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Family Plays

DON COYOTE

A folktale for children

by

Silvia Ashby



DON COYOTE

“A fun script ... The dialogue is fast-paced, and the addition of Spanish words adds flavor and interest. The play is portable, requiring little scenery ... can be performed for and by children grades K-6” (*BYU Children’s Book Review*)

“All characters are animals, each delightful in his own way.”

(Longview TV Facts)

“This is a good play for children, both to perform and to watch ... the audience enjoyed it enormously. Its pace is quick, it’s got a lot of color and humor, and it’s easy for children as young as five to understand.” (Chico, Calif., *News & Review*, reporting on the Peppermint Palace production)

Folktale. By Sylvia Ashby. *Cast: 10 to 20+ actors, flexible.* As she did with her much-acclaimed *Professor Zucchini’s Traveling Tales*, Sylvia Ashby dipped into folklore for this one Mexican and Native American tales. The incorrigible coyote just can’t resist playing pranks on his friends. His tricks nearly always backfire, and he takes a “crash landing” ... but he never learns that you don’t make friends that way. Premiered by the Lubbock, Texas, Children’s Theatre. The Spanish words in the dialog may be minimized or emphasized. This amusing play has ample opportunities for Mexican folk songs. “La Cucaracha,” “La Golondrina,” “Mexican Hat Dance,” and others add to the fun and spectacle. A vocal and guitar score for original music, “Don Coyote’s Song,” is included in the playbook. Adding dancing and singing to the fast-moving plot produces an enchanting musical. Full production notes included. Most roles may be played by males or females, adults or children. A wonderful opportunity to put an entire classroom or a mixture of classes on stage. *Simple desert scene. Approximate running time: 40 to 60 minutes. Code: DE1.*

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Don Coyote

DON COYOTE

A Play for Children

by

SYLVIA ASHBY

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311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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(DON COYOTE)

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ABOUT THE PLAY

Like that fellow who fights windmills, Don Coyote has impossible dreams. He'd like to fly like birds, rule the animal kingdom like lions, ride bucking broncos like cowboys . . . The only thing he doesn't want to be is "just" a coyote.

Don Coyote (pronounced with three syllables: "ky-OH-tee"—or perhaps "ky-YO-tee") is like most of us: Overlooking our own abilities and talents, we envy and covet the unattainable feats of people we admire. What scrawny little boy has never daydreamed of himself as a giant football player; what stringy-haired little girl has never pictured herself as a glamorous movie star? What decrepit old Don Quixote has never looked in the mirror to see a dashing young knight in shining armor?

"The idea of 'be yourself' fitted into some of the values discussions we have had in the upper grades," an elementary school principal wrote the producers of a touring production of *Don Coyote*. "The play appealed even to this wide age-range of children (K-5). The response was beautiful . . . indicating how they were captured by the story," the letter went on to say. "There were some unexpected benefits. The teachers observed some children re-enacting the play while on the playground . . . This was a pleasurable experience for everyone, but I also recommend it as a learning experience."

Sylvia Ashby, author of the highly popular *Professor Zuccini's Traveling Tales* based on Italian folklore, found her inspiration for this play in the folklore and animal tales of Mexico and the American Southwest. One incident is Zúñi. The Tarahumare still race with stick and ball.

Don Coyote permits great flexibility in casting. Most roles may be played by males or females, adults or children. It may be performed by as few as nine or ten players, or as many as the stage will hold (see the Production Notes at the back of this book for suggestions). It offers an opportunity to put an entire classroom or a mixture of classes on stage.

"One of my favorite productions was in Longview (Texas) with kids from elementary through junior high. Coyote was played by an impish sixth grader," Mrs. Ashby said.

Set in the desert, the play can be staged with simple scenery (a few cut-out rocks and cactus). Fanciful animal costumes and make-up add to the fun of producing *Don Coyote*.

Numerous successful productions were mounted prior to publication, some with elaborate scenery and costumes, some with minimal effects.

DON COYOTE

Cast

(In order of appearance)

Don Coyote
Madame Javelina
Ring Tail
Puerco, a porcupine
Horn Toad
Uncle Armadillo
Poco Armadillo
Poquita Armadillo
Delgadina, a skinny sheep
Abundancia, a fat sheep
Cricket
Rabbit
Bumble Bee
Yellow Jacket
Hornet
Lord Leon, a mountain lion
Burro
Señora
Zunilda
Rosa
Rita
Lupe } *Blackbirds*

(All roles may be played by 10 performers—see Production Notes at back of book)

Playing time: 40-60 minutes, depending on amount of dancing, etc.

Setting: Southwestern U. S. Desert, today or yesterday or any time



*First presented by the Lubbock (Texas) Children's Theatre,
directed by Toni Cobb, artistic direction by Pam Brown*

The author suggests that emphasis be placed on Coyote's positive talent—singing. One complete song is included in the text (see appendix for melody); and on two or three other occasions, Coyote delivers rhyming lines, which may also be sung or chanted. He is obviously much better at singing than at flying, kiting, or cowboying.

The Spanish words in the dialog may be minimized or emphasized. The amount of Spanish used in pre-publication productions varied greatly. "Mainly, the Spanish is a matter of flavoring: season to taste," the author advises. "Don't be put off by the Spanish; the meanings are implicit." Each time Spanish is used, the speaker also gives the English equivalent.

Pre-publication productions included the world premiere by the Lubbock Children's Theatre Festival for that city's Fine Arts Festival in 1981, and numerous performances by public and Catholic high schools, elementary schools, community theatres, and children's theatres.

"This is a good play for children, both to perform and to watch, and the little ones in the audience enjoyed it enormously. Its pace is quick, it's got a lot of color and humor, and it's easy for children as young as five to understand. [There were] looks of pleasure on the faces of all the children in the room."—review of the Chico, Calif., Peppermint Palace Children's Theatre production (*Chico News & Review*)

"A play guaranteed to bring smiles to young faces . . . all characters are animals, each delightful in his own way."—Longview, Texas, *TV Facts* report of the Longview Community Theatre Children's Summer Workshop production.



Synopsis

The main plot of *Don Coyote* centers on the Golden Gourd Race. The speedy Coyote has won the race every year for as long as anybody can remember, and, consequently, no one wants to compete with him this year. So the promoters decide to call the race off. No race, no prizes. It's bad enough to lose the honor of winning, but the prizes consist of *food!*—and Don Coyote is *always* hungry. To save the race, the tricky Coyote talks old, feeble Uncle (or Auntie) Armadillo into running against him.

Several subplots involve Coyote's efforts to outwit the other animals

of the desert, like Puerco (a porcupine), Javelina,* Horn Toad, and various other birds, insects, and furry creatures. The incorrigible Coyote can't help playing pranks on the other animals even when there's little to be gained. Nearly always his tricks backfire, and he takes "a crash landing."

In the end, Don Coyote is the victim of a trick himself, causing him to lose the race and—hopefully—to reform his mischievous ways. Do you think he will?

* "Javelina" is a Southwestern American word for the peccary or wild pig, but many American dictionaries do not include the word. It is pronounced "have-uh-LEAN-uh."

PRODUCTION NOTES

Properties

Several gourds*
 Several racing sticks*
 Volume of Records, pen or pencil—Horn Toad
 Rapier-like swords or fencing foils—Insects
 Pointer or baton—Señora
 Feathers*—Birds
 Prickly pear fruit*—on cactus
 Pebbles—on ground (for Coyote)
 Long (6') sack—behind rock (for Coyote)
 4 red cloth headbands—Puerco (for Coyote & Uncle), Poco, Poquita
 Archway decorated with colorful paper flowers—Animals
 Scroll—Puerco
 Finish line*
 "Prizes" (jars of honey, basket of corn, baskets of fruit)—Animals
 Prize ribbon—Lion (to pin on Uncle)
 Optional banners, streamers, flowers—Animals

* Irregular grapefruit-sized *gourds* are easier to manage; make this pear-shaped melon from papier mache or styrofoam, or use real gourds. Clearly display the gourd to audience during Coyote's first speech. Use gourds for all stage business, but fake gourds for race into auditorium (or have gourd tied to the racing stick like a paddle ball). During the race the gourd may be kicked or hit with:

Racing sticks. For striking and controlling the gourds, the three-foot-long racing sticks can be fashioned from wood, cane, etc., and decorated with colorful streamers. Puerco brings on Uncle's; Coyote's can be used in the first scene or preset near rock; young Armadillos bring theirs on from wings.

Prickly pear fruit is red and about the size of a fig or a very small pear (a large strawberry or cherry tomato may pass on stage as the fruit). Poke toothpicks into the fruit as the spines (fruit may be shaped from styrofoam, in which case Uncle will have to fake eating it).

Feathers, for Coyote in the Bird scene, need not be realistic. Large feather-shaped pieces of cloth, net—whatever—may be attached to Coyote's shirt with Velcro. Of course, real feathers may be used, but they should be very large.

Finish line can consist of two poles with streamers or rope stretched across. Or Animals can simply hold two ends of the rope, or Animals can shift the decorated archway downstage for runners to charge through.

Costumes and Make-Up

The play can be produced with a basic outfit, such as leotards or jeans and shirts, plus animal-costume details. The details may simply be a mere suggestion—ears and a tail for Coyote, for example. Adding a Mexican flavor, with sombreros, ponchos, serapes, etc., creates an attractive and colorful effect.

Make-up should fit the costume. That is, if merely a suggestion of animal details is used for the costume, a similar suggestion will do for make-up. Animal make-up is fun, however, and a good book, such as Irene Corey's *The Mask of Reality*, shows how to do it realistically. Masks also work well.

Other suggestions for costumes and make-up are included in the next section:

Characterizations

Coyote (pronounced with three syllables—"ky-OH-tee"): Thick golden coat; full, bushy tail; long sharp face with whiskers, keen eyes. As Mark Twain wrote in *Roughing It*, "The coyote is a living, breathing allegory of Want. He is *always* hungry." To the Southwestern Indian he exhibits anti-social qualities but is, above all, a symbol of human nature. As the irrepressible fool, he has the potential for both good and evil. Though the coyote is regarded as something of a Lone Wolf, Don Coyote of our script takes the audience into his confidence; there should be a sense of intimacy between Coyote and his audience. Our Don, like his kinfolk, is noted for his skill at running and singing (Indians considered him as the bringer of song). He has also inherited the coyote reputation, according to folklore, for scheming, boastful, vain, greedy, fumbling, but fun-loving behavior. In spite of everything, there is something lovable about this irrepressible clown.

Uncle Armadillo: Noted for his distinctive armored shell; speaks and moves slowly (actually, the armadillo moves with great speed—definitely not a turtle; but Uncle is old and decrepit); not overly bright, he has a certain rural simplicity; a good-natured rustic full of conventional wisdom, given to bromides and proverbs. He has the traditional values and old-fashioned morals; he is grandfatherly, courteous, helpful, sympathetic.

Little Armadillos: Uncle's nephew and niece, Poco and Poquita. They are loyal and protective. An impish, impudent, little-rascal quality would be appropriate.

Porcupine: The Spanish term for porcupine is "puerco espina," literally, "Porky Spine." Our Señor Puerco (poo-EHR-ko) is overly serious, an officious bureaucrat. In charge of the games and Fiesta, he is careful to follow the rules; tends to be a pompous, long-winded bore; should have a legalistic, pedantic touch. Emphasize his long spiny coat (soda straws make good spines).

Horn Toad: He is Boswell to Puerco's Johnson. An admiring sycophant, he mimics Puerco's words and copiously takes notes on all the details. The horned toad is actually a member of the lizard family—a relic of the dinosaur age with his thorny coat and one spiny "horn" in the center of his forehead. Eyeglasses are a possibility.

Lion: The mountain lion (cougar, puma), though not as imposing and majestic as the African king of the jungle, is nevertheless a member of an aristocratic breed. Our Lord Leon (be sure to give his name the Spanish pronunciation—lay-OWN) is likeable even though he has a certain quality of "noblesse oblige." He is a confident politician, the undisputed kingpin, with a charm and easy sense of power.

Cricket: Caruso Cricket, an aspiring opera singer in the Italian tradition, should have the manners and gestures of the serious student of the vocal arts.

Javelina: Otherwise known as a peccary ("javelina" is the feminine form of the word "jabali" and is pronounced "have-uh-LEAN-uh"). This wild pig is distinguished by a grizzly collar—a light ruff of stiff long hair ringing the neck and shoulders. Javelinas have long muzzles, tusks pointing downward, large prickly ears, and short tails. They can be angry and aggressive. Think of our Madame Javelina as a gruff, blustery, hot-tempered, determined, impatient, fat matron.

Ring Tail: Belongs to the raccoon family, distinguished by a very long slender tail encircled by seven black-and-white rings (the tail is half as long as the body). Cat-like claws, fox-like face, with fur a golden brown to light gray. Sometimes called a miner's cat, these animals make desirable pets. Like all ring tails, our Rico is shy and timid but appealing. Rico is especially intimidated by Javelina.

Birds: The birds in this play are red-winged blackbirds. Señora, their leader, is in control of her flock, though a bit on the fluttery and forgetful side. Her chorus consists of Zunilda, domineering; Rosa, a follower; Rita, perhaps a bit clumsy and argumentative, and Lupe.

Sheep: Two desert bighorn ewes with large horns which coil back. The sheep are ladylike and a bit timid and giggly. Delgadina is thin; Abundancia is fat.

Rabbit: Roberto can be a jack rabbit (with longer ears than other rabbits—like a jackass—and a black tail). Or Roberto can be of the desert cottontail variety with white belly, white fluffy tail, long teeth. Rabbits are alert, with sensitive ears and nose and keen eyes.

Insects: Bumble Bee, Yellow Jacket, and Hornet move rapidly, determinedly, with much fiendish buzzing.

Burro: The strong silent type—the plain-spoken outdoor Westerner.

Casting

With doubling, this play can be performed with as few as nine or ten actors: Puerco can also play Burro; Horn Toad can double as an insect and a bird; Javelina, Ring Tail, Poco, and Poquita can play birds; Ring Tail and Poquita can also appear as sheep; Poco, as Cricket, and Poquita as an insect; Lion, as an insect; and Señora as Rabbit. The Bird Chorus can be reduced to three by distributing Lupe's lines.

There is no maximum limit to the cast size. Any number of animals and birds can participate in the Fiesta scenes. The Bird Chorus can be expanded, and so can the number of Insect warriors.

The script offers flexibility in terms of sex as well as size. Coyote has been played effectively by both males and females. Poco and Poquita have been transformed into Poquita and Juanita; the sheep have appeared as Delgadino and Abundancio. Uncle Armadillo has been seen as Auntie Armadillo.

Lights, Sound, and Special Effects

The play has no particular lighting requirements—dazzlingly bright light is typical of the desert. Most of the sound effects can be provided vocally by the performers. The bugle blast can be recorded or rendered live—onstage by one of the performers, or offstage.

Piano accompaniment works but is not necessary. A guitar makes a good addition to Fiesta. Mexican music—"The Mexican Hat Dance," "La Cucaracha," "La Golondrina," and many others—is available on records and tapes and as sheet music.

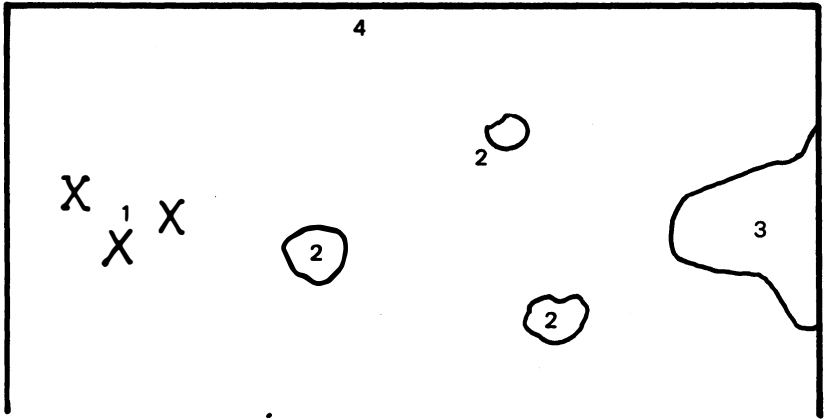
"Don Coyote's Song" can be a production number with Animals singing and dancing (a vocal score is provided on page 31). Coyote's short verses can be spoken, sung, or omitted.

The Set

Minimal set consists of two pieces: a rock and a cactus clump. Painted two-dimensional cutouts work very well and fit the fantasy mode of the play. More scenery can be added, of course, and platforms, ground rows, a backdrop painted with a desert scene, and rocks scattered around the set provide atmosphere. A platform (and/or a trampoline) helps in the Bird scenes for the flying business. Fiesta can evolve into a colorful spectacle as performers bring on festive decorations . . . especially the huge, colorful paper flowers so popular in Mexico.

Most important is the shape of the rock: the overhanging ledge must be high enough for actors to stand below it and raise their arms as if supporting the ledge.

Suggested Floor Plan



Scale: 1/8" = 1'

- 1—Cactus (including one or more clumps of prickly pear)
- 2—Random rocks
- 3—Rock outcropping with overhang
- 4—Optional backdrop with desert scene



**Program cover design
for Thomas More Catholic
High School, Lubbock**

DON COYOTE

[Southwestern desert locale. At Stage Right a high mesa rock with overhanging ledge. At Stage Left a thicket of cactus: tall barrel cactus and shrub-like prickly pear. Other decor—stumps, gnarled tree, boulders—may be added.]

AT RISE: Mexican folk MUSIC. DON COYOTE acrobatically bounds across stage, yelps with joy, greets the audience:]

COYOTE. Hola! Amigos! My friends! You arrived in time for the Fiesta! Now, each and every one of you can watch while Coyote triumphs again at the annual Kick the Golden Gourd Race. *[Tosses gourd up into the air]* Me—Don Coyote—the fastest runner in the West . . . *[Wistfully]* Me—the hungriest runner in the West. I don't know if I can last . . . *[Plaintive howl]* Yaaaaa oooooo uuuuuuu . . .

JAVELINA. *[Offstage]* Coyote! Coyote! *[COYOTE playfully sneaks behind rock. JAVELINA charges on, furiously snorting]* Ring Tail, do you see him anywhere?

RING TAIL. *[Following her]* No. I'm sorry, Madame Javelina. *[Scouting]* Coyote . . . Coyote . . .

JAVELINA. Don Coyote! Where are you? *[While they circle the rock, COYOTE steals over to cactus in hide-and-seek style]*

RING TAIL. Coyote . . .

JAVELINA. I'll sink my tusks right into that rascal! That unreliable—

RING TAIL. *[Timidly]* Now, now, Madame Javelina.

JAVELINA. Ring Tail, you check over by the cactus. *[COYOTE briefly eludes the pair]*

RING TAIL. Oh, there you are, Coyote. *[Cheerfully]* Hola!

JAVELINA. Coyote, you're supposed to help with songs for the Fiesta. Don't deny it.

COYOTE. Who cares about singing?

RING TAIL. But you promised to teach us a new song. Didn't he, Javelina?

COYOTE. My dear Rico Ring Tail—truly I swear—I am more of a solitary singer. Besides, anybody can make up songs.

RING TAIL. *[Admiring]* Not like you.

JAVELINA. They don't call you Song Dog of the Desert for nothing.

COYOTE. But I only sing when I'm sad. When I'm alone and blue. And right now—I am in the mood for a good time. Olé!

JAVELINA. [*Snorting*] You p-promised!

RING TAIL. Por favorcito. Help us out, Coyote. We like to hear you sing.

COYOTE. Singing is not important. I am more interested in the race tonight—the prizes: corn, melons—you know how hungry I get— [*Enter Señor PUERCO and his assistant, HORN TOAD. PUERCO carries a yellow-orange gourd and a slender, yard-long racing stick. HORN TOAD carries the official volume of Records*]

PUERCO. Greetings to you this bright and sunny day. [*Bows*] Buenos dias.

HORN TOAD. [*Displaying gourd*] Well, Señor Puerco? Who will race against me?

PUERCO. Nobody. That is precisely the problem. We have no volunteers.

HORN TOAD. [*Studiously taking notes*] “No volunteers . . .”

COYOTE. [*Pleading*] Madame Javelina?

JAVELINA. I . . . I . . . put on a little weight lately . . .

COYOTE. Ring Tail?

RING TAIL. [*Stroking tail*] My long tail is such a nuisance . . . when I run . . . it catches in all the prickers.

COYOTE. [*Wheedling*] Horn Toad, my friend. Will you race against me?

HORN TOAD. Horn toad? Not me. I might get hurt.

PUERCO. [*Announcing from the Records*] Coyote, listen: Winner of last year’s Kick the Golden Gourd Race—

HORN TOAD. [*Reciting*] Don Coyote.

PUERCO. And the winner from the year before:

HORN TOAD. Don Coyote.

PUERCO. And the winner from—

HORN TOAD. Don Coyote.

COYOTE. But who will race against me this year?

PUERCO. As I just said: Nobody!

JAVELINA. Because you always win.

COYOTE. Cowards!

PUERCO. It grieves me to inform you that this year’s Golden Gourd Race will have to be called off.

HORN TOAD. Si. Si. “. . . called off.”

COYOTE. [*Attacking Puerco*] Call off the race! End a noble tradition! [*UNCLE ARMADILLO slowly enters, followed by his nephew and niece, POCO and POQUITA*]

UNCLE. [*Fanning*] So hot today. Que calor!

COYOTE. Señor Puerco, you are in charge of the games. Find me a worthy opponent!

UNCLE. We armadillos like to be helpful. Perhaps I should offer my services as a gesture of courtesy . . .

POCO & POQUITA. Uncle! Shhhhh.

PUERCO. Coyote, you have a sharp nose but very poor ears: [*Yelling into his ear*] All the animals refuse.

COYOTE. A fine Fiesta! Contests, games, the Blackbird Dance—but no Gourd Race! Puerco—

PUERCO. Horn Toad, what did I just say?

HORN TOAD. “Horn Toad, what did I just say?” Oh! [*Reading notes*] “. . . Gourd Race . . . called off.”

UNCLE. [*As POCO and POQUITA try to restrain him*] I’m not much of a runner . . . but if it would help . . . maybe I . . .

JAVELINA. [*Laughing*] An old armadillo!

POCO & POQUITA. Uncle, don’t volunteer!

COYOTE. [*Moaning and groaning in pretended pain*] Owwwwwww. [*Clutching leg*] Look. I hurt my leg. Fell off that rock, I swear. Owwwwwww. [*Hobbling away*] I’m limping. Anyone could beat me now. Even an old armadillo. [*Sits, clutching foot, still howling in pain*]

RING TAIL. Coyote does seem to have a bad limp.

COYOTE. And I sprained my left toe—even hurts when I kick the gourd. [*Light kick*] Owwwwwww. [*More exaggerated misery*]

UNCLE. [*Philosophically*] Who knows which branch the dove will choose?

JAVELINA. What’s that supposed to mean!

UNCLE. [*Crossing to still-moaning Coyote*] Or, as I always say: Querer es poder. To desire is to achieve! Si. My mind is made up. I will race you, Coyote. [*Shaking hands*] Amigo.

POCO & POQUITA. Uncle!

PUERCO. Uncle, I present you with the Golden Gourd. And the Racing Stick. Horn Toad, enter his name in the Records . . .

HORN TOAD. How do you spell “armadillo”? With two d’s?

COYOTE. [*Observing UNCLE practicing*] Uncle, you need lessons. [*Remembers to limp*]

POQUITA. We will help you, Uncle. Poco, you show him.

POCO. [*Demonstrating soccer-like technique*] Kick and run. Kick and run.

UNCLE. I can almost do it. Look, Poquita. [*As ANIMALS disperse or busy themselves, COYOTE cartwheels Down Center to audience*]

COYOTE. [*Laughing*] Ha! Once again at the Fiesta, Don Coyote will triumph! [*Kicking up his heels*] Don Coyote—the Desert Dasher—
[*Leaps for joy, bursts into loud howl*] Yaaa uuuuuuuuu . . .

ANIMALS. [*Turning in fury*] Coyote! [*As ANIMALS rail at him, COYOTE races off into wings or auditorium aisle*]

PUERCO. Remarkable recovery!

POCO. Injured leg, my foot!

POQUITA. He tricked you, Uncle!

JAVELINA. That scoundrel Coyote. I knew it all along.

POQUITA. Uncle, you can still back out of the race.

UNCLE. No, Poquita. A promise is a promise.

POQUITA. But he cheated you—

PUERCO. [*Exiting*] That scheming, deceitful, conceited—but clever!
. . . Muy astuto.

HORN TOAD. And such a devil. Muy diablo!

UNCLE. [*Depressed*] Ohhh, my dear little niece and nephew. Whatever will I do? An armadillo racing a coyote! Well, as I always say: What cannot be remedied must be endured.

POCO. Don't worry. We'll help you.

POQUITA. After all, you're family—our uncle!

POCO. Look, Uncle. Use the Racing Stick—like this. [*Exits demonstrating*]

[*UNCLE and POQUITA follow him out Right. COYOTE returns, Stage Left, speaks to audience*]

COYOTE. I'm so hungry I could eat a dozen rattlesnake sandwiches. How would you like rattlesnake for lunch? You know, they say we of the Coyote Clan will eat anything—items no other animal would touch. We can't help it—we just get hungry. But tonight—when you see me win the race—I will dine on delicious corn, juicy melons—but now my stomach's growling like a mountain lion. [*Punches belly*] Silencio! I—Don Coyote—in other words, Sir Coyote—known throughout this desert for my cunning, my skill—

SHEEP. [*Offstage*] Baaaahhhhh. Baaaahhhhh.

COYOTE. [*Perking up*] Que bueno! I hear the dinner bell. Ringing sweetly. [*Mouth waters as two desert bighorn sheep, DELGADINA and ABUNDANCIA, enter. Spotting Coyote, they draw back timidly*]

COYOTE. [*Extravagantly*] Hola! My friends. Señoritas! Buenos dias, my sweet little sheep.

SHEEP. [*Approaching cautiously*] Buenos dias.

COYOTE. [*Bowing*] Don Coyote, at your service.

SHEEP. [*Curtsy*] Oh, gracias.

DELGADINA. [*Eagerly, crossing to Center*] Are we in time for the race?

ABUNDANCIA. [*Enthusiastically*] In time for the Fiesta?

COYOTE. [*Stepping between them and putting his arms around them*] In fact, sweet ladies, you have arrived in time for dinner.

SHEEP. [*Tittering*] Oh, muchas gracias.

COYOTE. [*Grabbing one with each hand*] My dinner! [*SHEEP pull away in opposite directions. Brief tug-of-war with COYOTE in Center*]

SHEEP. [*Screaming*] Oh, no. Not me!

DELGADINA. Look. All skin and bones. That's why they call me Delgadina. Because I'm so skinny. [*SHEEP break away. COYOTE takes turns chasing one, then the other*]

ABUNDANCIA. I'm too fat. That's why they call me Abundancia—because I'm so—so—abundant!

DELGADINA. [*Giggling*] Fat!

ABUNDANCIA. Don't eat me. I'm too greasy. Hard to digest.

DELGADINA. [*As the chase continues*] I'm too stringy. Hard to chew.

SHEEP. [*Pointing at each other*] Take her!

COYOTE. [*To audience*] Which one should I choose? [*Teasing*] This scrawny one? Or this plump one?

SHEEP. Take her!

COYOTE. [*Enjoying himself*] Let me see . . .

DELGADINA. Don't start with me. Not enough meat on me.

ABUNDANCIA. Save me for dessert, por favor.

COYOTE. Caramba! I have it. We will play a little game. The one who wins goes free.

SHEEP. Gracias, Don Coyote. [*SHEEP cross toward Center; COYOTE stands between them, speaks to audience*]

COYOTE. Watch this.

SHEEP. Un millon de gracias.

COYOTE. [*With sombrero draws imaginary line on ground*] This is the finish line. [*Straddles line*] First one to cross this line wins. Comprende?

SHEEP. Si. Si. I go free.

COYOTE. Andale! [*As COYOTE stands Center, one SHEEP faces Right, the other Left; they pace away from each other, duel-style, counting slowly*]

SHEEP. Uno . . . dos . . . tres . . . cuatro . . .

ABUNDANCIA. [*To audience*] Should I try to run away?

DELGADINA. Coyote would only catch me—

COYOTE. [*Smugly*] I am famous for my speed.

SHEEP. Cinco . . . seis . . . siete . . . ocho . . .

COYOTE. [*To audience*] Who will win? Doesn't matter. They'll both come charging toward each other— [*collision gesture*] Zas! I win! I devour them both! Yaaa iiiiii!

SHEEP. Nueve . . . diez.

COYOTE. Atencion! Keep your eye on my sombrero. When this hat touches the ground—that's the signal. [*Grandly swings hat down*] Go!

SHEEP. Baaaaaaahhhhhhh. Baaaaaaahhhhhhh. [*One leap from the finish line, they swerve upward, furiously butting COYOTE, who flies into the air*] Powwwww!

COYOTE. [*Landing*] Ayyyyyyyyy. Ay de mi.

SHEEP. [*Holding up each other's hand, prize-fight style*] The winner! By a knockout!

COYOTE. [*Still moaning*] Ayyyyyyyyyyyyy.

ABUNDANCIA. [*Going off, giggling*] Adios, Don Coyote . . .

DELGADINA. [*Waving*] Hasta la vista!

SHEEP. Sorry we couldn't stay for dinner . . . [*COYOTE comes to, somewhat dazed*]

COYOTE. Can't trust anyone these days! [*To audience*] Did you see that? [*Sadly*] One more crash landing:

Whenever my hopes are high,

I always come crashing down.

Whenever I reach for the sky,

I fall on my face like a clown.

[*Recovering*] Heart, don't despair. Think of the Fiesta. The race. The prizes. Mmmmmmmmm—fruit, honey . . .

CRICKET. [*Off*] Mi, mi, mi, mi, mi, mi, miiiiiiiiiiiiiii . . .

COYOTE. [*Perking up*] Ah, Caruso Cricket. Serenading me. Teeth: get set. Here comes crispy, crunchy Cricket.

CRICKET. [*Enters vocalizing*] Figaro-o-o . . . Figaro-o-o . . . Figaro-o-o— [*spotting Coyote*] OOOOHHH— [*Runs*]