

THE RICH MAN'S SON GETS A SECOND CHANCE

A Mexican Tale

Once upon a time a wealthy man and his only son lived in a household full of riches and servants. The man was kind and level headed. The son contributed nothing to the maintenance of the family or household. Instead, he spent his father's money on drinking, gambling and merriment. Several other young men and women from town pretended to be his friend so he would buy them drinks and other pleasures.

As the father got older, his health declined. He worried about his son and tried to talk him into changing his ways. His pleas were met on deaf ears. The son continued on his destructive path.

One day the father brought his son in for one last talk. His son was drunk but still able to comprehend what was being said to him. The father asked his son to promise him to hang himself from a certain beam in the house on the day that life became too much to bear. Although a bit confused by this strange request, the son agreed to his father's request. Soon after, the father died.

The entire estate was left to the son, who soon forgot his promise. He continued spending money on drinking, gambling

and merriment. Many other young men and women stayed close to the son so he would buy them drinks and other pleasures.

Through the young man's neglect, the estate began to deteriorate. Several of the servants left because the son forgot to pay their wages. Things were getting bad.

One day, the village held a celebration to honor the saints. The young man went to the bank to withdraw some money but was told that he had none left. Although surprised, he went to the celebration anyway. There he met with his friends who were used to his extravagance. They greeted him kindly but quickly left him alone when they learned that his money was gone.

The young man walked around in a daze. He couldn't even buy himself a drink, much less any food. He sat down on a corner and began to cry. Soon the son of one of his remaining servants came along. He asked the young man why he was crying and the servant was told about his plight. The servant treated the young man to food and drink. The two young men enjoyed the village celebration together.

On his way home, the young man realized that he had been such a fool. He squandered all his father's hard earned money and allowed the estate to deteriorate. He realized that his "friends" were not really friends at all. Rather they were leaches.

The young man thought his life was too much to bear so he went

home to hang himself, just as he promised his father he would. As soon as he dropped himself to hang from the rope his weight caused the beam to break. This made a hole in the ceiling. The young man landed hard on the floor. As he lay there stunned a rush of gold coins came pouring out of the newly made hole in the ceiling.

As he lay on the floor surrounded by gold, the young man contemplated his life to this point. He realized the errors of his ways. The next morning he made an announcement. He made the servant's son, who had befriended him the previous day, a partner. The two worked hard to restore the estate. It soon became prosperous once more.

The young man's old "friends" returned to him once they heard he had money again. They were promptly sent away and asked to never return.

The young man realized that his father was generous and wise. Every day after he gave thanks for this, and he lived out the remainder of his life in peacefulness and prosperity.

Adapted by Kathleen Simonetta. Inspired by the following story:

"The Poor Rich Man's Son Gets a Second Chance," Mexican Folk Tales, translated by Anthony John Campos. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, c1977, pp. 111-114.

