



The Boy and the Rose

by Dale Hill

“The Boy and the Rose” is a case study of a gifted/talented student and his parents. The names of the family, as well as other people in the study, have been changed to protect their privacy. The facts in the study were gleaned as a result of perusing public and private records and the conducting of personal interviews by the author. In some instances, supposition and divination are used to fill in the gaps in the narrative. “The Boy and the Rose” has drawn upon the tradition and conventions of Southwestern folk tales such as “La Llorona” (“The Weeping Woman”) to shape its structure; with their themes of misplaced affection, unrequited love, and their resultant consequences, they echo this study.

Once upon a time,

in a prairie town not so far away, lived a small boy named David. And, as many of these stories go, David was a very special boy. He had been born 8 years before, not in this prairie town, but in the big city of San Antonio to a mother named Isabel and a father named Unspecified—at least that was what it said on the Bexar County birth notice. Now, of course, every child has a father, even if you can't necessarily track him down, and David's father is Tony. But, don't mention his name to David's family, especially his *tías*, because they'll purse their lips and shake their

heads and let out low mutterings. But, I'm getting ahead of this story because the story really begins with Isabel.



She was born in Mexico, and when Isabel was a young girl, she was sent to Texas, along with her two older sisters, to live with her *tías* and *tíos* in San Antonio. She liked her new home and went to school and made good grades, just like her sisters. After a few years, her oldest sister graduated from high school and soon got married. Next, the middle sister graduated, and she got married.

Now it was Isabel's turn. She graduated from high school, but much to her family's surprise, she didn't get married. She got a job, moved into an apartment with some friends from school, and seemed to be happy. Her sisters and her *tías* just shook their heads.

A few years went by, and she kept on working, but she still didn't get married. Now the *tías* were *scratching* their heads.

“What is the matter with Isabel?” they kept asking each other.

And then they asked Isabel, “What's the matter with *you*?”

But, Isabel just shrugged her shoulders and blushed, for she was very quiet

and shy and didn't like to be asked such personal questions.

The years went along, and Isabel turned 30, and her family had finally given up asking when it happened. One night, to please her friends, she went to a dance club, and there, sitting alone because she was too quiet and shy to dance, she met Tony.

Tony was not quiet and he was not shy. He was a flirt, a ladies man, and a pool player. He was an excellent pool player, and he made money at it. He had even once been on cable TV. He won tournaments and traveled all over Texas and Louisiana and Oklahoma. Sometimes he won four or five thousand dollars at a time, but usually spent as much as he made. He was in San Antonio to play pool that very weekend, and when he saw Isabel, he was taken aback by her beauty. (Did I forget to mention, as many of these stories go, that Isabel, of the three daughters in her family, was the prettiest? It's the truth.) He started talking to Isabel, and he didn't seem to mind when she didn't talk back, for he had enough conversation for the both of them. He refused to leave her side that night, and before the night was over, to please him (and secretly to please herself), she danced with him.

He called her the next day (having gotten her phone number from her helpful friends), and he took her out dancing. They went out the next night, and the next, and the next. Isabel's friends told her sisters that Isabel was in love, and she just might have been. Then, two things happened. Tony left for another tournament, and a few weeks later (and this is *not* like these stories usually go), Isabel discovered that she was expecting a baby. Her sisters and her *tías* did not like the looks of this, but when Tony told Isabel they would get married, they were relieved. "At least she will be married," they thought, "even if it is to a pool player."

Isabel and her family were soon making plans for her wedding. All seemed well until one day, just weeks before the ceremony, Tony told Isabel that he couldn't marry her. He just wasn't ready to give up the exciting life of a pool player and settle down, he said. Isabel, being quiet and shy, didn't say very much, but she was very hurt. Her *tías*, not being quiet and shy, said a lot.

"You might as well try to marry the wind!" one of them told her.

Another called him "pool room trash" and other names too strong to mention in a story like this.

So, Isabel took her sadness and packed it up with her wedding dress and got ready to have a baby. And, just before Thanksgiving, she had a little boy and she named him David.

In the hospital that day when the officials asked for a surname, Isabel's family gave David their name, Loya. After all, when the father is unspecified, what else is there to do? And so, David Loya went home with Isabel and her sisters and her *tías* and her *tíos* and soon proved himself to be a very special boy.

Everyone remarked to Isabel, "My, David is talking so early!"

"My, David is such a bright *chico*!" they would say.

Isabel would usually just smile, being so quiet and shy, and thank them. She would then pass this information on to Tony in the form of letters because, you see, she was still in love with that pool player. He would oftentimes send money to Isabel, and even a few times he came to see her and little David when there was a pool tournament close by. But, Isabel's family had no use for him, and they warned Isabel to guard her heart and her son with equal fierceness.



And so time passed, and when David was 4, Isabel moved to that

prairie town outside of Dallas. An uncle had just been given a job with a new company, and he thought there might be a position for Isabel, one that would pay her more money. So, Isabel came north with her child and a sense of relief at being a bit removed from her *tías* and their watchful eyes. That fall, David started kindergarten, and almost at once his teacher also remarked to Isabel about his brightness.

"He should be tested," she said.

And when Isabel gave her permission, tests were administered, and they showed David to be very smart, indeed. Now, he was called *gifted* David Loya, and Isabel was very proud. As David went on to 1st grade, his teachers were constantly remarking on his progress.

"Did you know his IQ is above 130?" they would ask.

"He sees math in everything, even in playing pool!" said another innocently.

"He wishes he had a computer and plans to build the best one and can tell you how he would do it," said a third.

As intelligent as David was, he was equally as sensitive. In fact, Isabel had remarked upon this very thing in one of the observation papers the teachers had asked her to fill out and sign. "Is sensitive and aware of other's feelings" it had said, and Isabel had put a big check mark under *Siempre*, for Isabel still spoke mostly Spanish. However, David could speak and read both Spanish and English with astonishing ease.

"He's reading on a 6th-grade level in both languages, and he hasn't even started 2nd grade!" his teachers marveled.

But, one thing was bothering David: Being bright and sensitive, he was aware of the absence of his father, Tony, and of Tony's surname, Rodriguez, as his own. As he got to know other students in his class, he noticed that they almost all had their

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father's names, and, more importantly, they told stories of times shared together. David had none of these, and he wished more than anything to have them. He would have even given up his most prized possession, the trophy given to him for catching the longest fish in the Grand Prairie Fishing for Kids tournament held earlier that summer, he told his mother, if his father were here with them. And then she told him the most amazing news: She and his father were going to be married!

Absence from each other, and perhaps from the ever-scornful eyes of Isabel's *tías*, had made Tony and Isabel's hearts grow fonder. Tony had been paying ever more frequent visits to the little house on Oak Street where David and his mother lived, and at the end of one of those visits, he had asked Isabel to marry him. Being quiet and shy, she had waited a day to give him her answer, "Yes." But, she was not so quiet and shy that she failed to summon the courage to ask Tony to give up the pool hall life, and Tony also said, "Yes." And so, in the summer before David's 2nd-grade year, Tony and Isabel were married and David had the father and the name he had always wanted. The birth records were changed. Now, David had a birth father, Tony Rodriguez, so specified, and David's social security card had a new spelling, and David was happy.



Now, as many of these stories go, this should be the end, but this is not altogether one of those stories. David started 2nd grade a happy little boy, and now it was his new teacher Mrs. Cordero's turn to beam and remark about his brightness.

"He is so creative!" she would say to her friends in the teacher's lounge.

"He is amazingly inventive!" would

be her proclamation in the teacher's workroom.

"It takes all my skill to challenge him!" she would exclaim at teacher's meetings.

But, as summer turned to fall, the sun began its retreat from the little house on Oak Street, as well. Tony was doing construction work, and the hands that had once caressed pool cues and young ladies with the same dexterity were now rough and callused and crisscrossed with cuts. He had little to say when he came home from work, and when he said something, it was mainly to David. Isabel noticed and remembered the words of her *tías*. "You can't marry the wind!" they had said. Now, she began to wonder if it was true. And David, *siempre* sensitive, noticed, too.

Now all of a sudden, after Christmas vacation, Mrs. Cordero wanted to fret to her friends down the hall. "David is distracted and he's not doing his best," she wanted to say, but she was secretly afraid the other teachers would think she was to blame, so she said nothing. His grades began to drop, as did his attitude. He had always been a sweet, respectful boy, but now he began to act out, especially when, Mrs. Cordero noted, his father arrived to pick him up. It was nearly April when she took her fears to Mrs. Leal, who worked with David each day in his gifted/talented class. Mrs. Leal had been David's teacher for the past 3 years and knew him better than anyone else in school, so she shared Mrs. Cordero's misgivings. David was quiet and shy like his mother, and Mrs. Leal knew he kept his feelings deep inside and didn't talk about them with others. But, Tony could not, and it was from him that Mrs. Leal had her fears confirmed.

It was the night of open house, and Mrs. Leal was greeting parents when Tony and David entered her classroom. She noticed that Tony still had on his dusty construction clothes, stained with

sweat and dirt from the day. Tony apologized for the way he looked and explained that he had come straight from the construction site to be there for his son. She had started to ask about Isabel and why she wasn't there.

But, even as David had moved across the room to point out his work, Tony had leaned in and told Mrs. Leal, "It just wasn't working out with David's mom. I miss my old life. I may have to leave."

He said it too loudly, and Mrs. Leal, panicking because she did not want David to hear and because it was not the sort of thing you talked about at open house night, began talking about the weather and the children's work and anything she could to keep the conversation away from the family's troubles. Her heart sank because now she knew what was behind David's gloom. He was afraid he was going to lose his father and his new name.

Early the next week, as school was dismissed, Mrs. Leal was on outside duty watching the long line of parents' cars make their way to their children's pick-up spots when she heard Tony call her name. Surprised, she turned, and there he was, picking up David. It had been a rainy afternoon, and the construction company had stopped for the day. He leaned out his car window and began to talk to Mrs. Leal, and again his conversation was all about being tired of his situation and missing the excitement and not getting along with Isabel, and this time Mrs. Leal was sure that David had heard him.

She went straight inside to Mrs. Cordero's room, and the two teachers decided that they must have a meeting with Tony and Isabel. They just didn't know what they should say. So, the next day, Mrs. Cordero placed an envelope in David's hand at the end of the day and asked him to share it with his parents.

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When Isabel opened it at home, David asked her what the letter said.

“Oh, the teachers just want to meet with us after the spring break vacation to talk about your work for next year,” she said.

But, as he walked back to his room, David knew better.

Once, when David was smaller and had asked one of his *tias* why his name was Loya and his father’s was not, she had told him a story about a rose that smelled just as sweet even though it had a different name, but this hadn’t satisfied David. Boys aren’t roses, he had thought.

And he wanted his father’s name. Now he had it, but he had to wish again and hope it came true.

As he slept that night, David had a dream, and in that dream he was sitting at a big table. His mother was there and so were Mrs. Cordero and Mrs. Leal. But where was his father? He was nowhere to be found. David got out of his chair to look for him, when suddenly Tony blew into the room, hugged Isabel, and told her, “All my life I’ve been the center of attention. Now it’s time for me to *pay* attention.” Isabel smiled, but not in the shy, quiet way she had, but with a big smile that showed her teeth. And

Tony reached over and gathered David in his lap and whispered in his ear, “I always knew it was meant for me to be a good pool player. Maybe it was also meant for me to be a great father.”

And then, just as he reached for his father, David woke up. There was a sound in the night. He listened, and at first he thought it was his father calling for him from the next room. He sat up in bed and listened carefully. He was oh so still.

Then the sound came again, and with a sigh, he knew. It wasn’t his father calling for him. It was just the wind as it rushed past the little house and moved far away down Oak Street in the darkness. ©CT

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and technological expertise. Students who use sophisticated technology to create products, students who integrate a variety of technologies into their projects, students who use common technologies in unusual ways or at advanced levels, and students who find creative ways to apply technology to solve problems all show potential for technological giftedness.

Conclusion

Like any student with a gift, technologically gifted students need to have their gifts recognized and nurtured. Doing so may require outside assistance from someone with more technological expertise than the regular classroom teacher or even the gifted education specialist has. Of course, technological talent cannot be developed if technology is not available. Advanced technologies beyond their school may be necessary to develop technologically gifted students’ potential to its fullest. This may require providing elementary students with access to high school and college laboratories. It may also require finding mentors in the community with access to the needed skills and

equipment to feed these students’ inquisitive nature and appetite for new knowledge and skills. With recognition and support, the talents of technologically gifted students can grow and prosper. ©CT

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