

THE THIRD DEATH OF PANCHO LaGUARDIA

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A short musical

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

PANCHO LaGUARDIA, AKA Antonio LaGuardia, the dashing antihero

PEPE, his sidekick

EL MALO, an unabashed villain

EL CORO GRIEGO:

PACO, the guitarist

FLACO, the guitarrónist (to coin a term)

TACO, the violinist

KEITH, the trumpeter

## SETTING

The main courtyard (town square) of the small fictional Mexican villa of Santo Marco, roughly around the turn of the 20th century.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

Time and place information goes here, along with anything else that will help the reader understand the script.

Production notes go here.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SANTO MARCO, MEXICO. TOWN SQUARE. CIRCA 1900.

Lights up on EL CORO GRIEGO, our  
Greek chorus of four musician  
actors dressed as "Mariachi-lite"  
performers. They are standing  
center in an arc, as befits as  
music group of their supposed ilk.

EL CORO GRIEGO

1. "THE BALLAD OF PANCHO LaGUARDIA"

FROM OUT BEYOND THE WEST HE RODE IN  
ON A FURIED HORSE  
SET HIS SIGHTS ON THE FIRST TOWN HE FOUND  
AND TOOK IT ALL BY FORCE  
LIKE SO, THUS FELL IN TERROR ALL THE  
VILLAS IN THE LAND  
AT THE SIGHT OF THIS MYSTERIOUS AND  
MOST FEARSOME MAN

Lights up on an oil portrait  
suspended upstage of a menacing  
villain-PANCHO LaGUARDIA.

HE RAIDED, PLUNDERED, PILLAGED, ROBBED  
AND WITH HIS BAND OF GOONS  
CHASED THE LAWMEN OUT OF THEIR HOMETOWNS  
FROM HERE TO SAN ANTOON'  
THE BRAVE POOR SOULS THAT FACED HIS WRATH  
STOOD NARY A CHANCE  
FOR IT'S SAID HE CANNOT DIE UNLESS  
BEHELD BY HIS TRUE LOVE'S GLANCE

IT'S THE BALLAD OF PANCHO LaGUARDIA  
THE *BANDITO* WHO CANNOT DIE  
LEGEND SAYS HE HAS DIED TWICE AND STILL COME BACK TO LIFE  
IT'S THIS FEAR THAT GIVES HIS VICTIMS TACHYCARDIA  
THE BALLAD OF PANCHO LaGUARDIA!

EL CORO GRIEGO continues the two-  
step feel as an underscore as the  
dialogue continues.

TACO

*Buenas noches y bienvenidos, amigos y amigas.*  
Yes, this is the tale of Pancho LaGuardia, the  
most evil, most villainous thief ever to set  
foot in all of Mexico.

FLACO

Legend has it that he is the bastard son of Juan Cortina, AKA the Rio Grande Robin Hood, but then no one knows how he wound up with an Italian last name.

PACO

Still, it is said that, whether blessing or curse, he cannot die because of his father's abandonment...

KEITH

... at least, not until he finds his one true love, and even then, only if he is felled as she looks on helplessly.

TACO

Indeed, according to legend, he has been slain twice before...

PACO

... but the first time, no one knew about his ... "predicament" ...

KEITH

... and the second time, the woman they found was not his true love, just some floozy from college.

PACO

*Señoras y caballeros, soy Paco.*

FLACO

I am Flaco.

TACO

Taco. *Mucho gusto.*

KEITH

And I am Keith. And together, we are...

EL CORO GRIEGO

*MARIACHI EL CORO GRIEGO!* And this is...

1A. "THE BALLAD OF PANCHO LAGUARDIA (REPRISE)"

THE THIRD DEATH OF PANCHO LAGUARDIA!

Enter PANCHO LaGUARDIA, our ostensibly dashing anti-hero in a Zorro-like mask who looks conspicuously out of place to the audience, and nowhere near as menacing as he's depicted in his portrait, and his loyal sidekick, PEPE. PEPE has in hand a small gift.

PANCHO

Pepe, I don't know what to say. It's very kind of you, but today is most assuredly not my birthday.

PEPE

But it is, Pancho. Don't you remember? Pancho LaGuardia was born on March 14...

PANCHO

March 14th, yes, I know. But...

PEPE

Just trying to keep up appearances, *jefe*.

PANCHO

All right, very well. *Muchísimas gracias*, Pepe.

PANCHO opens the gift.

Pepe, I don't know what to say. You got me ... the very watch I already own. That went missing a week ago.

PEPE

(with a dimwitted excitement)

*Sí*, Pancho. I stole it from you! I thought you'd be proud of me!

PANCHO

(to himself) Keeping up appearances.

(to PEPE) Yes, Pepe. I'm very proud of you. Again, thank you.

PEPE

Anytime, *jefe*. So long as you don't lock your bedroom door when leaving on a raid, and it's a week before March 14th. Oh Pancho, I so look forward to being your second-in-command. I hope one day to be as good a *bandito* as the great Pancho LaGuardia. Maybe I could even be the next Pancho LaGuardia, eh?

A beat. PANCHO becomes introspective.



PANCHO

You know... (sigh) I admire your spirit, Pepe.  
It is good to have ambition, even if that  
ambition is to be eviler than ... evil itself.  
Alas, being the most feared *bandito* in Mexico  
is a heavy burden to bear. I am the cause of  
more bed wettings than Cholera. Do you  
understand the guilt I feel at that? I'm just a  
man doing a job. A job I don't even really want  
anymore.

## 2. PANCHO'S LAMENT

"GIVE ME YOUR MONEY, YOUR HORSES, YOUR WOMEN," I SAY  
I'LL TAKE ALL YOU CAN GIVE  
IT'S THE THING THAT I DO  
BUT BETWEEN ME AND YOU  
I'D LOVE TO BID ADIEU  
TO THIS SCENE

I HAVE A BOUNTIFUL VOCABULARY, YOU KNOW  
MY ERUDITION KNOWS NO BOUNDS  
NARRATIVE SENSE SO ASTUTE,  
FILMS COULD TAKE A NEW ROUTE  
EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE MUTE  
ON THE SCREEN.

I'D LIKE TO BE OUT THERE IN HOLLYWOOD,  
WRITING THE MOTION PICS.  
SEALING THE DEALS AND DRIVING AUTOMOBILES  
MY FICTIONS ON REELS, MY LIFE ON PAGE SIX.

THAT COULD BE ME OUT THERE IN TINSELTOWN  
IN A POSH STUDIO.  
MISTER BIG SHOT ON ALL THE BACKLOTS,  
OH, HOW I'VE GOT TO GO!

I'VE STUDIED ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS* BACK AND FRONT,  
I KNOW HOW TO CRAFT A GOOD TALE  
FULL OF DRAMA OR FUN  
OR TWO GUYS ON THE RUN  
ADVENTURE TO BE DONE  
ON THE TRAIL

SAY, WE COULD MAKE A NEW START FOR OURSELVES IN LA  
JUST YOU AND ME AND MY ELISA  
WE COULD GO SETTLE DOWN  
IN A QUAIN T LITTLE TOWN  
FAR FROM BAD GUY RENOWN  
AND LIVE IN PEACE...A.

PANCHO and PEPE leave the town  
square. Continuing with an  
underscore, EL CORO GRIEGO steps  
forward.

TACO

Do you get it, *mis amigos*? The great Pancho LaGuardia, famed villain of Mexico whose mere mention makes women lock the stables and men swoon, is but an heir to an identity.

FLACO

To this day, no one knows how Pancho's gangs kept this secret so well—

KEITH

Actually, I do. You see, when one Pancho dies or is ready to retire, the gang is paid enough money to retire themselves, and since they ride in disguises, no one knows to ask. Even if they were to say something, you know, who'd believe them? The new Pancho—normally the former's second-in-command—keeps only his own second-in-command, and hires an all-new gang.

PACO

And how, pray tell, do you know this, *hermano*?

KEITH

The playwright[/director] told me. I asked. No one thinks to ask.

PACO, FLACO, TACO

(in disbelief)

Ah.

A beat. FLACO resumes the underscore as he continues on.

FLACO

(back to the audience)

Months passed. Pancho stayed true to his job, and his beloved Elisa, his one true love whom you'll meet soon enough, though he secretly yearned for the life of an *artista*.

## 2A. "THE INTRODUCTION OF EL MALO"

TACO

But trouble was brewing on the horizon. While Pancho continued to pillage the lands, a new villain encroached on his turf.

PACO, FLACO, KEITH

EL MALO!

TACO

El Malo was no ordinary *bandito*, my friends. Not simply content with robbing people of their goods, he would destroy their homes. Beat and maim and ... even kill them if he felt like it.

PACO, FLACO, KEITH

EL MALO!

PACO

He'd take *los dulces* from the babies not even to eat them, just to drop them in the dirt.

FLACO, TACO, KEITH

EL MALO!

KEITH

And I heard once, he left his mother on hold. On purpose. And never called her back. *Qué triste.*

PACO, FLACO, TACO

EL MALO.....

TACO

(suddenly like a boxing announcer)

Here he is, folks, weighing in at [weight] and standing [height] tall, the King of Crime who won't do the time, *el Rey de Monterrey*, don't tell him he can't or he'll show you he *Cancún*—

The other three groan at these sins against puns.

—ELLLLLL MALLLLLLLOOOOOOO!

EL MALO enters, a wrestler's entrance (though he is not a *luchador*). Clearly, he uses violence to compensate for intellect. And he is always violent.

EL MALO

(to the audience)

I'll tell you what. I've heard about this Pancho LaGuardia. He doesn't sound so scary. There can be only one "most evil, most vill--vill-anus? thief ever to set foot in all of Mexico." And that will be ... EL MALO!

EL MALO turns to EL CORO GRIEGO. They are suddenly transformed into his own band of thieves. As his thieves, they speak with incredibly dopey voices and don fake mustaches.

Hugo! *Prófugo! Verdugo! ¡Secuaces!* Come! I want to strike right at the heart of Pancho LaGuardia. Tonight, we ride for Santo Marco, where he lives in secrecy with his one true love, Elisa Juanita Maria Estefenia Alazanas de la Conchita Rodriguez Salazar.

EL CORO GRIEGO look at each other  
in confusion, then at EL MALO.

PACO (as VERDUGO)  
What's her last name?

EL MALO  
Well, I don't know. Is there more than one  
Elisa Juanita Maria Estefenia Alazanas de la  
Conchita Rodriguez Salazar in Santo Marco?

FLACO (as PRÓFUGO)  
There's, like, six.

EL MALO  
Ah. Well you know, she's the one, *muy linda*,  
long flowing hair, pretty eyes... that doesn't  
matter now. *Escucha me*. Under cover of darkness  
we will snatch her from his grasp, and then he  
will have no choice but to face me in a duel to  
the death at high noon at *Plaza Cliché*. Go. Get  
the horses. By tomorrow night, the title "*Most  
Vill-anus Bandito in All of Mexico*" will be  
mine!

EL MALO, PACO, FLACO, AND TACO  
exit as if riding on horseback  
through the night. KEITH steps DS  
to narrate.

KEITH  
And so, with his evil plan set in motion, El  
Malo began his long journey to Santo Marco to  
do all the stuff you just heard him say he'd  
do.

KEITH holds up his trumpet and  
begins playing "The William Tell  
Overture." EL MALO stops in his  
tracks and gets in KEITH's face.

EL MALO  
HEY!!!! What do you think you're doing? What,  
is this *The Lone Ranger*? Take a look around.  
We're BAD guys, *cabrón*.

KEITH  
(fearful for his life)  
Oh. Right. *Perdóname, señor*.

EL MALO returns to his place in  
the line. KEITH continues playing  
the "William Tell Overture," but  
now in a minor key.

EL MALO

There. *Mucho mejor*. See guys? You can get everywhere by asking nicely.

With a flamboyant spring, EL MALO resumes his gallop. The rest of EL CORO GRIEGO follows suit, and the group gallops offstage. PACO and FLACO return immediately after escorting EL MALO off, "returned" to their original selves.

PACO

Nicely done, Keith.

KEITH

*Gracias*. El Malo and his gang arrived in Santo Marco almost precisely when the night was at its darkest and quietest, and stole Pancho's one true love Elisa away from her home. To this day, no one knows how El Malo was able to do this without Pancho noticing.

FLACO

Hey, El Malo! How did you steal Pancho's one true love Elisa away from her home without him noticing?

EL MALO

(sticking his head out from behind a curtain)

I asked nicely.

FLACO

(to KEITH)

He asked nicely.

KEITH

You asked nicely.

A beat.

FLACO, KEITH

No one ever thinks to ask.

PACO

No one ever thinks to ask nicely. Yeah.

PACO (CONT'D)

El Malo left behind his note for Pancho and Pepe to find, and sure enough come morning the town was abuzz with the news of the impending duel.

FLACO

But little did Pancho know that El Malo was a conniving cheater of the worst kind.

The three move US as EL MALO and TACO enter and all meet C. EL CORO GRIEGO are once again EL MALO's henchmen.

EL MALO

After today, *hombres*, the name of El Malo will strike fear into the hearts of Mexicans everywhere, and the name (mockingly) Pancho LaGuardia will be but a ... but a ... an old ... thing. That people will forget. Because they will be too busy remembering the name EL MALO!

(to TACO as HUGO) Hugo, you have been my most trusted advisor for many, many years now. How many?

TACO (as HUGO)

Uhh, just three weeks, *señor*. You killed the last Hugo and made me change my name.

EL MALO

Right. No matter. I will go and fetch Pancho's one true love Elisa. You get the men hidden around the plaza. One way or another, Pancho LaGuardia and his sidekick Pepe will not leave Santo Marco without a casket. *¿Bueno? ¡Ándale!*

EL MALO exits. TACO points out places for the other three to hide, then follows EL MALO.

PACO

The stage was set, my friends. How could Pancho and Pepe hope to survive? Let's find out.

PACO makes an ominous face to the audience and shakes his maracas as he kneels out of sight. Enter PANCHO & PEPE and EL MALO escorting TACO (as ELISA), now wearing a wig, at gunpoint, from opposite sides of the stage.

#### 4. THE SHOWDOWN AT PLAZA CLICHÉ

TACO (ELISA)

OH, PANCHO! THIS IS JUST LIKE ONE OF YOUR STORIES!  
OH, PANCHO! WOULD YOU COME SAVE ME, PLEASE, LIKE, RIGHT NOW?  
FOR HE HAS A GUN AND I DON'T.

PANCHO

ELISA! I'M COMING TO SAVE YOU NOW, JUST HOLD ON!  
EL MALO THINKS HE'S SO GREAT  
BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE....

That's. IT!

(MORE)

PANCHO (CONT'D)

After I rescue my one true love Elisa, we're going to Hollywood, Pepe! I can no longer live a rogue's life. Stealing from the *pueblos*, fleeing from the authorities, gunfights, swordfights... does that sound exciting to you?

PEPE opens his mouth to respond, then hesitates. Confused, he nods his head affirmatively as he says—

PEPE

No?

EL MALO

COME, PANCHO LAGUARDIA, YOU'RE WASTING MY TIME.  
I HAVE TO KILL YOU NOW AND THEN GO COMMIT SOME CRIMES.  
I DO NOT THINK YOU'LL LIKE THE OUTCOME WE SEE TODAY.  
BUT I HAVE MY GUN.  
AND I HAVE YOUR GIRL.  
AND SO I SAY ... *Olé*.

I'm a good aim, Pancho. But even I, El Malo, cannot make sure your one true love Elisa watches helplessly as I kill you for good.  
Hugo!

Everyone looks around, then realizes TACO is also Hugo. TACO and EL MALO exchange a look, then TACO sighs, takes his fake mustache out of his pocket, and wears it along with the wig. EL CORO GRIEGO pop out of their hiding places, everyone looks around for agreement, then they all shrug and return to the action.

TACO (as HUGO)

*¿Sí jefe?*

EL MALO

Take this pretty little bird. Make sure her eyes stay open so she sees her lover die.

EL MALO releases TACO. TACO, fighting with his own body, draws his pistol and holds it to his head as he holds one eye wide open with his other hand. As the action continues, he alternates playing the henchman and damsel in distress. EL MALO takes his place on the dueling ground as FLACO pops out of hiding.

FLACO

El Malo's gang was instructed to wait until the duel was over to strike, when Pancho, if he somehow won, would have his guard down.

PEPE

Be careful, Pancho!

PANCHO

(Not at all concerned)

Don't worry, Pepe. Keeping up appearances. Just like we rehearsed it.

PANCHO winks and nods at PEPE, then takes his place on the dueling ground.

EL MALO

On the count of three, *tonto*.

EL CORO GRIEGO again pops out of their hiding spots casually—as themselves—to continue the underscore.

FLACO

The two men faced off for what seemed like an eternity. Yes, in stereotypical fashion, a tumbleweed blew between them, seemingly oblivious to the dangerous situation in which it ensnared itself. But we, uh, don't have any wind in here.

From O/S, a stagehand throws a tumbleweed UC of the duel.

FLACO (CONT'D)

They held their hands just above their guns, the skin of their fingertips trying to stretch further, further, yearning to get as far away from their bones and as close to their pistol as possible. Anything to gain an advantage.

TACO (as HUGO)

One. Ummmm ...

A beat. PANCHO rolls his eyes.

PANCHO

Two.

TACO

(as soon as PANCHO speaks)

Two, yes, two, I was just getting to that.

Two.

(MORE)



TACO (CONT'D)

...  
Three.

PANCHO and EL MALO draw and fire.  
FLACO narrates as the action  
continues:

FLACO

With lightning-fast reflexes, both men drew their pistols and fired. BANG! They waited to see who would fall. Nothing. Growing agitated, EL MALO sneered as he raised his *pistola* and fired again. Pancho responded in kind. But again, no man bled, no man fell.

EL MALO

Say, what gives? Hugo! You loaded the bullets, right?

TACO nods.

KEITH

These are stage guns. They don't have bullets. They just flash and make a racket. It looks convincing to audiences, and it keeps insurance premiums down.

EL MALO and PANCHO nod with understanding. A beat while they try to figure out how to proceed.

FLACO

Foiled by the field of theatrics, El Malo suddenly tossed his gun, drew his sword, and charged at Pancho! Pancho loosed his sword just in time to block El Malo's attack, and the two began a fierce swordfight that some say can still be heard echoing throughout Mexico to this day!

PANCHO

FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! CLANG!  
SWORD! CLASH! BRRRNNNGGG...

EL MALO

STRIKE! BLANG! SCHWING!  
FIGHT! SOUND! CLINK!  
BUAUUAUUAUA...

The fight moves offstage. EL CORO GRIEGO move C.

PACO

The duel of Pancho LaGuardia and El Malo lasted hours, maybe days. Finally, fully exhausted and unable to continue, they took a break. It was at this time that Pancho LaGuardia began to regale El Malo with the most divinely told tale of adventure he had ever heard. It had everything.

KEITH

Everything.

PACO

Swordfights, gunplay, ...

FLACO

... romance, adventure, ...

KEITH

... endearing characters, fourth wall jokes ...

EL CORO GRIEGO split up to allow  
PANCHO and EL MALO to enter UC and  
walk DC. PEPE moves slowly behind  
PANCHO to C. EL MALO turns upstage  
to face PANCHO.

PANCHO

... and so the antihero and his loyal sidekick  
tricked the real villain into dropping his  
guard, at which time they struck. Victory! With  
no more fights to be had, the antihero, his  
sidekick, and his one true love moved to  
California to pursue their dreams.

EL MALO

Wow. That is such a beautiful story, Pancho! I  
had no idea you had that in you! I don't know  
how I feel ... it's like something new has  
awoken inside me. Maybe being a *bandito* isn't  
my calling. Maybe I can become a *padre*. Or an  
*artista* like you maybe?

PANCHO

Now, Paco!

Suddenly, PACO throws a dagger  
that impales EL MALO square in the  
chest.

EL MALO

That was a pretty good trick. Et tu, Pepe?

PACO

And just like that, El Malo was *no mas*.

FLACO

But Pancho and Pepe weren't out of the woods  
yet. El Malo's own sidekick Hugo still had  
Pancho's one true love Elisa in his clutches.

PANCHO

Fear not, *mi amor*, I will save you now!

TACO (as ELISA)

No, don't worry. I got this.

TACO stomps on his own foot and gets into a fight with himself. He plays both characters simultaneously as they fight for the gun. Finally, TACO as Elisa gets enough control of the gun that (s)he shoots TACO as Hugo. He falls to the floor. A beat. He pops his head up, one eye open, to check the scene, then removes the mustache and stands back up.

PANCHO

Elisa! How did you ...?

TACO (as ELISA)

(with an innocent shrug)

I know capoeira.

PANCHO and TACO as ELISA embrace and stand arm in arm as the rest of EL CORO GRIEGO reassembles.

KEITH

Amazed by his bravery and skill with a dagger, the townspeople emerged from hiding, as did El Malo's former henchmen.

PACO

He has slain El Malo!

FLACO

He is no villain. He is a hero!

The three cheer for the death of EL MALO. PEPE moves beside PANCHO.

PEPE

Now what, Pancho?

PANCHO

Now, Pepe, we move to Hollywood, and get away from all this ... dirt.

PEPE

(suddenly wistful)

Oh, Pancho, but I can't. That's not the life for me. Plus, I have family here. Two of them. And look! I'm celebrated! They like me now!

PANCHO thinks for a moment.

PANCHO

Then ... I suppose it is you who is Pancho  
LaGuardia now. Not I.

PANCHO removes his hat and puts it  
on PEPE.

PANCHO (CONT'D)

But things are different. They won't celebrate  
you if you rob from them.

PEPE

Then I'll have the good guy. And you can write  
a movie about me! But wait! How will I convince  
people that Pancho LaGuardia is now fighting to  
defend them from all the El Malos of the world?

PANCHO

I don't know, Pepe. Maybe use your own name  
instead?

PEPE

Pancho Villa? Are you kidding? That's a  
stupid--no one will ever believe that's a real  
name!

As in the cliché endings of old  
sitcoms, PANCHO and ELISA exit  
laughing melodramatically and  
inorganically. PEPE follows,  
continuing to plead his case. As  
music builds to a swell, EL CORO  
GRIEGO move DC and lights fade  
everywhere but on them. TACO  
quickly ditches the wig, collects  
his violin, and rejoins EL CORO  
GRIEGO.

EL CORO GRIEGO

5. THE BALLAD OF PANCHO LAGUARDIA (FINALE)

THE THIRD DEATH OF PANCHO LAGUARDIA

THE HERO WHO CANNOT DIE

LEGEND SAYS HIS THIRD DEATH TURNED HIM FROM WRONG TO RIGHT

VILLAINS IN HIS AIM WILL FIND THEMSELVES SORRY-A

THE LEGEND OF PANCHO LAGUARDIA!

THE LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK...

THE END