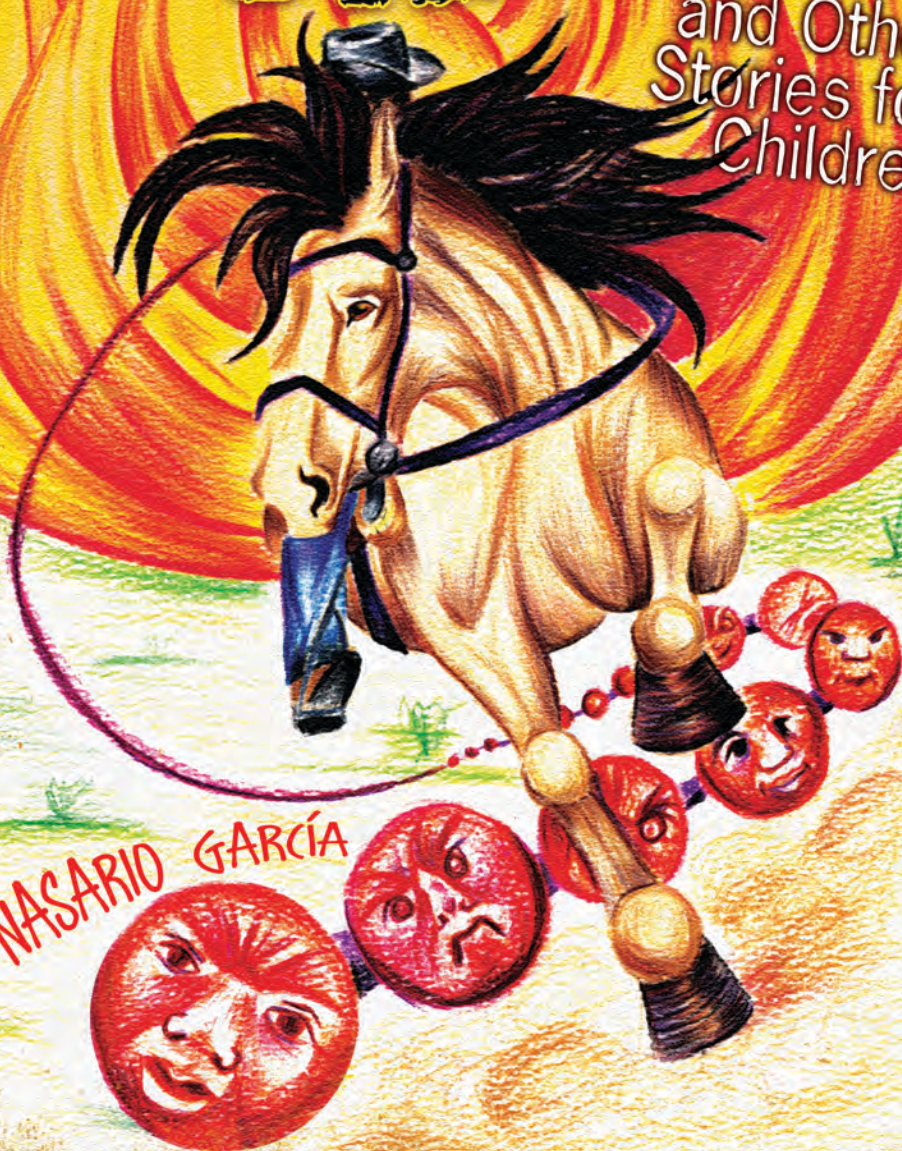


RATTLING CHAINS

and Other
Stories for
Children



NASARIO GARCÍA

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for Children

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PIÑATA BOOKS
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CONTENTS

1	<i>Preface</i>
5	<i>The Magical Nicho</i>
19	<i>The Coquimbo Owl</i>
29	<i>No More Bogeyman!</i>
37	<i>A Buried Treasure</i>
49	<i>Rattling Chains</i>

TO MY BELOVED GRANDDAUGHTERS
Ashley Cristina Morris-García
and Hannah Renée Morris-García

TWO FUTURE READERS

PREFACE

New Mexico is known as the Land of Enchantment. These words can be found on the state's license plates and countless other places, including books. For the non native New Mexican, the three words may evoke an assortment of thoughts or guesswork regarding what lurks behind them. They may sound mystical and enticing, but the allure of enchantment gradually captivates the newcomer or visitor to our state once he or she embarks on a tour of New Mexico. From the landscape to the people and its history, a mosaic of splendor unveils before their eyes. But for us natives, the words on the license plates are unmistakable. They spell magic.

The stories in *Rattling Chains and Other Stories for Children / Ruido de cadenas y otros cuentos para niños* are typical of New Mexico's kaleidoscope of enchantment. They can be enjoyed by grownups—parents and grandparents—reading them to their children or grandchildren or children reading them on their own. I heard many tales like these at the dinner table, around the potbelly stove on cold winter nights, at campfires during cattle roundups and while working in the cornfields at our country ranch

where I spent the first nine years of my childhood before moving to Albuquerque.

I grew up in the Rio Puerco Valley in rural New Mexico, about forty-five miles northwest of Albuquerque. Ojo del Padre (Guadalupe in more modern times), today a ghost town, was the name of my village, although my family and I, along with my paternal grandparents and an aunt and uncle and their family, lived about two miles from the *placita* (town). My grandfather homesteaded near here during the latter part of the nineteenth century after migrating with his parents from the Rio Grande Valley.

It is said that Ojo del Padre was named in honor of a priest who discovered a spring not far from what was to become the hub of the village, now dating back more than 250 years. Water in that arid part of New Mexico is still a scarce commodity so the priest's discovery as he stumbled upon the spring in the middle of the desert was nothing less than a miracle in a state known for its magic.

When I was a small boy living on the farm there were no books at home, television, radio or record player (my mother did listen once a week to her favorite Mexican songs on a battery-operated radio that my father bought for her), but I was blessed with something more wonderful, precious and enduring. I had my parents and grandparents who could neither read nor write, but they were fabulous storytellers. Their tantalizing stories were the "real deal," the flesh and blood of narratives related to witches, the Wailing Woman, animals disguised as

ghostly apparitions and a host of other supernatural creatures.

Rattling Chains and Other Stories for Children / Ruido de cadenas y otros cuentos para niños is a collection of stories lodged in New Mexican folklore whose appeal is universal in scope. The stories are my own creation. They embody a fundamental slice of my childhood world of fantasy and superstitions and were inspired by stories I heard or episodes I experienced firsthand at our ranch. Tales like these were appealing to kids like me when I was a small boy, and they are still just as engaging for children today. So come along and join Junie López, our narrator, on his journey of fun and fancy.

Nasario García, Ph.D.
Santa Fe, New Mexico
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