the precious cargo of the famed goat herd.

In his hospital bed, as evening approaches, Faunio is fading. There is now only Santiago by his bed. For the moment, the crowd of friends and doctors have gone, giving Faunio the peace he needs to think and speak to his favored friend.

"I always knew it wasn't you who finished Cesar's life. I said it was no El Rosarian. And I was right," he said.

"You've always thought you were right, you old twister," replied Santiago.

Faunio beckoned Santiago to lean closer.

"Build a new village. Make it your destiny. A new Rosario. Promise?"

"I promise," said Santiago.

Faunio continued: "Use that inheritance of yours. He would have wanted you to. We loved Cesar. And you see, how he loved you."

Santiago looks away, a sad look crossing his face.

"Now don't waste that love," Faunio spoke again. "Don't go all soft. We all sacrifice. I am sacrificing now. I can't recover and help you, as I would like. You know. I'm happy."

Faunio is very weak now, and the words gasp from his lips, almost inaudibly. "I knew I shouldn't have stayed in bed this morning," was his last plea to life, and with it, he beamed a great big smile, and died. "Happy," as he said.

Santiago rested by Faunio's side for a long while. He had not thought it before, but of course the dead give rest to the living. And after this terrible day, Santiago needed that quiet, that peace, to find some hope, and feel plans emerge for the future of their village, and for all of their lives.