

Prietita and the Ghost Woman

La Llorona as told by Gloria Anzaldúa

Prietita was at the house of la curandera – the healer. She was working in the garden when her little sister Miranda came running toward her. Prietita could see that she was frightened.

“Prietita, Mami feels very bad. It’s the old sickness again. Can you ask la curandera to help?”

“Yes, I’ll ask her,” said Prietita, getting up and hugging her little sister. “Doña Lola can cure almost any sickness. She knows lots of remedies. She’s teaching me all about them.”

Prietita went to the curandera. “Doña Lola,” said Prietita respectfully, “You know every healing plant in this valley. My mother has the old sickness again. Is there any remedy that can help her?”

“Yes, there is a *remedio*”, said the curandera. I have all the ingredients except for one – the leaves from the rue plant. I’m sorry, *mijita*, but I’ve used up all the *ruda* I had and none of the neighbors grow it. I know there is some in the woods. But it is dangerous to go in there. It is not safe for a little girl.”

Prietita decided that she had to find the healing plant. That afternoon she walked to the woods. She stayed close to the fence, but as she searched for the rue plant she walked deeper into the woods. Suddenly, she thought she heard a crying sound, and she remembered her grandmother’s stories of *la Llorona* – the ghost woman dressed in white. Her grandmother said that *la Llorona* appeared at night by rivers or lagoons, crying for her lost children and looking for other children to steal.

Prietita shivered. She turned and looked for the fence, but she didn’t see it. She was lost. She began to cry, but then she said to herself, “Don’t give up, Prietita. You have to find the rue for Mami.”

Again Prietita heard a soft crying sound. She wanted to run away, but she forced herself to walk toward the sound. She came to a

lagoon where the moon was reflected on the water. She saw a dark woman dressed in white come out from the trees and float above the water.

In a trembling voice, Prietita asked the ghost woman. "Please, Señora, can you help me find some rue?"

The ghost woman floated along the side of the lagoon and Prietita followed her. Soon the woman stopped and pointed to the ground. The moon moved in the sky and suddenly Prietita could see the plant. She examined it – yes, it was the rue! No longer afraid, she took the plant and looked up at the ghost woman. "Thank you, Señora Llorona."

The ghost woman guided Prietita through the woods. Finally, Prietitia saw the fence. She turned to say good-bye to her new friend, but no one was there. The ghost woman had disappeared.

Then, Prietita saw people with flashlight. It was her family and the curandera! "How did you find your way out of the woods?" asked Doña Lola.

"A ghost woman in white was my guide," Prietita said.

Lo llorona!" said Prietita's sister, Miranda. "But everyone knows she takes children away. She doesn't bring them back."

"Perhaps she is not what others think she is," said Doña Lola.

Silently, Prietita put the rue plant into the hands of la curandera. "Gracias, mijita. Thank you, my child," said Doña Lola. Prietita smiled.

"Tomorrow, I'll show you how to prepare the healing remedio for your mother," said Doña Lola. "I am very proud of you. You have grown up this night."