



A New Mexican Musical Montage
and
A Tales of Tila sequel

by **Carolyn Chatwin Murset**



Newport, Maine

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TRAILS OF TILA!

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ORDER # 2106

TILA—At opening, 12 years old, then progressively again to 69 years, Spirited

SETTING: Taos, New Mexico

Time: 1912 through 1971, then the present

PROPS: 2 chairs, a trunk (with good stuff in it), and a Guitar

SYNOPSIS OF MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT ONE

Scene One — a garden on a late summer morning, in Placitas, a neighborhood in Taos, New Mexico. 1912

#1 — We Didn't Take Our Chances, part1

#1a — We Didn't Take our Chances, part2

#2 — Partners in Crime, part1

#2a — Partners in Crime, part2

#2b — Partners in Crime, part3

#3 — The Young Suitor, part1

#3a — The Young Suitor, part2

#4 — 600 Miles (Stay Awake)

Scene Two — Tila's living room, Taos, New Mexico, the present.

#5 — A Teenager's Omission

#6 — Is This Etsy?

#7 — Not a Fabricator

#8 — Food for Thought

#9 — Red, or Green?

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

Scene Three — Christmas season, 1950s, Los Alamos, then 1960's Taos New Mexico

#10 — The Little Lie

#11 — We'll Wait

#12 — Las Posadas

#13 — Biscochito

Scene Four — Taos, New Mexico, late 1960s

#14 — Those Cataracts

#15 — Trujillo's Bible

#16 — I Left My Trail

#17a — Sweeter Than Honey, part1

#17b — Sweeter Than Honey, part2

#18 — You're Human, part 1

#18a — You're Human, part2

TRAILS OF TILA a One-Woman Musical by Carolyn Chatwin Murset 1f. Simple setting. About 80 minutes. **Trails of Tila** is a montage of stories based on the life of author Carolyn Murset's lively Latina Grandmother Domitila (Tila) Miera Trujillo's life during the first half of the twentieth century in northern New Mexico. This musical is a sequel to **Tales of Tila**, Carolyn's original musical. Tila was the wife of a shepherd, and a mother of ten who joyfully navigated her way through the Spanish Flu Epidemic, the Great War (WW1), the Great Depression, World War 2, and the creation of the Atomic Bomb. Her husband, Juan Manuel Trujillo built government housing in the Secret City of Los Alamos, New Mexico during the mid 1940's and the family lived there a few years later. Tila tells stories of cultural New Mexican Christmas traditions, and how she left trails for other to follow. She encourages readers to leave a written trail and a physical trail for others to remember them by. In both plays, Tila returns after being gone since 1971 and interprets current events through the eyes of someone who's been away for several decades. Get your Spanglish on! **ORDER #2106**

CAROLYN MURSET I live a quiet life as many of you do, out of the spotlight. I'm a nice and friendly half-Hispanic grandma, singer/songwriter tortilla-maker. I grew up in the 1960's in Taos, New Mexico. I learned to play the guitar and wrote my first song while I was in high school during the 1970's. My first guitar was a \$25 special, complete with vinyl gig bag. I listened along with my older brother and sister to the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. When they left home, I added Linda Ronstadt, and Fleetwood Mac to the stack of LP's my siblings left behind, and the tunes wafting through the wooden record player console eventually evolved through the decades into my iTunes playlist, with a little Allison Kraus, Chris Proctor, and Lennon & Maisy thrown in with the predecessors. My first weekly gig was back in the early 1990's at noon on Friday's at Chumley's vegetarian cafe in Hurricane, Utah, where I was paid with a large slice of cheese lasagna. At another gig at a local restaurant, I once fell into the hot tub during a break in-between sets, and no one even mentioned my wet dress afterwards. But I got a lot of tips that night. Since then, I've played at fairs, celebrations, festivals, private parties, fundraisers, etc. Now that I think of it, all of those events would be celebrations.

I premiered my original one woman musical *Tales of Tila* at the Electric Theatre in St. George, Utah, October, 2018 (produced by Wilford Brimley), ran it again at Brigham's Playhouse September 2019 and then took it to New Mexico in November where my Hispanic family stories originated! In 2021 it was filmed onstage by Flower and Bone Productions at q-Staff Theatre in Albuquerque (and streamed online, due to COVID-19 restrictions in New Mexico.) I've self-produced three CD's: "People Change," "He is My Song," and "My Gray Sky to Blue" I've been a member of a couple of local bands that have since disbanded. I play the guitar, mandolin, ukulele and banjo and have studied with Trish Gale, Richard Hart, and will resume my role as a student of Lisle Crowley before I lose my callouses. I dabble with the banjo, mandolin and harmonica. I'm an original, but now, former member of the John Houston Gospel Choir in St. George, Utah. You can find her music on iTunes, etc. and her podcast at mycarolynmurset.com.

I have played roles in *The Addams Family Musical*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Great Circus Caper*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *Harvey*.

My remarkable five children and their incredible spouses have given me and my husband, Rich, sixteen grandchildren! Some of these youngsters jam with me in my music studio, and some of them dance with me.

My siblings had appointed me as the family historian, probably because I'd kept a journal for years and had shown interest in our family ancestry. Soon after they piled the family records onto my lap, I came across my Grandma Tila's personal history.

Act One

Relatively Speaking

SCENE ONE: *A garden with growing vegetables and many weeds waiting to be pulled. It is a late summer morning, in Placitas, a neighborhood in Taos, New Mexico. 1912. Stage left are two wooden southwest style chairs side by side, about seven inches apart. The chair on the right is center stage. A wooden guitar stand is directly to the right of it.*

Behind the chairs is a trunk that will hold aprons, and small props. Stage right is a small table and chair. Throughout the play the chairs become and represent various objects as needed in the scenes. In this scene they represent the buggy (with horses) that her parents and older brothers take to work in the fields nine miles away from the family home.

A black rotary telephone is on top of the table that preferably has a drawer to hold the cellphone, a box of chocolates, and other items when needed.)

(AT RISE: TILA, a young teen girl, full of life, wearing a work apron over her dress enters stage left, holding a classical guitar. She sees the weeds she should be pulling, motions right for her brother, Victor to enter, and points to the chair on the left for Victor to sit on. She places the guitar on the stand.)

TILA: *(nodding to Victor)* My brother, Victor and I were the youngest of eleven children in our family. He and I made mischief together. A lot.

(She sings)

MUSICAL #1 — We Didn't Take Our Chances

HOW COULD YOU BLAME US?

OUR MOTHER AND OUR FATHER LEFT US ALL ALONE TOGETHER

DURING THE DAY, WHILE THEY AND THE OLDER BROTHERS

WITH THE HORSES AND THE WAGON, WENT TO THE FIELDS

MUY LEJOS EN ARROYO SECO, NINE MILES AWAY

I WAS TEN, AND HE WAS EIGHT,

TOO YOUNG TO BE OF HELP, SO THEY SAY.

(She speaks)

At home, we fed the chickens, gathered eggs, swept, and pulled the weeds that were all over creation!
We helped!

(She sings)

BUT WE DIDN'T PULL AS MANY IN THE GARDEN AS WE COULD HAVE
WE COULDN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE FROM A SQUASH CALABAZA

and those broad leaf whatever you call it weeds,

SO WE DIDN'T TAKE OUR CHANCES
GUESSING WHAT TO PULL, AND WHAT TO LEAVE

(She speaks)

in the ground.

(She stands, motions for Victor to stand, and she points to the weeds.)

“Oye, Victor, I keep saying, These are squash, and **those** are the weeds.

Or is it the other way around? Oh, let's not touch any of them. I don't want us to get in trouble again!

“Mira! Look over here. These are the *quelites*, the ones *mamá* says are weeds, but are edible and good for us. Oh, is **that** what was mixed in with the meat and the corn yesterday? I'm with you. Let's pull them out and hide them! “

My name is Maria Otila Domitila Miera Trujillo. Call me Tila.

I was born in Taos in 1902 when the roads were unpaved, and the dirt floor adobe houses crumbled if you didn't re-plaster the outside walls often. If you were smart, you put a pitched tin roof on your house to keep the melting winter snow from leaking.

If you weren't smart, you left your roof flat and had a lot of buckets. New Mexico was still a U. S. territory for another ten years until it entered the union, as state number 47. Arizona, number 48, joined a month later.

I had to make the family's tortillas when I was just a little taller than the weeds over by the chicken coop. It was so hard that I prayed in the garden for help! When la Carolina , my granddaughter found and read this childhood story in the pile of family history records I left behind, she started writing musical plays about my life! And about tortillas!

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PRODUCTION PURPOSES to the following group:

Only four of the eleven children in our family were girls. My oldest sister, Maria Magdalena died when she was just ten years old. When I was ten, Jacinta and Eduvigen were already married and made really good tortillas,

(She continues singing)

MUSICAL #1a — We Didn't Take our Chances

BUT THEY WOULDN'T SHARE WHAT THEY HAD MADE
UNLESS WE WENT TO GET THEM.
I SHOULD'VE WATCHED AND HELPED AND ASKED

How, when mamá made them

BEFORE I GOT THE TASK
THE TORTILLA TASK, TORTILLA TASK.

(She speaks)

It was now my job to make them every day. Mamá chose to help Papá and the older brothers way the heck away.

“Victor! You are no help! Just because you hear Moises and Lino calling my tortillas crackers when they come home starving and tired, you think it's so funny that while they're away working, you tease me about it, too.”

“Stop it! It isn't funny. Just wait! Should I laugh at how you carry in the wood for the stove one stick, one twig at a time?”...

I got back at him once, okay, twice by tying his bootlaces together while he sat at the table eating his queso and apple for breakfast. He stood up and stumbled, and on the way down, conked his head on the edge of the table.

(She sings)

MUSICAL #2 — Partners in Crime

WE WERE PARTNERS IN CRIME
HE DIDN'T TATTLE ON ME
BUT THE COLORFUL BRUISE
THAT WAS HARD NOT TO SEE

WELL, OUR PARENTS, THEY KNEW
HOW I LIKED TO REVENGE
SO, IS THIS STORY TRUE?
DO YOU LIKE THE SUSPENSE?

(She speaks)

Whether this story is true or not, you'll have to ask my granddaughter. She'll tell you that because we didn't write EVERYTHING down before we left, she's had to make some things up. I don't mind.

Anyway, we all "grew up". Well, we got older, and seven years later I got married to Juan Manuel Trujillo (now, pay attention to these names, because things are going to get really confusing in a little while, and you might have to draw a diagram!)

(From here until the end of the scene, the author recommends using six 18" dolls on stands, perhaps labelled, each representing Victor, Marina, Simonita, Fred, Manuel and Celia, keeping them off stage until needed to lessen the intended confusion.)

(She sings)

MUSICAL #2a — Partners in Crime

WHEN VICTOR WAS TWENTY THREE,
ALMOST AN OLD MAN

He made a good choice for a wife, Marina Trujillo of Manassa, Colorado, north of Taos

EIGHTY-ONE MILES AWAY

We don't know if she's related to my husband's family

PERHAPS SOME OF YOU
WITH YOUR FANCY COMPUTERS
CAN FIGURE THIS OUT
BEFORE THE MILLENNIUM.

(She speaks)

This is how they met: they both lived within the boundaries of the Spanish American Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The missionaries where she lived wanted her to marry a good Mormon boy, and los misioneros where he lived wanted him to marry a good Mormon girl.

So, both sets of missionaries arranged for Victor and Marina to attend the next mission District Conference. As their son, Sam would today tell you, “That was all the push they needed, and they were married for over 60 years!”

(She sings)

MUSICAL #2b — Partners in Crime

I KNOW, THAT IS A WONDERFUL STORY!

Anyway, Marina Trujillo Miera and I were a year apart in age and she and I became great friends and sisters-in-law, living not too far away from each other. My brother Jose Manuel Miera (remember, my husband is Juan Manuel Trujillo) got married to Celia, and their first child was my niece, Simonita, nine years younger than me.

They moved back and forth between Colorado and Taos, and when they stayed in Taos, they lived only a hop, skip and a jump away, and as Simonita got older, she started coming over by herself.

She’d watch and help me make tortillas, or cheese or listen to me and Marina talk about the things we wished we could buy from the Sears and Roebuck Catalog, if we had the money. Or how we’d love to visit that new JCPenney store in Santa Fe, if we had the money, and something faster than a horse and a buggy, to get us there, like an airplane!

Well Simonita, that niece of mine soon grew into a beautiful young lady, and became interested in a young man that her parents, and Marina and I weren’t too excited about., maybe because Marina had a good looking and eligible brother living in her hometown in Colorado. So what do you think my sister in law who always had a twinkle in her eye did?

(She sings)

MUSICAL #3 — The Young Suitor

SHE CORRESPONDED WITH HER BROTHER
AND TOLD HIM TO WRITE TO OUR NIECE
WITH COURTSHIP IN MIND.
HE FOLLOWED HER ADVICE
AND WROTE TO SIMONITA
WHO EASILY COULD TELL THAT HE WAS KIND.

SHE RESPONDED IN WRITING
WITH HARDLY EVER SIGHTING
THE YOUNG SUITOR, TRYING TO WOO HER, AND TO WED.
THIS CONTINUED FOR A WHILE
LETTERS CROSSED THE MANY MILES
AND WE ONLY CAN IMAGINE WHAT THEY SAID!

(She speaks)

Marina and Victor and I were really happy about it. The first time Simonita saw Fred, he was trying to sell potatoes to her family because he was poor. They didn't buy any because they were poor. She was scared and didn't tell her parents that when Fred was in town, he'd walk her home slowly from her housekeeping job and hold her hand.

Well, Marina was a good person. She and her parents and her siblings were all great, honest and hardworking people. They lived in Manassa, worked for and were converted to the LDS Church by the Mormon farmers who were called to settle the area by President John Taylor.

This Familia Trujillo joined the Church before I did. Heck, Marina made it to the temple twenty years before I did. So, if my sister in law, who even taught herself to play the piano when she was little, was that good of a person, I figured her brother, Fred Trujillo would be too.

(She sings)

MUSICAL #3a — The Young Suitor

WE DIDN'T WORRY WHEN HE WROTE

AND PROPOSED TO SIMONITA

AND SHE ANSWERED IN HER LETTER WITH A “YES”!

THEY HAD HARDLY MET IN PERSON

DIDN’T REALLY KNOW EACH OTHER

THOUGHT THEY FELT

THAT IT WOULD WORK OUT FOR THE BEST.

THEY KNEW THAT IT WOULD WORK OUT FOR THE BEST.

(She speaks)

A week after she said “Yes”, he showed up with his parents from Colorado to marry her. This was a complete surprise to her parents.

Celia said, “I’m not happy about this! Our daughter is only seventeen years old, and if we allow them to marry, she and Fred will move away to Colorado!”

But her father (my brother) said, “I don’t want the visitors to have come all this way for nothing! Marina! Take this money and you and Tila take Simonita to buy a dress.”

So the three of us went to Gusdorf’s Dry Good store on the Taos Plaza, and let her choose a pretty dress for this important occasion.

“I’ve been here before. The women’s clothing department is up the stairs. Come on! Oh, look how pretty these dresses are. Look, it’s that drop waist style we saw in that catalog. Simonita, do you like any of these? Which one? Which color? The red with blue trim? Try it on. Try these tan shoes on, too. They go with everything. Oh, that white hat you just found does, too. The dressing room is in that corner.”

“Celia is going to be so mad at us, Marina, especially you, the matchmaker! I was 17 when I got married, and I’m turning out alright, am I not? Oh, *cállate!* You were 23 when you married my brother, and we’re just as smart as each other now. It’s all evened out.”

“Oh, Simonita,! *Que bonita!* Is this one your choice? Good. Go back now, and change into your regular clothes. Then we’ll go down to the counter and pay. We don’t have much time. Your father is waiting for us outside in the buggy. I can hear the horses. They must be hungry. ”

Oh, I'm shivering, and I'm sure she is, too. I don't want her mother and my brother to be mad at us. But it's exciting and romantic, don't you think?

Well, people, start drawing that diagram now, because today, June 21, 1929 Fred Trujillo, the brother of my brother Victor Miera's wife, Marina Trujillo Miera, married our niece, Simonita Miera, who is now Trujillo.

Yes, my brother's wife's brother married our niece. And we all share the same last names, in both directions. And some of their family members are also cousins to their aunts and uncles. No, wait. They are sisters and brothers in law to their aunts and uncles... No, wait. Sigh...My head is spinning. Good luck to you family historians in keeping that one straight.

So I was right in guessing that Fred would return to Colorado with his bride, my Simonita, where he could continue selling potatoes, and later, be a mechanic. It's a good thing her parents lived close to my house, so we could see each other when they came to visit.

Celia went and helped with their babies, and there were seven of them. No, not all at once, don't be silly. She wanted to help with baby Irene after they moved to Utah, but Mercedes their oldest was 14 by then and was a big help. Simonita had to stay in the hospital for two weeks after the birth because of complications. This was during the Second World War, when Fred worked at Hill Air Force Base, in maintenance.

That is also where my brother Victor worked when he and Marina moved to Utah, a short time after that. Nobody asked me if they could move away. He got tired of farming and shepherding in Taos, and wanted a steady income. I guess I don't blame him, but if you drive to northern Utah, where they all moved to, it takes over twelve hours to get there from here. But it's a really good time once we arrive.

Doesn't it seem like there should be another song right about here? La Carolina wrote this one for her own musical life story a while back, which she'll never get around to finishing. So it's mine now.

(Tila sits in the chair next to the guitar, picks it up, plays it and sings,)

MUSICAL #4 — 600 Miles (Stay Awake)

SIX HUNDRED MILES

I WISH WE HAD A CHEVY

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WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?
OUR EYELIDS ARE HEAVY!

WINDOWS GO UP AND DOWN
WHEELS, TURNING ROUND AND ROUND
ONES WE LOVE ARE ON THEIR KNEES
SOMEONE'S WATCHING OVER HIM AND ME.

SOME THINK WE'RE CRAZY
TO BRAVE THE MILES IN THAT TRUCK.
TRUJILLO BESIDE ME,
WE'LL GET THERE WITH ANY LUCK!

GOING TO SEE DEAR FAMILY.
AND ON THE WAY SO MUCH TO SEE.
RELIEVE THE PAST THAT WENT TOO FAST,
THAT WENT TOO FAST!

SIX HUNDRED MILES,
1941 INTERNATIONAL.
TRUJILLO WON'T STOP NOW,
HE'S BEING IRRATIONAL!

WINDOWS GO UP AND DOWN,
WHEELS TURNING ROUND AND ROUND.
ONES WE LOVE, STAY ON YOUR KNEES
UNTIL WE RETURN, WOULD YOU PLEASE?
ON YOUR KNEES....PRETTY PLEASE?

(She speaks)

After that first visit, I caught rides with **other** family members who were going in that direction. Most of our kids and their spouses eventually moved away and lived in Utah, Albuquerque, Denver, California.

Marcia and Tex were even in Louisiana for a while, and brought us some shrimp. I really like shrimp, but have to close my eyes when I eat them because they look like little monsters or those aliens I saw in that science fiction movie at the theater the other day.

Anyway, I got to visit my kids and their families, and even flew in an airplane once to California! The ride was noisy and bumpy, a lot like riding in the truck, or even with the horses and the buggy. But the shopping trip to JCPenney in Los Angeles once I got there made it all worthwhile!

SCENE TWO: *Tila's living room, Taos, New Mexico, the present.*

(AT RISE: Tila, in her late 60's wears an apron. The ledger is on the table. A box of candy is in a drawer.)

TILA: La Carolina has been writing plays about me. That other play she performs and wears herself out with is Tales of Tila. This one is "Trails of Tila". If your vision isn't 20/20, you might have thought this was "Trials of Tila". Well, my Trials left Trails, so.

In the other play I tell about Los Alamos, New Mexico in the 1940's. I ask the audience "What is a fabricator?", and tell them, "I'll look it up", but forget to tell the answer. In that secret city, fabricators made the Atomic Bombs called Little Boy and Fat Man, the necessary evils that brought World War 2 to an end.

Another kind of fabricator is someone who makes up stories that aren't true. I don't do that.

During my lifetime I went to the movies many times with my husband, Trujillo, but never to a play. But here I am again, on a stage, thanks to my granddaughter. Right before I died of heart failure in 1971, I stayed in her bedroom for a while so her mother, my daughter, Nora could take care of me. La Carolina was thirteen

(She sits next to the guitar, picks it up and sings.)

MUSICAL #5 — A Teenager's Omission

AND DIDN'T ASK PERMISSION

TO TELL MY STORIES NOW
THIS TEENAGER’S OMISSION
BEFORE I LEFT, THOUGH
HOW WOULD SHE KNOW TO LOOK AND SING
WHAT MANY YEARS FROM THEN WOULD BRING?
SO, HERE WE ARE NOW. HERE WE ARE, NOW!

(She returns the guitar to the stand, stands up and walks to table and picks up the ledger. She speaks.)

Two thousand and what? ... Where did I go? To a better place. I had been a respectable person depending on who you ask. And while I was in Taos,

(She sings)

I KEPT TRACK OF THINGS AND WROTE DOWN
A FEW DETAILS IN A BOOK
THAT MY TRUJILLO BROUGHT TO ME
FROM WORK ONE DAY, AND LOOK:

I WROTE MESSAGES TO MY OLD MAN
SOME ANGRY, TELLING OFF.
DID HE RESIST IN ANSWERING?
ARE YOU KIDDING? HE SHOWED OFF!

(She speaks imitating Trujillo.)

“This woman and this TV are the perdition of this poor man. Amen.”

(In her voice)

“*Viejo lindo*, my darling old man, you really do enjoy watching that TV, don’t you? No other New Mexican loves and studies that television as much as you do!”

(She sings)

AND, KNOWING THEN WHAT I KNOW NOW
I COULD HAVE BEEN MORE NICE.
BUT, LOOKING BACK, OUR ARGUMENTS
WERE SILLY, MORE THAN VICE.

AND IMPECCABLY OUR HANDWRITING
WOULD EASE AWAY THE STING
OF COMPLICATED DIFFERENCES
IN HEARTACHE, YET UNSEEN.

(She speaks)

When you don't have a typewriter, you get a lot of practice writing by hand. And you get callouses on your fingers and cramps in your hands. But writing by hand is therapeutic.

Before there were PaperMate fine point pens, there was a lot of ink smearing and you had to be careful not to knock over the little jar of ink. Well, my parents and their parents had that problem when they used the feather quills and ink pots. By the time I was an adult, we had modern fountain pens. Look them up. Fountain pens. I digress.

Little did I know that for decades after I died, my grandchildren would be arguing over who got to keep the book.

(Mimicking an annoying cousin)

"I'll bet you anything that Carolyn has it!"

(As Carolyn)

"No, I only have digital photos of the pages. Photos that someone else took. I looked at them and copied the best parts and then translated them," even though her Spanish isn't very good.

I will now keep pretending to be my granddaughter, using what you now call a cell phone:

(You decide where she gets a cell phone from....?)

This feels like I'm putting a bar of soap next to my head!

(No Spanish accent) "Tío Jesse! How are you? How is Aunt Ginger? We're coming next month to see you in Tacoma. Yes, I'm working on my Spanish.....um *más despacio*, slower, *por favor*..... Um, *en ingles?* in English? Of course! We'll take you to lunch. You choose the place. Okay, nice talking to you. I'll keep practicing and we'll talk more Spanish then. Love you, bye."

She can pronounce it and sing it, but when she talks to my son, Jesse on the phone and he speaks to her in Spanish, **that** happens.

He and my other kids were punished for speaking Spanish at school. It was their first language! He later served a church mission speaking our language, and later went on to become a high school Spanish teacher. He can speak French, too, and went with his students to Europe on a field trip. Jesse is my ninth of ten children. Marcia, my tenth, joined me here a few years ago. I don't want to see Jesse or Tito, # 7 here soon. Their kids and grandkids need them. There.

This book?

(pointing to it)

It's a ledger. My granddaughter bought it from a store online called Etsy? It already looked old like mine does now. Mine is in worse condition now than when Trujillo and I used it, and she wouldn't have used it in her plays. She doesn't have it anyway, remember?

By the way....What is an online store? Does that mean you call over the telephone line,

(She sings)

MUSICAL #6 — Is This Etsy?

“HELLO, IS THIS ETSY?

ARE YOU THE ONE IN CHARGE? OKAY!

DO YOU HAVE A USED, OLD LEDGER BOOK

FOR SALE, IF SO, I'LL ORDER ONE.

But it can't fall apart if you handle it a lot. My name.... Domitila Trujillo”,

THEN, I SPELL IT OUT FOR HER OR HIM.

“BOX 42, *EL PRADO*, IN NEW MEXICO

(New Mexico. North of the border. Um, um. North....)

87529. HOW MUCH?”

I SHOULD HAVE ASKED...THAT QUESTION FIRST.

“WHEN I GET IT, I WILL SEND A CHECK TO..

What's your address?

OKAY, BYE, BUENO, THANK YOU!

OKAY ADIOS”, WE CONVERSE.

(She speaks)

Then you send your *viejo*, your old man to get it at the Post Office when it arrives two weeks later? No? Was I close? Yes? Which part?

In my day, Taos didn’t have many stores to shop at, except for JC Penney, which came to Taos sometime after 1925, stayed a few decades, then left. There’s an art gallery in that building now, one of many dozens in town.

We had a Safeway and neighborhood grocery stores like Taos Supermarket with the Fiesta Bakery connected to it. This grocer had the S&H Green Stamp Redemption Center in the front of the store. I didn’t want Trujillo to get mad at me for buying my collection of dishes, that matching shoe and purse set, and the Avon Skin So Soft. (My cousin sells it. How could I turn her down when she comes all the way to the house with her glossy catalogs and lipstick samples?)

So, I collected the green stamps every time I bought groceries there and spent a qualifying amount, and came home.

“Oye, Grandkids! I have some more stamps for you to come and stick on the pages. You can use the sponge or your tongue. But don’t get it too wet. The sponge. And don’t slobber. Your tongue. Who wants to help me?”

Every page held 50 stamps and when you filled the book they gave you, you could go and redeem them for merchandise at the S&H center.

(She gets the guitar puts a strap around her neck, sings and plays.)

MUSICAL #7 — Not a Fabricator

WHAT DID I GET? A BATHROOM SCALE.

(Not that I’d gained any weight after having ten kids).

AS BUSY AS THEY KEPT ME,

I WOULD’VE KEPT THE WEIGHT OFF

BUT MY WEAKNESS FOR...FILL IN THE BLANK,
I DON'T REMEMBER

NO, I NEVER TOOK MY SWEET TRUJILLO'S CHOCOLATE
OR CORDIAL CHERRIES,
I'M NOT A FABRICATOR!

(She returns guitar to stand and gets candy box.)

HE SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD THEM ANYWAY.
NO, HE SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD THEM ANYWAY!

I HAD TO TELL HIS FAMILY
NOT TO GIFT THEM FOR HIS BIRTHDAY
ON NEW YEAR'S DAY
IT WAS SO EASY TO REMEMBER!

BUT MINE IS ONLY TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT.
A LONG ENOUGH TIME FOR FAMILY TO FORGET IT.
I'M KIDDING YOU!
THEY DIDN'T FORGET IT.

(She speaks)

Trujillo and I both got diabetes, but he stayed skinny. Not because I ate his candy! I feel sorry for our kids and grandkids, and hope there is a cure for it today. There isn't yet? Oh, who wants to watch their diet and exercise? That was a rhetorical question, and I wasn't going to talk about that. Yet. I get so distracted!

(She sings)

MUSICAL #8 — Food for Thought

EXPENDITURES AND PURCHASES
I WROTE DOWN IN THE BOOK.

That's what I was talking about. \$8.00 rent? Not bad. \$250 for a radio?

I HOPE YOU DON'T PAY THAT MUCH NOW,
TECHNOLOGY'S NOW CHEAP, SOMEHOW?

Since there were so many blank pages, I wrote down recipes for enchiladas, and so on.

AND TAUGHT MY GIRLS TO MAKE THEM
THEY TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN, TOO.
KITCHEN HERITAGE CONTINUED,

WHAT ELSE COULD I DO
TO LEAVE A PATH, TO LEAVE A TRAIL
FOR LOVED ONES THEN TO FOLLOW?
IT ISN'T JUST FOR FOOD TO EAT,

IT'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT TOMORROW.
IT'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT TOMORROW!

(The tempo picks up.)

(She speaks)

Some of the ink in the ledger is so faded now that I can't tell whether I used green or red chile peppers to make the enchiladas with. I guess the ink inside those fountain pen cartridges wasn't meant to last forever.

But I remember that either color was tasty depending on who made them.

(She sings)

MUSICAL #9 — Red, or Green?

IF COUSIN MELINA TRIED TO FEED US
SOME OF HERS, WE'D SAY,
“OOH, THEY LOOK DELICIOUS,
MAYBE DOME OTHER DAY, DEAR PRIMA!”

DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT'S BEEN

SINCE I ATE AN ENCHILADA?
OR ANYTHING ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER?

How long ago was 1971? You do the math.

THE ONES I MADE WERE HEAVENLY
THEY CALLED THEM THAT , BUT THEY
DON'T SERVE THEM HERE,
SO HOW WOULD ANYONE KNOW
UNLESS THEY DIED, AND CAME BACK,

(The music vamps while she speaks:)

Hey! I hear that some of you are using flour *tortillas* instead of corn. Flour? Stop right now! Save them for *burritos* and for scooping *frijoles*. Or poke holes for your eyes, nose and mouth and use them to keep your face warm when you walk to and from school in the snow, in 12 degree weather, uphill both ways. Like Jesse says he did.

(She sings)

DO YOU KNOW NEW MEXICO'S
OFFICIAL STATE QUESTION?
IT'S "RED, OR GREEN?"

Does your United State have an official question? No? Oh... Sorry. Anyway, the people who can't make up their minds request,

"CHRISTMAS, PLEASE, RED AND GREEN SAUCE!"

I never asked for that. I didn't like my sauces to touch.

SPEAKING OF CHRISTMAS,

I hope I can decipher the recipe for our Official State Cookie (your State doesn't have one? *Lo siento*, sorry..) that we made during the holiday season, because I'm going to teach you how to make them, after intermission, so stick around. And remember:

IF YOU DON'T USE A PEN WITH GOOD ENOUGH INK

when you write down those recipes to leave a trail for your family to remember you by, then you've written a **recipe for** (say it with me,) **disaster**.

END OF ACT ONE

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

Christmas In New Mexico

SCENE THREE: *Christmas season, 1950's, Los Alamos, then 1960's Taos New Mexico.*

(AT RISE: There is a Nativity set on the table. TILA in her mid 50's wears a Christmas apron over her dress. In the trunk behind the chairs is a Christmas stocking and clip to attach it to a chair, a brown lunch size paper bag, a pillow case, three different sized mixing bowls, a glass, a butter knife, and a small rolling pin. Draped over the chair next to the table is a shawl that Tila will wear over her head during #12 Las Posadas.)

TILA: My husband, Trujillo and I had ten children, eight lived to adulthood. They married, and some lived nearby. Ralph and Ursula lived in Taos, downtown near the plaza, and Lula and Joe, by the high school. At Christmastime, they came in the evening, bringing tamales or tortillas.

Some of our other kids and their families were only a few hours away, in Albuquerque. They brought the biscochitos, the cookies I'm telling you how to make in a little while. Nora and Wally lived in California, Tito and Carmen in Denver. Arthur and Ida in Salt Lake City. They brought themselves. The women helped in the kitchen, making posole, and empanaditas. The men and older boys went outside and chopped wood for the stove.

Earlier, in the summer, the grandsons, including Nora's son Lynn and Lula's Waldo went with their grandfather to the mountains to gather the wood, and in return Trujillo watched them practice driving the truck around the pasture behind the house. I tried not to watch, even though they couldn't drive very fast. If they wrecked, how would Trujillo take me to Taos Supermarket or to the movies. We sold the horses and the buggy after the war. And I don't like to walk that mile if I can get a ride.

Because, at Christmastime, with all the people who visit, I have to go to the store all the time to restock the cupboard and the fridge. I can only carry so many bags in my arms before I start dropping and rolling the oranges that are supposed to go in the Christmas stockings with the nuts and the ribbon candy. It ruins the surprise if any of my grandkids see me struggling.

“No, no! I don't want you to help. I don't want you telling the other kids what they're getting in their stocking!”

(whispering)

even though it's the same thing every year.

Speaking of Christmas stockings, I will tell a sad story, but don't get mad at me: After the second World War, those of us who were still at home in Taos talked Trujillo into moving to Los Alamos where he'd worked during the war.

“Marcia, Jesse, I've already tried! I ask him every day. You talk to him. And ask him nicely. He might listen to you.”

He later told everyone, “We only moved there so she'd stop nagging me about it.” That wasn't the sad part. It's coming.

The houses there were smaller than ours in Taos, but they had indoor bathrooms with plumbing: a bathtub, a sink and that thing that you sit on, which is better than an outhouse!

Anyway, one Christmas while there, Nora and Wally came to visit with their two young children, Susan and Lynn. At bedtime on *la Noche Buena*, Christmas Eve, Susan wanted to hang up a stocking for her and for her little brother.

(She gets the Christmas stocking out of the trunk and sings)

MUSICAL #10 — The Little Lie

SANTA DOESN'T FILL THE STOCKINGS
IN LOS ALAMOS
I DON'T THINK THAT HE'LL BE STOPPING
LET'S NOT LEAVE A NOTE.

FOR, IN THE MORNING, HERE'S MY WARNING,
MY SAD GUARANTEE:
THERE WON'T BE A TREAT INSIDE,
NO TOY THERE TO SEE.

TECHNICALLY, I HAD A REASON
FOR THIS LITTLE LIE.
LOS ALAMOS, IN ANY SEASON

I WILL TELL YOU WHY:

ATOMIC BOMB CREATED THERE
TO SECRECY, THE TOWN DID SWEAR!

(She speaks)

Susan didn't believe me when I told her and got her dad to pin a couple of stockings on the back of an upholstered chair.

In the morning, those stockings were still empty. Her smiles turned into tears.

(She sings)

NO WARM AND FUZZY HALLMARK STORY,
SUSAN NOW BELIEVED
HER GRANDMA TILA
POOR, NO GLORY
ON THAT CHRISTMAS EVE.
ON THAT CHRISTMAS EVE.

17 MORE PAGES TO THE END