



The Dwarfs of San Miguel

Village

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Action/adventure, Kids

“Eduardo, don’t go over there; get away from that area,” shouted my grandma, indicating at the clearing of flat rocks I were traversing.

“Why not?,” I asked.

“Because, if you’re not watchful, the magical dwarfs who live under those rocks will hear you and might not like it.”

“What?,” I exclaimed, both shocked and thrilled by this revelation.

“Yes, there’s are dwarfs under those rocks,” responded my grandma. “See that flat, circular rock? That’s the entrance to their underground camp. When they need to come out, that’s the spot where they climb out of.”

“And when do they come out?,” I asked.

“Oh, they usually come out nighttime. Your Grandpa saw them do so once, and told me about it, that’s how I know it’s true. He never lies.”

So it was true then, for my Grandpa did in fact never tell lies. Everyone in the village knew him as “the Honest Old Man.”

“When did it happen?,” I asked.

“Oh, it was a long time ago, long before you were born and your parents left you and your sister with us. But if you want a more specific time, it was sometime after the rainy season here in San Miguel, so May.

“As you know, your Grandpa usually works late into the night during that month—what with the works that needs get done: plowing fields, planting seeds, pulling out weeds, etc., etc..”

“We help with that,” my sister, Esmeralda, pipes up.

“Yes, you do help us with that, but we have two more plots of land further down from these, and your Grandpa usually has to take care of those alone. And actually, it was after working on those milpas and making his over this same path that we’re taking today to head home, that he saw the dwarfs climbing out of that entrance on the ground.

“At first, he heard the sound of a rock sliding against rock. And he was surprised, of course, for he didn’t know who could be making that noise, especially since he’s never encounter another person work at this hour of the night, in this area. He followed the noise anyway, but made sure not to make a sound as he did so, lest it a couple of young troublemakers up to no good. The moon was close to being full, so he was able to watch where he was going. But besides that, you know your Grandpa has eyes like a cat. Now, when he got as close as he possibly could, without being seen, he saw them.

“They were baffling: very small in stature, like you, Eduardo, no taller than my elbow, but older than me or your grandpa—with eye bags under their eye bags. They had long silver beards, too, he said—and I do mean silver: they shone metallic and had a certain weight to them. But despite looking so old, they also looked quite strong: their arms could easily lift Canela.”

“Wow!, really? They could lift Canela?” I said, referring our female donkey carrying a load of garbanzo beans, which we had cropped that day.

“Yes, two or three could easily lift Canela.”

“So what happened next?,” my sister asked, eager as me to hear the rest of the story.

“Well, shock at what he was beholding, your grandpa was paralyzed with shock, but he regained his sense soon enough. He stayed put and observed, though. It appeared that a band of them were going to go scavenge for materials. They had ax picks and a large plank to carry back whatever it is they were in search of, ‘probably more copper nickel from the side of the mountains,’ your Grampa guessed.

“Soon enough, the group of them headed on their way, and when he felt the coast was clear, your grandpa went over to check the entrance. Looking down, he was surprised it wasn’t deeper, and that instead of dirt, the floor and walls were made of stone. There was also a ladder, made out of wood logs, nailed against the wall. Now, hesitantly, he made his way down the ladder. And when both his feet were plated safely on the stone floor, here realized there was really only one way go: down a wide, long tunnel.

“Oh my goodness!, was it all dark around him?”

“No, it wasn’t. There were large chunks of crystals strewn here and there down the tunnel, which reflected some of the moonlight pouring in.

“Did he follow the tunnel?,” my sister asked.

“He did. And a long tunnel it was. Your grandpa said he must have walked for fifteen minutes until he reached the end.”

“What was at the end?”

“You wouldn’t believe it. I myself found it hard to believe when your Grandpa first told. But as he’s never lied to be before, or since after, I’ve come to accept what he told me as true.

“He told me that the tunnel led to a massive underground space. It was like our village, but replicated in white stone. There were houses and plazas, and larger stone buildings. Small fires blazed about all around, keeping things pleasantly warm: this, considering they were deep underground. Your Grandpa said that when he looked up, all he saw was a black abyss.

“Wow! Was he scared? Did he go back?”

“He was a little scared, yes, and certainly considered going back—who wouldn’t? But your Grandpa is extremely curious, he just needed to know what it was he was looking at. So he started walking down; and once again, the walk down was longer than it appeared at first glance. It must have talking him another fifteen minutes, but this time around, it of a treat to the senses. The space smelled of sweet, rich soil; the white stones reflected the soft, ember glow of the flames; and far off, he could swear h heard the gentle flow of a river.

“Were there any dwarfs around?”

“Everywhere! There were female dwarfs with copper hair, young girl dwarfs with weighty golden tresses; young male dwarfs with somewhat darker copper hair, and young boy dwarfs with spiky steel-like hair, and older dwarfs too, all sporting the same silver-like hair. But don’t think these elder dwarfs were any milder of step as the younger-looking dwarfs—no sir—they looked just as capable as any of them.”

“Did they see Grandpa,” Esmeralda asked?

“No, your grandpa made sure to keep hidden behind the stone houses and other spots that could ensconce him.”

“What were the houses like?”

“Well, the all houses were made out of white stone, like I said, but their doorways and windows were either shaped out by how the stones were stacked, or they were chiseled out. Doors were made out of thick slabs of wood, but the windows were all barren. It’s this fact, however, that allowed your grandpa to get a glimpse of the interiors. There were but four things: beds, which were large river rocks covered in moss; a table made out of stone slabs, short chairs made of tree truck stubs, and an assortment of rough metals on the table. I think that’s what they ate: metals.

“Wow!, that’s incredible. And then what happened?”

“Everybody seemed to be going on about their business; it seems that nighttime was their daytime. Realizing this, your Grandpa wanted to know just how their world functioned, so he decided to head to the center. It was extremely tricky, as you can imagine. Your Grandpa didn’t want to be seen, for he didn’t know how they would react to him being there. Though they seemed peaceful enough, their physical strength made him uneasy. So on he ventured, and eventually he made to the center.”

“How did he know it was the center?”

“He knew it was the center because of the mountain of treasure that just stood there.

“What? Treasure!,” Esmeralda exclaimed for the both of us.

“Yes, Mayan treasure! There were coins, golden statue heads detailed in jade, goblets, rings, necklaces, jaguar and bird figurines, on and on.”

“Did he get any?”

“He was entranced, absolutely magnetized—and so of course he wanted his hands on some gold. But it was that accursed call for wealth and beauty that found him out. Hypnotized by the Mayan treasure, your Grandpa walked to it from where he was hiding, and in no time, he was spotted by the dwarfs.

“A man!,” shouted some.

“An intruder!,” shouted others.

“Run,” was all your Grandpa could think—and then acted. Heart beating like the humming birds that roam all over our village, your Grandpa darted past those who had seen him, and surprised those who were still going about their business. Soon enough, though, he had a long trail of them chasing after him. And if it wasn’t for your Grandpa’s long legs and their short ones, they would have been on him the moment they caught eye of him. But on he went, out running them, and making his way back to the tunnel. The flight up trail was the real trial. All of a sudden, it was like running in quicksand. Every step your Grandpa took was harder and harder to lift up and put down again. The dwarfs, on the other hand, seemed to be speeding up.

“Why do you think that was?,” asked Esmeralda?”

“I don’t really know,” answered Grandma, “my guess is that the pathway was somehow enchanted to make it hard for normal people to reach the underground village. But of course, there’s nothing normal about your Grandpa, that man was born under a blue moon.”

“So what happened next,” I asked, wanting the story to continue. “Did they capture him?”

“No. Somehow his life of daily toil helped your Grandpa make his way to the tunnel. But something was wrong when he reached it: it was pitch black, which meant the ground-level entrance must have been enclosed when the other

dwarfs returned back from gathering more metals.”

“No!,” I gasped.

“But Grandpa’s with us now, which meant he must have escaped,” Esmeralda formulated, “How did he do it?”

“I’ll tell you how he did it. By keep pushing forward, despite being scared, and by using the strength of his back. Having reaching the end of the tunnel, your grandpa blindly felt the walls for the ladder he had come down on. And when he at last got a grip on one of the steps, he started to ascend. Just in time, too, he could hear the angry mob of dwarfs behind him. So on he climbed, and then “Clank!,” he hit the top of his head against the rock. And though dizzy as the clank was, he regained his wits and strained to lift the rock from where it was sitting. Muscles and bones pushed to the limit, the side of his face squashed against the surface of the rocks as well, he at last began to hear it slide from it place, and began to see a small flicker of light. The flicker of light gradually got larger and larger, until it was it a decent size, but still not wide enough for him to jump out of. But then the horrifying thing happened: one the dwarfs was on him. It was tugging at your Grandpa’s pant leg, trying to get a grip on him to pull him off.”

“Ah!, that’s terrifying.”

“It certainly was, your Grandpa still has nightmares about it—and I do; I have no idea what I would have done without him, had that Dwarf succeeded. But he didn’t; your Grandpa swung his leg with as much force as he could muster, and the Dwarf went flying. And when your Grandpa heard it land, he also heard the distressed groans of other Dwarfs. (It must have crash landed on the others.)

“Now, realizing he only had one real chance of getting out of there, your Grandpa put in one last great effort and slid the rock to a degree wide enough for him to get through. Hands finally at ground level, he pulled himself out and quickly ran to other end of the rock to slide back in place. And as means of precaution, he rolled over another heavy rock on top of it before he finally sprinted back to San Miguel as fast as he still could.

“There was no rock over where I was standing earlier,” said I.

“Oh darling, it was a long time ago, the dwarfs probably rolled it off. But I have always wondered how many of them it took to slide both rocks from their place.”

“Did they come after Grandpa?”

“And risk being seen by more humans?—I don’t think so. No. But after that, I’m sure they were more careful about leaving that entrance wide open while they go gather supplies.”

“Surely they never expected someone has curious and adventurous as Grandpa Miguel.”

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