

we hear A MURMUR OF VOICES.) In the wind... the voices are flying away! They're frightened... They're hiding... (Listens.) At the edge of the earth? No— (Listens again.) The Edge of the Sea! (We hear THE BOOT, faintly.) The soldiers! You've got to find your voice before the soldiers do! Don't let them scare you! (The dogs growl. She grows back and they run off.) Oye—show me you can be brave and I'll lead you to the Border of Lights! Apúrete—to the Edge of the Seaaaa!

(She starts to go in the wrong direction. She turns him around.)

LA LLORONA. ¡Al Norte! North! ¡Allí!

(She calls up THE OCEAN, and leaves. We hear WAVES. MIGUEL plays his guitar, calling his voice. Instead, he catches a song.)

VOICE PICKER (offstage, singing).

NONATZIN IH CAUCNIMQUIZ NOTLE CUILPAN  
XINECHITCA...

(The VOICE PICKER comes on, caught in, and dragging a large net filled with seaweed, driftwood and shells. She speaks partly to MIGUEL, partly to herself, partly to her shells.)

VOICE PICKER. Sigue, play—I like the old songs... (Laughs.) Don't tell the soldiers! (Searching the stage.) You heard any voices by here? (Whispers.) In the shells—that's where they like to hide. I got a sack full

already, but the soldiers won't be happy till I got 'em all. Greedy. And what do they pay me? Beans. (Laughs crazily.) Frijoles, sí. Maybe a tortilla.

(MIGUEL follows her, curious.)

VOICE PICKER (to her net). Ay, break the back of an old woman. (Yells at MIGUEL.) Pos, what else am I gonna do? Find another husband to bring home the frijoles? I had three husbands! (Rustles her net.) Dragged off to the wars, all of 'em! Now I got shells. (Takes one from pocket.) This one I'm keeping, eh? Listen...

(From the shell we hear the voice of AN AMOROUS MAN. The shell tightens up when it speaks.)

VOICE IN SHELL. Ay, mi amor, chula, preciosa, I adore you my love, I want to...

VOICE PICKER (pats shell back fast). Don't listen to that. You're too young.

(MIGUEL dives into the net of shells, looking for his voice.)

VOICE PICKER. Oye—stop that! What are you doing? Muchacho feo, mocoso—

(MIGUEL mimes, "I'm looking for my voice!")

VOICE PICKER. You're looking for your voice? Why didn't you say so? Maybe I'll help you... (Bears, wary.) Wait a minute—there's a war out there. Which side are

(*He salutes in the direction of the palace. MIGUEL bursts through the palace gate. The dogs growl. The VOICE KEEPER tries to seduce MIGUEL with his words.*)

VOICE KEEPER. The voices lie, hermano ... They tell stories about the general. They get together, one voice starts in—and before you know it, every one of them has an opinion. There's a racket in the garden. The general can't sleep.

(*MIGUEL tries to get the box. The VOICE KEEPER sidesteps, doing flamenco.*)

VOICE KEEPER. Always complaining ... crying "I'm hungry!" Whining. "It's not fair!" Well, that's not our fault. We didn't make the world!

(*MIGUEL manages to get the box open for a moment. A MURMUR OF VOICES flies out. The KEEPER closes the lid.*)

VOICE KEEPER (in a rage). ¡Infeliz! (Quickly smiles.) Oyéme, hermano, the voices are happy now ... content. Listen for yourself—

(*MIGUEL listens. He hears silence.*)

VOICE KEEPER. No more shouting, no more tears ... A kinder, gentler garden. (He takes a shiny medal coin from his sash and starts to hypnotize MIGUEL.) You don't want your voice, hermano. You don't want to tell

bad stories about the general's soldiers ... Promise? (He is inadvertently hypnotizing the dogs too.) The general loves you, hermano! You're a good boy ... A quiet boy ... Good. ¿Sí?

(*He teaches MIGUEL a gesture—a "ssshhhht" and a thumbs-up. MIGUEL repeats the gesture, like a dazed, smiling Moonie. The KEEPER waves and gestures, exiting. The good Moonie waves and gestures.*)

LA LLORONA enters. MIGUEL repeats the gesture to her, smiling dumbly.)

LA LLORONA ("Oh for God's sake"). ¡Ay mis hijos, qué te pasa a tí? Ay, ay, ay, ay, ay ... You give up your fight? For a pretty speech and a smile?

(*MIGUEL smiles and does the gesture.*)

LA LLORONA. And what will it be like when the whole world is silent? Will you miss the voice of your guitar? The song of the wind—the rain? The sound of your own voice telling the soldier, "¡No! ¡No mas!"

(*MIGUEL smiles and gestures, thumbs-up, again.*)

LA LLORONA. No! (She starts to cry. It builds and builds. But again, she catches herself mid-wail.) No. There's no time. (Her crying has broken the spell, but good. MIGUEL is MIGUEL. The dogs have awakened as well. Suddenly she hears something.) Listen! (He looks at her like she's nuts. She puts her hands to his ears and