

THE FORGOTTEN VILLAGE



LIFE IN A MEXICAN VILLAGE:

Photographs from the motion picture directed by ROBERT BLUM

STORY BY

JOHN STEINBECK

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Photographs from the motion picture directed by HERBERT BLECH

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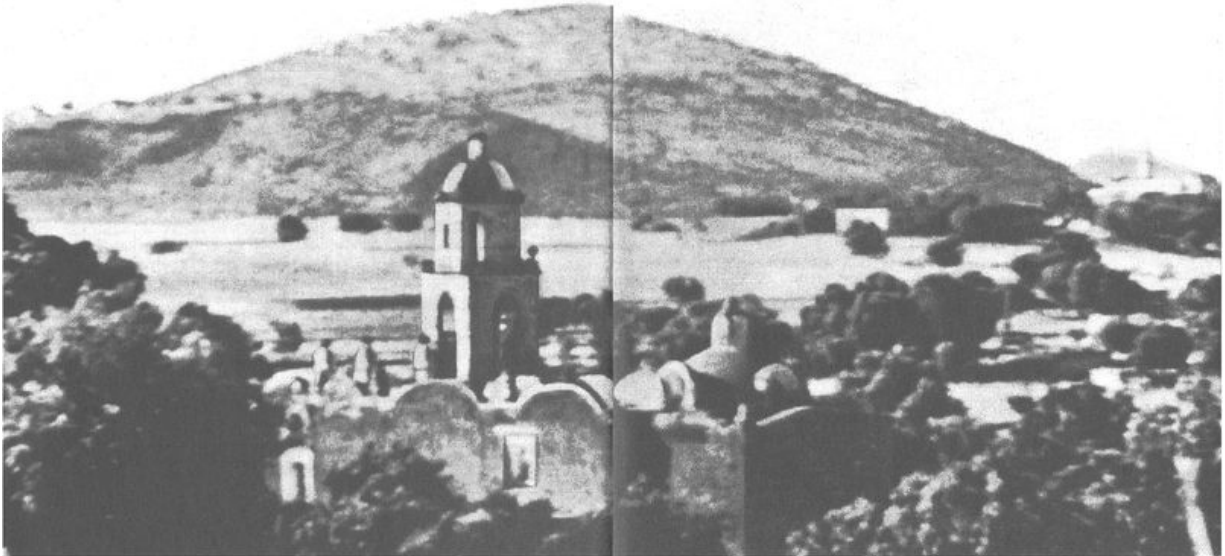
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THE FORGOTTEN VILLAGE

Born in Salinas, California, in 1902, JOHN STEINBECK grew up in a fertile agricultural valley about twenty-five miles from the Pacific Coast—and both valley and coast would serve as settings for some of his best fiction. In 1919 he went to Stanford University, where he intermittently enrolled in literature and writing courses until he left in 1925 without taking a degree. During the next five years he supported himself as a laborer and journalist in New York City and then as a caretaker for a Lake Tahoe estate, all the time working on his first novel, *Cup of Gold* (1929). After marriage and a move to Pacific Grove, he published two California fictions, *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *To a God Unknown* (1933), and worked on short stories later collected in *The Long Valley* (1938). Popular success and financial security came only with *Tortilla Flat* (1935), stories about Monterey's paisanos. A ceaseless experimenter throughout his career, Steinbeck changed courses regularly. Three powerful novels of the late 1930s focused on the California laboring class: *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and the book considered by many his finest, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Early in the 1940s, Steinbeck became a filmmaker with *The Forgotten Village* (1941) and a serious student of marine biology with *Sea of Cortez*. He devoted his services to the war, writing *Bombs Away* (1942) and the controversial play-novelette *The Moon Is Down* (1942). *Cannery Row* (1945), *The Wayward Bus* (1947), *The Pearl* (1947), *A Russian Journal* (1948), another experimental drama, *Burning Bright* (1950), and *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* (1951) preceded publication of the monumental *East of*

Eden (1952), an ambitious saga of the Salinas Valley and his own family's history. The last decades of his life were spent in New York City and Sag Harbor with his third wife, with whom he traveled widely. Later books include *Sweet Thursday* (1954), *The Short Reign of Pippin IV: A Fabrication* (1957), *Once There Was a War* (1958), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), *Travels with Charley in Search of America* (1962), *America and Americans* (1966), and the posthumously published *Journal of a Novel: The East of Eden Letters* (1969), *Viva Zapata!* (1975), *The Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights* (1976), and *Working Days: The Journals of The Grapes of Wrath* (1989). He died in 1968, having won a Nobel Prize in 1962.

The **FORGOTTEN VILLAGE**



**WITH 136 PHOTOGRAPHS
FROM THE FILM OF THE SAME NAME
BY ROSA HARVAN KLINE AND ALEXANDER HACKENSMID.**

STORY BY JOHN STEINBECK

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THE FORGOTTEN VILLAGE

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PREFACE.

In the making of a film about a Mexican village we were faced with many problems, some of which were foreseen and some of which were met and overcome in the field while the picture was in production. A great many documentary films have used the generalized method, that is, the showing of a condition or an event as it affects a group of people. The audience can then have a personalized reaction from imagining one member of that group. I have felt that this is the more difficult observation from the audience's viewpoint. It means very little to know that a million Chinese are starving unless you know one Chinese who is starving. In *The Forgotten Village* we reversed the usual process. Our story centered on one family in one small village. We wished our audience to know this family very well, and incidentally to like it, as we did. Then, from association with this little personalized group, the larger conclusion concerning the racial group could be drawn with something like participation. Birth and death, joy and sorrow, are constants, experiences common to the whole species. If one participates first in these constants, one is able to go from them to the variables of customs, practices, mores, taboos, and foreign social patterns. That, at any rate, was our theory and the pattern in which we worked.

The working method was very simple, and yet required great patience. A very elastic story was written. Then the crew moved into the village, made friends, talked, and listened. The story was simple: too many children die- why is that and what is done about it, both by the villagers and by the government? The story actually was a question. What we found was dramatic—the clash of a medicine and magic that was old when the Aztecs invaded the plateau with a modern medicine that is as young as a living man. To tell

this story we had only to have people re-enact what had happened to them. Our *curandera* was a real “wise woman,” one who practiced herbology and magic in the village; our teacher was a real teacher in the government school; our doctors real doctors; our mother a real mother who had lost a number of children. If they moved through scenes with sureness and authority it was because they had been through them many times before when no cameras were there. Such a method requires, above all else, patience, tact, and genuine liking for the people. The last we had, but we were not always successful in the first two. Mistakes were made, feuds started, quarrels precipitated which had to be settled and quenched with more patience and tact.

The villagers themselves were handsome and courteous and friendly; they had great dignity and flair and they were very poor, unbelievably poor. They lived in a social-religious frame which was part Aztec, part sixteenth-century Spanish Catholic, and part the thrusting toward social betterment which has been Mexico’s drive for the past fifty years. We did not editorialize, attack, or defend anything. We put on film what we found, only arranging it to make a coherent story.

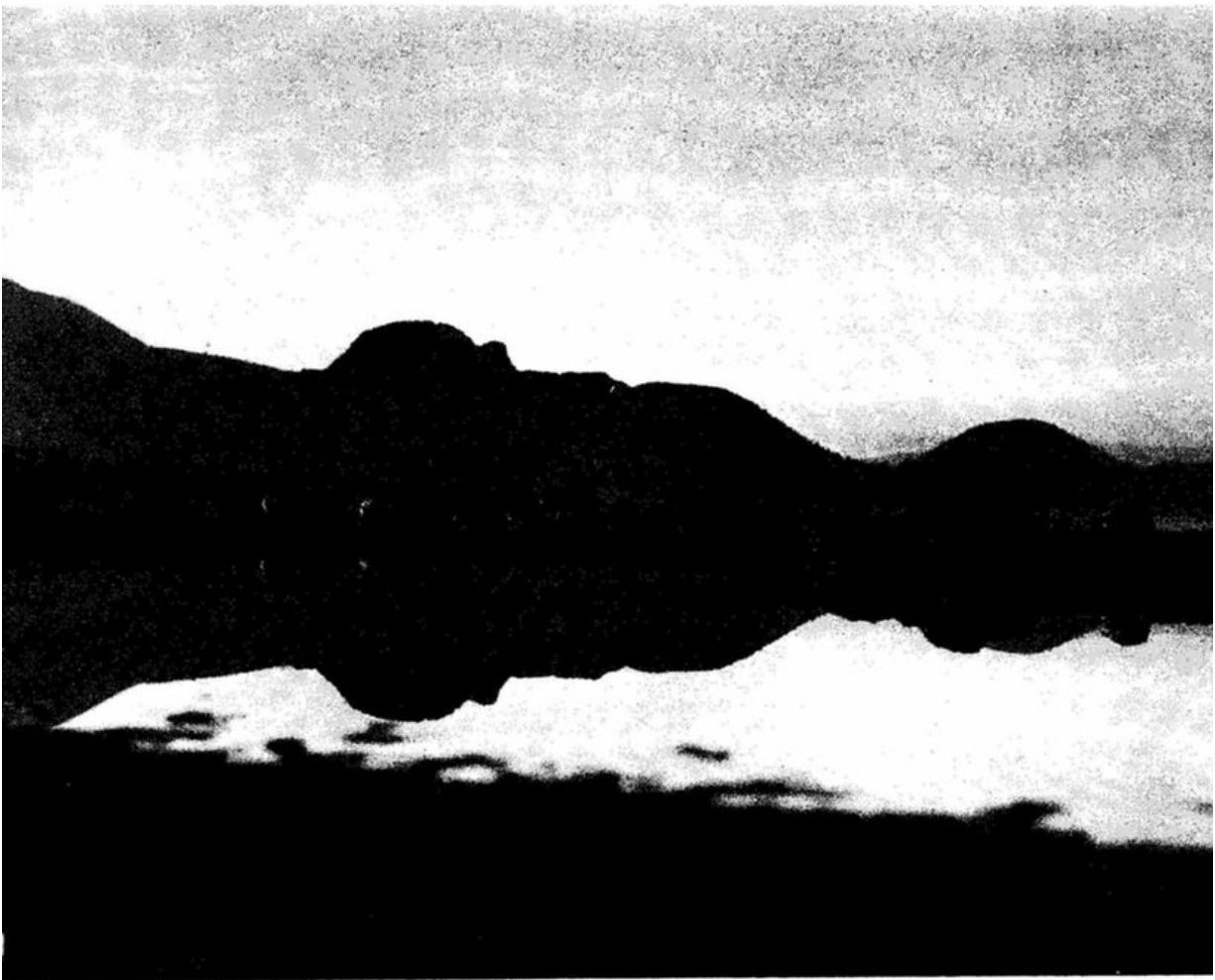
The most difficult problem of all was the method of telling the story to an American audience. Sound recorded on the scene was impracticable: the village was inaccessible to sound equipment. Dialogue was out of the question, even in Spanish, since many of the older people spoke little Spanish; they used the Indian language of their ancestors. The usual narrative method did not seem quite adequate. It was decided finally to use the method of the old story-teller—a voice which interpolated dialogue without trying to imitate it, a very quiet voice to carry the story only when the picture and the music could not carry it; and, above all, a spoken story so natural and unobtrusive that an audience would not even be conscious of it. Such were the methods employed in making *The Forgotten Village*. A curious and true and dramatic film has been the result.

JOHN STEINBECK

THE FORGOTTEN VILLAGE

Among the tall mountains of Mexico the ancient life goes on, sometimes little changing in a thousand years. But now from the cities of the valley, from the schools and laboratories, new thinking and new techniques reach out to the remote villages. The old and the new meet and sometimes clash, but from the meetings a gradual change is taking place in the villages.

This is a story of the little pueblo of Santiago on the skirts of a hill in the mountains of Mexico. And this is the story of the boy Juan Diego and of his family and of his people, who live in the long moment when the past slips reluctantly into the future.



One morning, in the dawn, before the work in the fields had begun, Juan Diego took his mother, Esperanza, to visit the Wise Woman of Santiago. The mother was heavy toward birth, and she wished to know early whether it would be boy

or girl child, beautiful or ugly, fortunate or damned. He carried the mother toward the hillside where the curandera lived.



Trini, the Wise Woman, welcomed them to her little stone house where she merchandised in herbs and amulets and magic. "Come in, come in, come seat yourself," said Trini. "I'll give you the future, black or white. I'll cast it in the black and white corn."



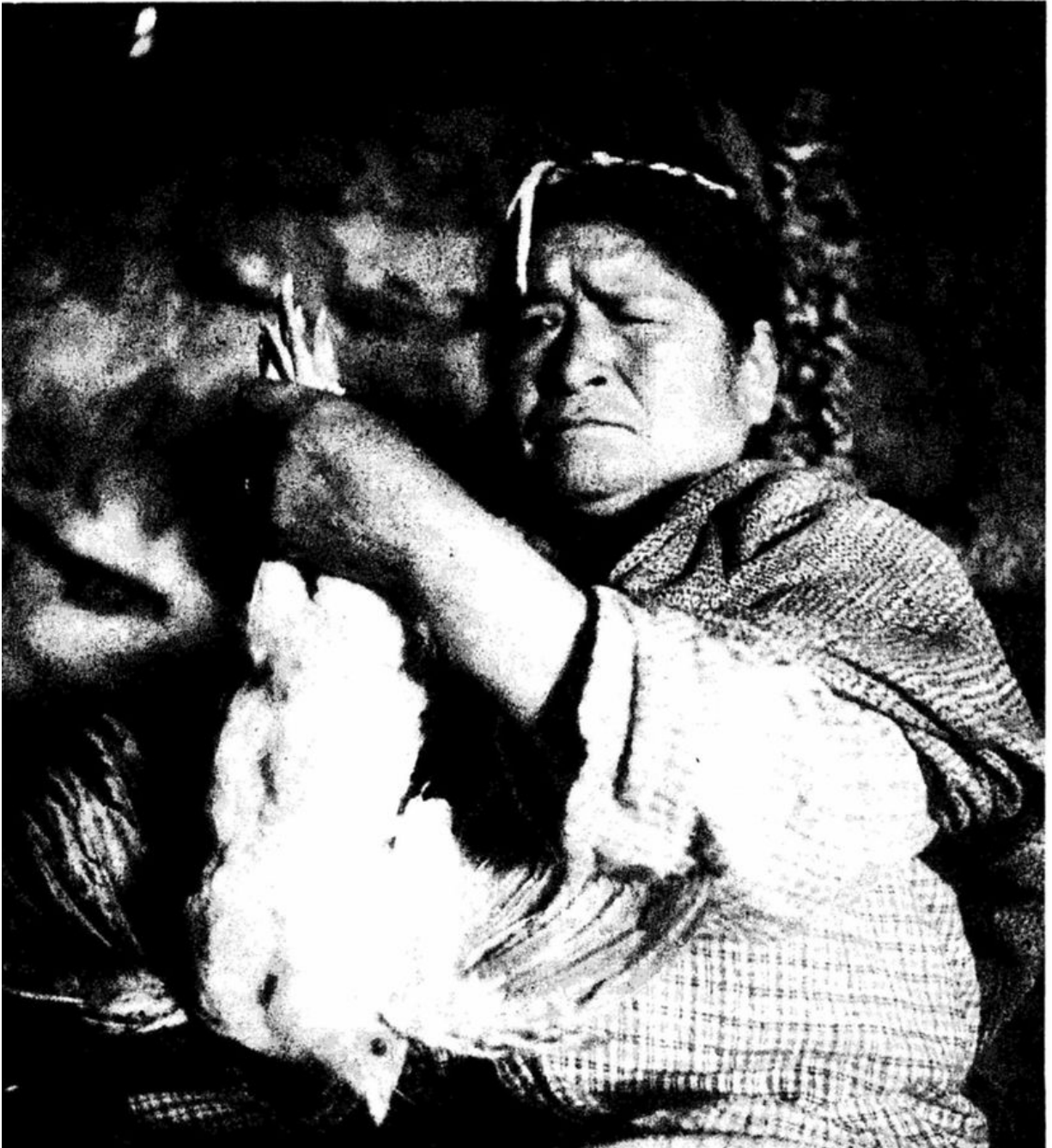
The Wise Woman sat before the mother and she said, "Pick out the corn; black for your boy children, white for the girls." Then Trini blessed the corn. She took it and chanted, "Corn of our lives, gift and giver, food of the body, feed thou now the mind and the memory. Speak to this mother."



And she traced the future in the corn of prophecy. "Boy child," she said, "born living and strong." Trini cast the corn again and traced again. "You are indeed the mother of luck. Your boy child will be beautiful and fortunate.... Now you will pay for the fortune?"



Juan Diego brought in a chicken for payment. "It is a skinny chicken for a fat fortune," the Wise Woman said. And the mother paid extra for so fine a prophecy.



Then the Wise Woman gave her a gift without payment, a bird of luck ... to ease the pains and prod the fortune on; a humming-bird dressed in colored magic thread.



The mother and Juan Diego came back into the village of Santiago with their great good news—with the prophecy and the magic bird of luck. “A boy child it will be. A child of beauty.... Beauty and fortune and a boy.... Trini has promised—a boy.... My child will be a man child, handsome and lucky. See, I have the bird of fortune.”



And the whole village was glad for Esperanza. They came to their home where the children were, and Esperanza told the little girls, "You will have a little brother, a new little brother."



In the hot, white light of the morning, Juan Diego went to the corn-field, for it was late and the work went on without him.



He went first to his father with the news.



"You will be the father of a new son, my father." The father said, "It is good to have sons who can work in the corn. God is good, I have already three good sons: little Paco, Juan Diego, and Carlos. Now I will have four."



But the corn cannot wait for birth or death. The corn is life itself, holy and clean. With corn they rent the land the corn grows on. With corn they buy clothing and salt and chilies.



The animals will eat the stalks. Father and sons, mother and daughters, will eat, will sell, will live—the corn. The ripe and yellow corn cut and piled and carried, loved and prayed for. When there is corn there is life. When the corn is gone—only hunger and sorrow. For the corn is life itself.



Bound into bundles, a big bundle for the father and a big bundle for Juan Diego. Carlos has a smaller load, and even little Paco as much as he can carry. Everyone must eat and everyone must have his burden, even Paco.



"It is heavy," the father said, "but soon I will have a new son."



They bore the corn down from the mountain fields and into the pueblo of Santiago on the skirts of the hill, and they took the corn first to the house of the landowners, for the owners had first choice of half the crop.



"You are the lucky one!" said the owners. "Four sons! Imagine that! You are a great man, Ventura."



They divided the corn: this to us and that to you. The father protested the division, as he always did. And Juan Diego cried, "We should have more of our own corn now! There will be one more mouth to feed. We should have more of our own corn now."



The owners said to Ventura, "What does a boy know of men? Come, we will drink to this son and to many more. That is how men do. You are a great man."

Then Juan Diego called his brothers to go to school, for the day was passing. And they left the men to do as great men do.



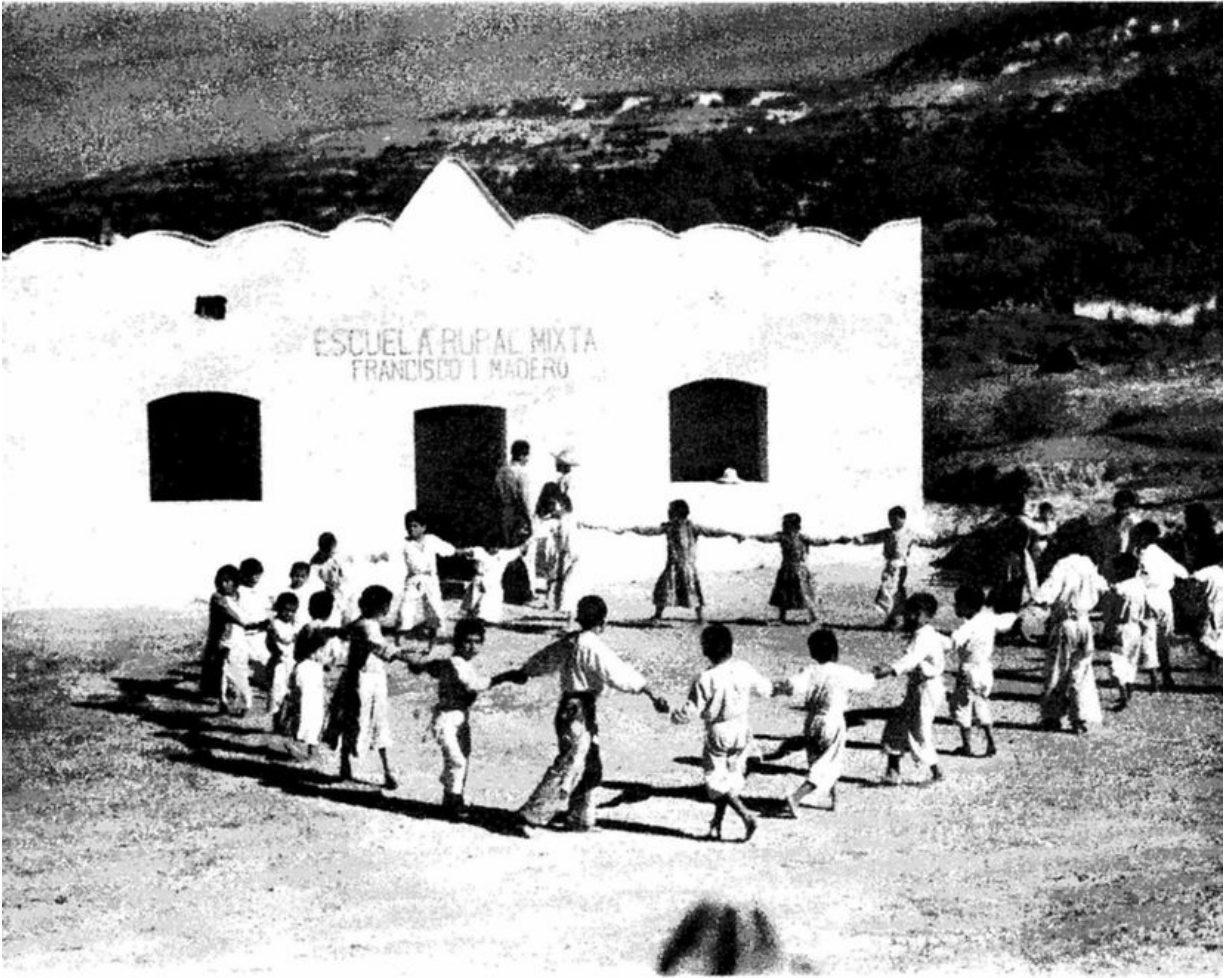
The boys came to the school yard and were prepared for learning.



It is easier to learn with a clean face; clean ears can hear more truly.



And Juan Diego talked to his friend the schoolteacher.



They began the day with a song about their beautiful land:

*El frutero del Sur,
El frutero Ilego;
Nadie vende la fruta
Como la vendo yo.*



*Fruta del trópico quiero
Nadie la puede encontrar:
Piñas, papayas y mangos
y plátanos llevarán,
Piñas, papayas y mangos
y plátanos llevarán.*



Late in the afternoon the whole family prepared the corn, for the next day was Market Day at a near-by town. They must sell their corn. They talked about the next day at the market. There would be music at the market, they knew, and shows and sweets for the children, gossip and news for the father and mother. The corn would be sold and a little money coming in. Market Day is a good day for everyone.



The mother called them to the evening meal; they were excited by the day that had passed and for the day that was to come.



Very early in the morning, the people started off for the market.



Little streams of people from the villages swelled to a river on the main roads. And the roads led the people to the market towns.



Chilies and beans and corn. The people bargained with the mother for the corn. Paco was sick with a stomach cramp and he stayed with the mother.



But the others walked among the wonders of the market. Hats and ropes and handkerchiefs, all for sale, all bargained for. Belts and pots and rice, and toys of the country.



And little shows



for thrown pennies.



But Paco was sick and did not love the market. And they tried to cheer him up.



They tempted him to health with a new hat.



But Paco was sick. Paco was very sick



In the night Paco was sick and cold, and Juan Diego warmed him and watched over him.



The Wise Woman came to cure him, in the morning. Trini came with herbs and magic.



"It is the airs," she said, "the bitter airs. They have gone to live in his stomach. I will prepare an ancient cure. My grandfather had it from his grandfather and he from his.



"Here the herb, and here the egg. The evil airs love the egg. I will draw them, trap them with it."

"Be patient, Paco," the mother said, "you will soon be well."



"Come to the egg. Come, little pains, into the egg," said Trini.



“Now I have them caught in the egg. I will show you. See—there they are. Now he will be well.”



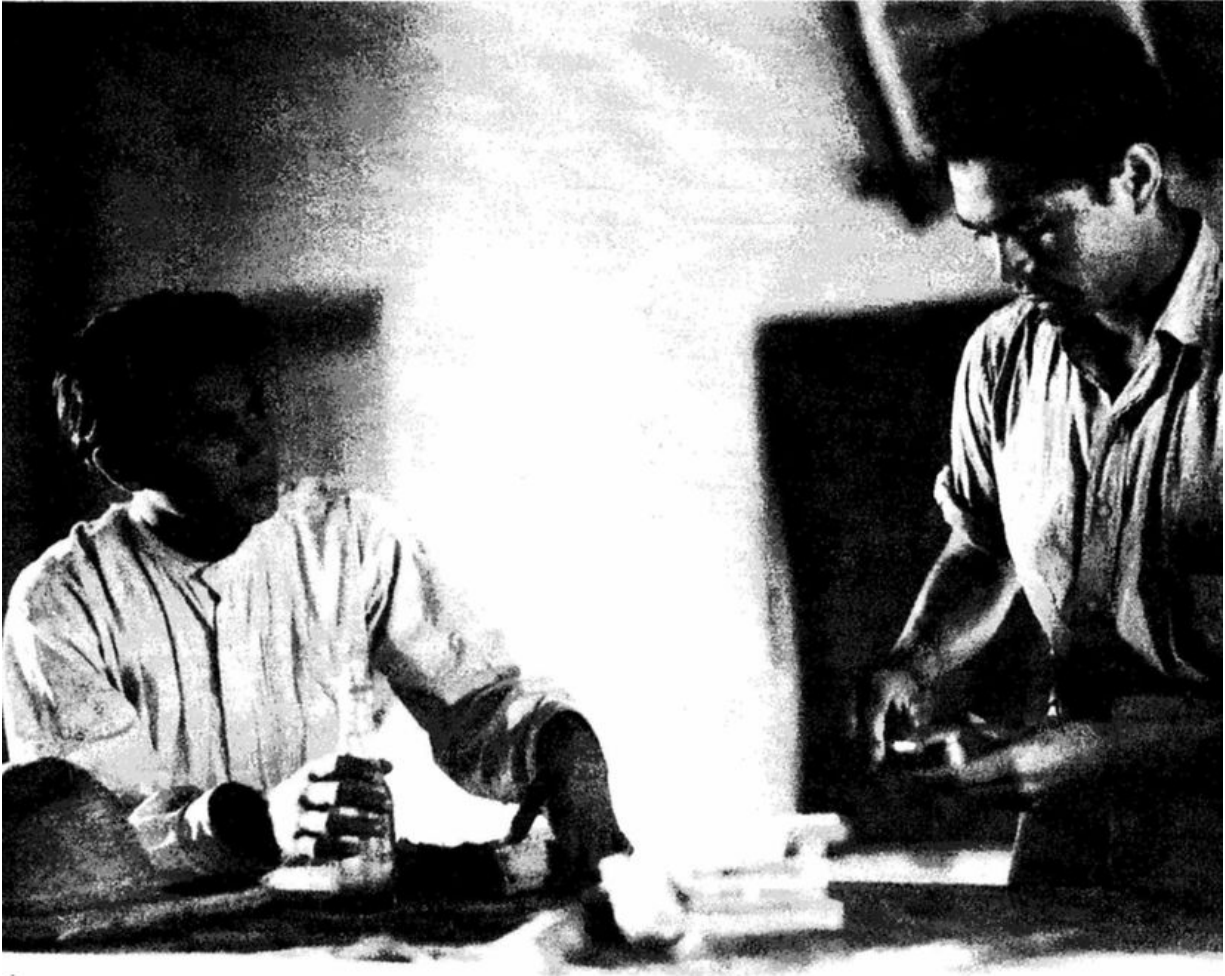
Juan Diego walked through the village and he heard the talk at the well, heard how the children were sickening with the same pain as little Paco had. The women were frightened for the children.



Juan Diego went to see his friend the teacher, the only man in Santiago who had been to the outside world. And Juan Diego said, "You know many children are sick." "I know it," the teacher said. "They say it is in the air, the evil little spirits," Juan Diego said.



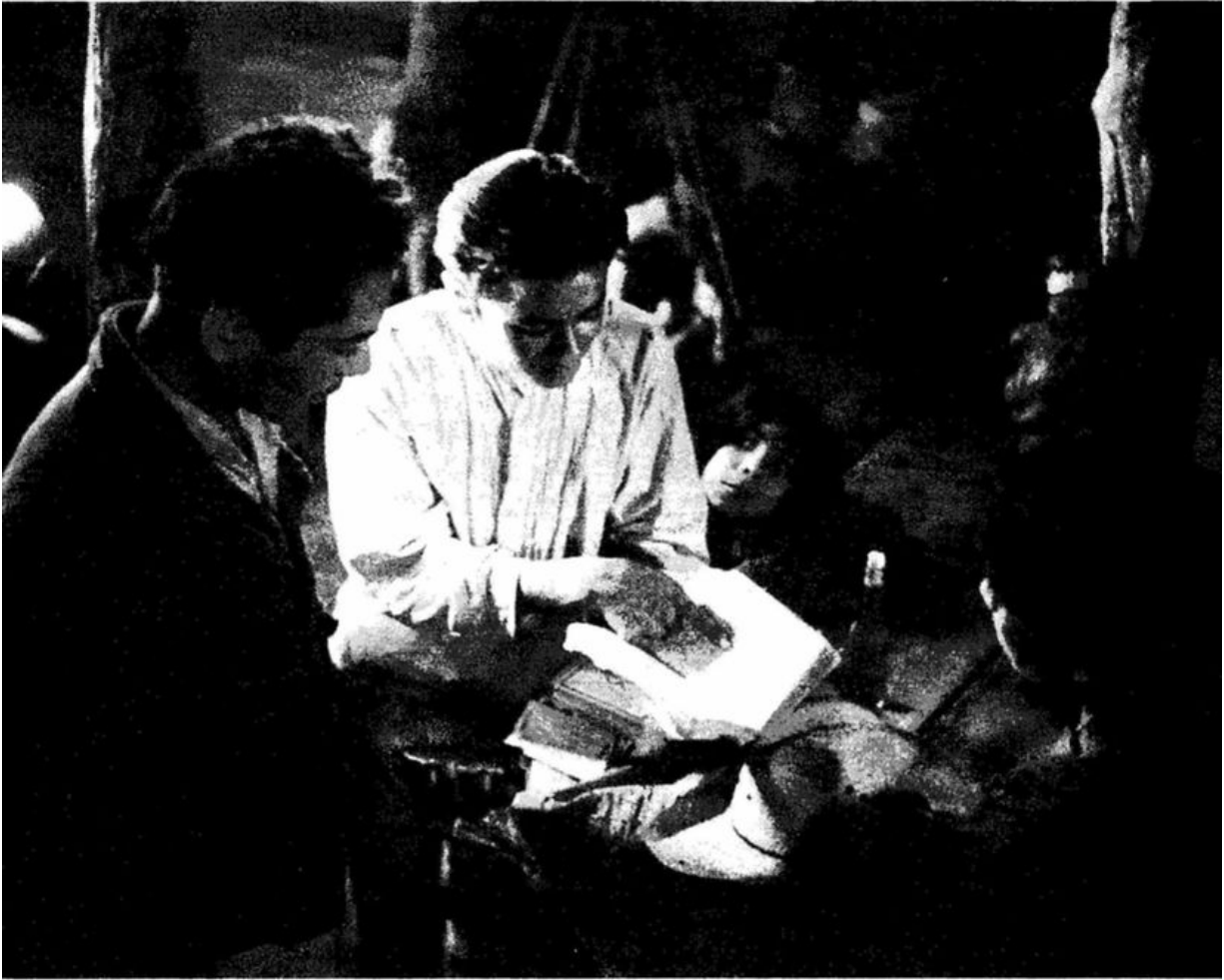
"No, I think it is the water," the teacher said. "I think the germs are in the pueblo well. I can try to help, but I do not know enough. I can only try to help them." And he gathered his medicines and his books.



Paco was stiff with pain. And he was fevered. The mother said, "Trini is curing him. She has an ancient cure." "But her cures are not good!" the teacher cried. The mother said, "You are kind, but we do not like these new things. Trini will cure him if God permits."



"It is not the airs, my mother," Juan Diego said. "Here in the doctor book it tells of the germs, the little animals that cause it." "The airs or little animals, what difference?" the mother asked. "Trini knows. She will cure it. She has an ancient cure. Here she is now. Paco will soon be well."



Then teacher and Wise Woman met in the doorway. "It is not the airs," the teacher said, "it is the water. The well is contaminated." "Trini will cure it, whatever it is," the father said.



Trini said angrily, "What is this nonsense—these new things—these young men who tell their elders? You will kill the people with your new foolishness. This for your nonsense!" And she threw his medicines to the ground.



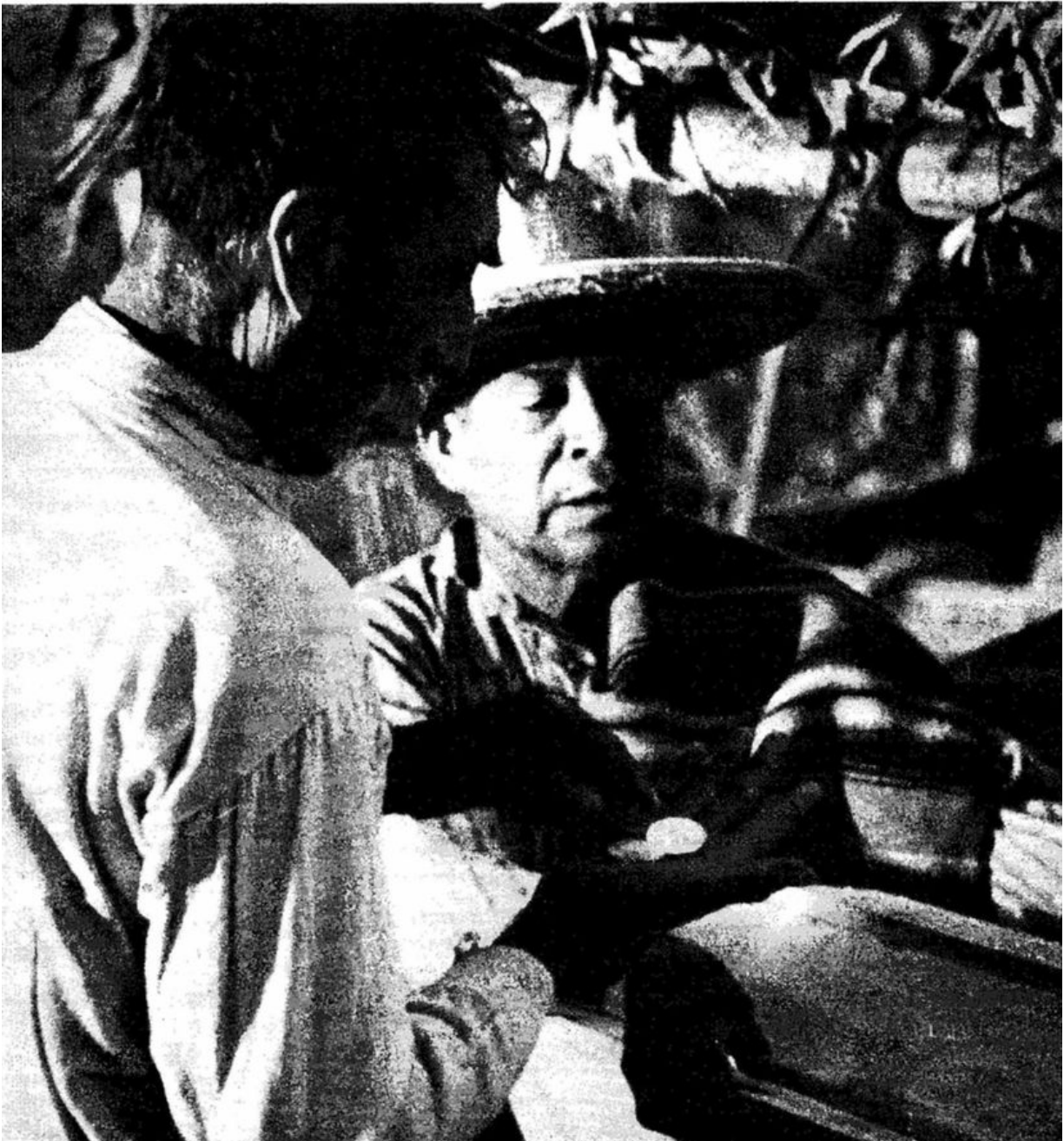
Trini sat beside Paco. "So the egg did not cure?" she asked.
"Well, I have another cure, a better one."



“We will draw the pains downward to his feet. We will suck the pains from his belly. We will draw the airs up to his temples and lose them. Now he will be well again.”



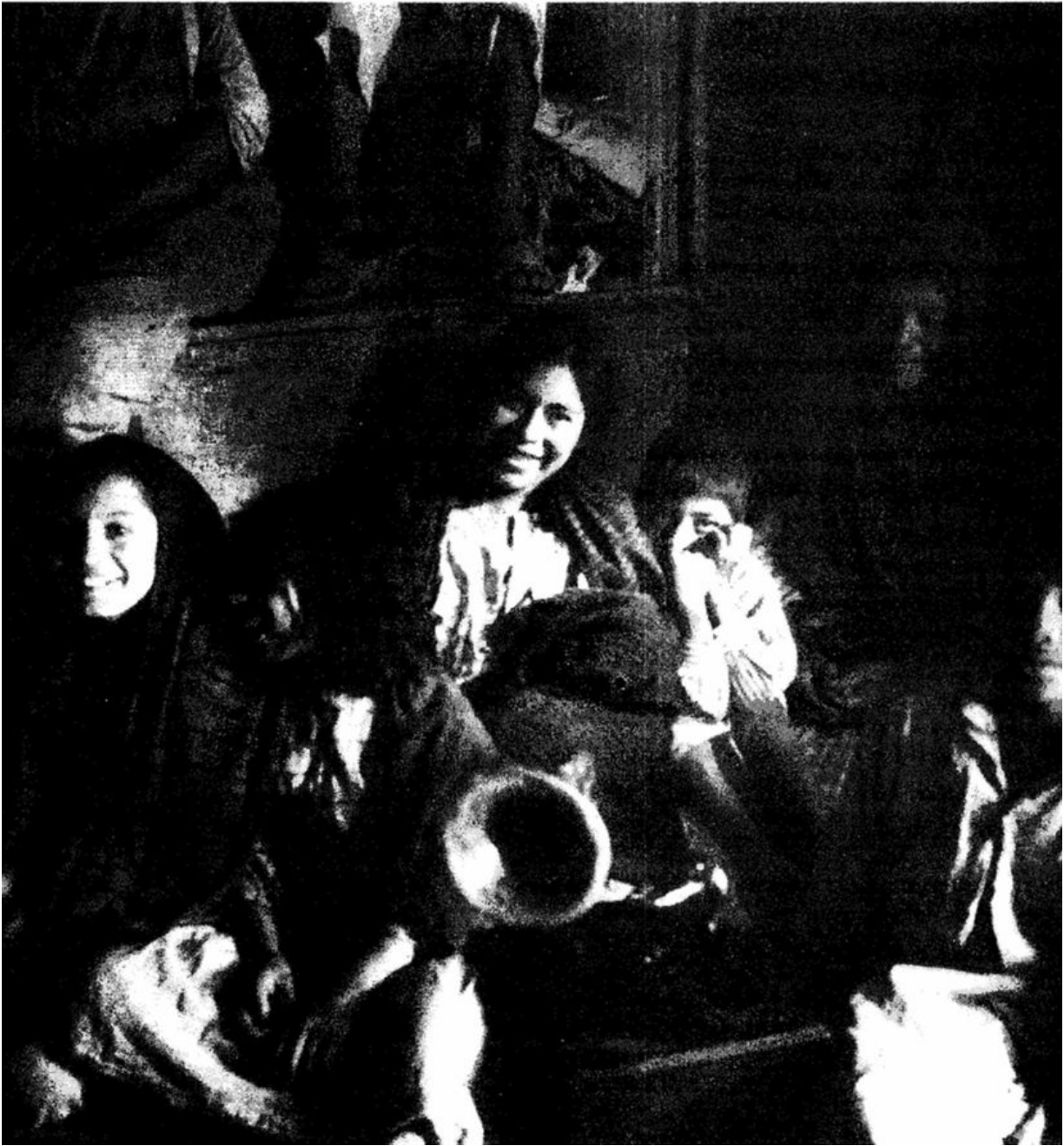
But Paco died and became a little saint—gone straight to heaven



without sin or sorrow, without shame or burden.



The neighbors came and danced all night, as they always do. It is not good to be sad at such a time.



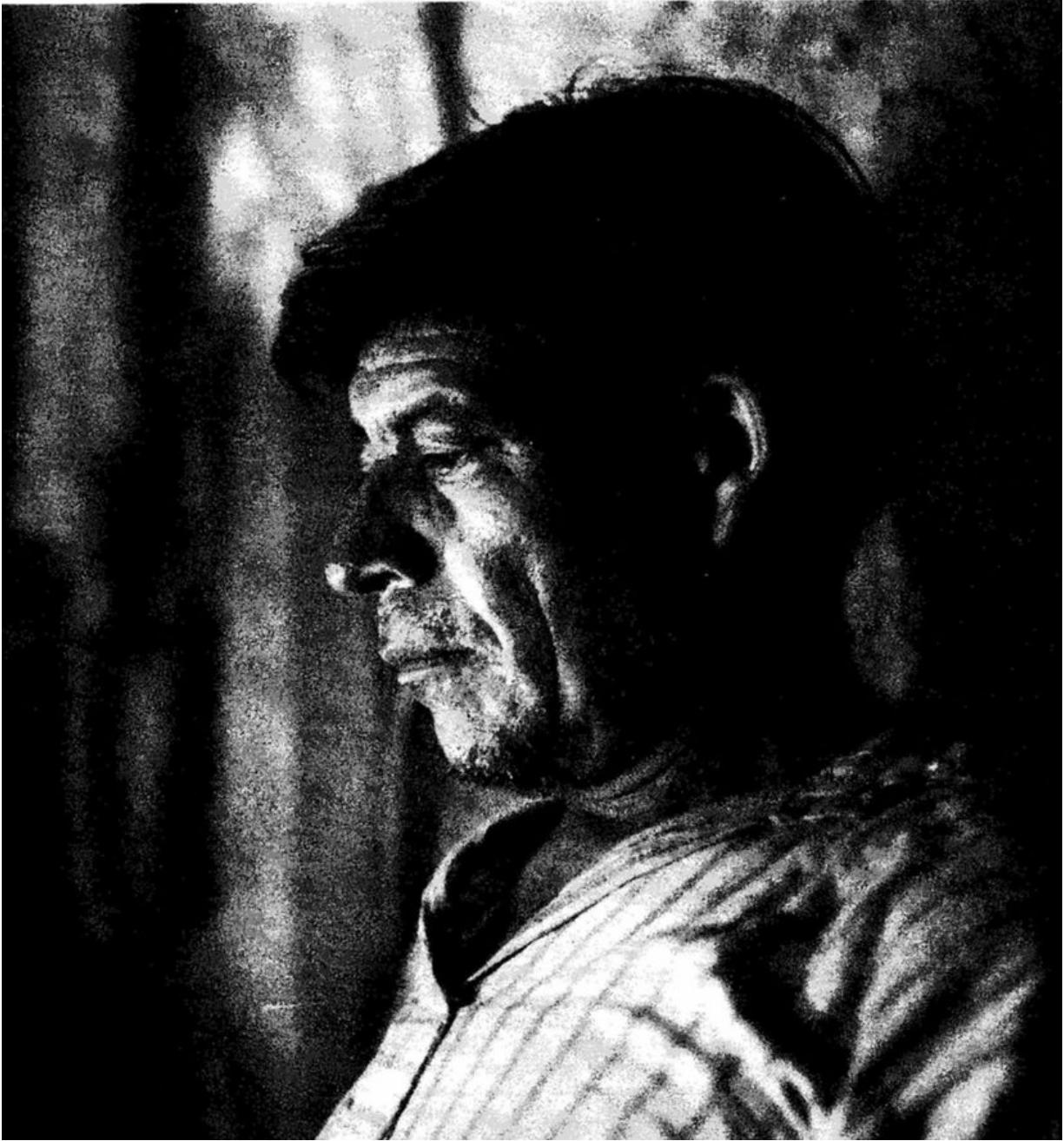
The neighbors came and danced all night in the room with the little saint.



Only the family was sad.

A little saint
without sin or sorrow
going straight to heaven
in his new hat.









The little sister cooked the food that night and the family waited. For the mother was shocked by the loss of one child to early labor on another.



In the kitchen, father and brothers and sister waited in the night. And Juan Diego read to them from a book. He read how an Indian boy named Juárez became a great man and president of all Mexico. And he read how in this one Indian who became president was bound the promise that all the

people would some day be free and happy. They listened, half believing, to the story.



The Wise Woman worked her magic, and chanted the old words:

“Now he is forming,
Now he is ready.



"Now he has hands.
Now he has eyes.
Now he is forming."



When the birth was near, they awakened the father to give strength and comfort to the mother. Between his knees he held her and braced her against her pain, and took some of the pain to himself.



And Trini worked with the last labor. She chanted, "Now he is formed, now he is ready." The father whispered in Esperanza's ear, "Be of good courage, I am with you. Be of good courage, I am with you." And Trini cried in triumph, "He is formed—he is born! He is here!"



In the morning the family welcomed the new baby. He was a boy child and beautiful. And he had hurried to be born on the feast day of his own village of Santiago.



His name would be Santiago; he must be fortunate with such an omen. And he was very beautiful.



They sent up rockets for the little fiesta of Santiago, and they drank and danced in the plaza. The people congratulated the father on his new son, and on the prophecy. The father was a great and happy man on that day.



Then, in front of the church, the people celebrated in dance the ancient war of Castilians and Moors.



They acted out a battle between peoples they did not know in a land they had never heard of in a time that was forgotten. And the people enjoyed the death of the king of the Moors, as they did every year.



But many children were sick and the fiesta did not cure them. And the white headbands of the Wise Woman were everywhere. And more children were sick, and the people of Santiago were frightened.



In fear they carried the Saint and the Christ in procession.

“Our Guardian, look on the sadness of Thy village,”
they sang.

“Look on the children.
Save us from this sorrow.



“Show us the sin we have committed, that we may repent.

Save us from this sorrow.

Look on Thy people and Thy village.

Look on the sinless children dying for our sins.

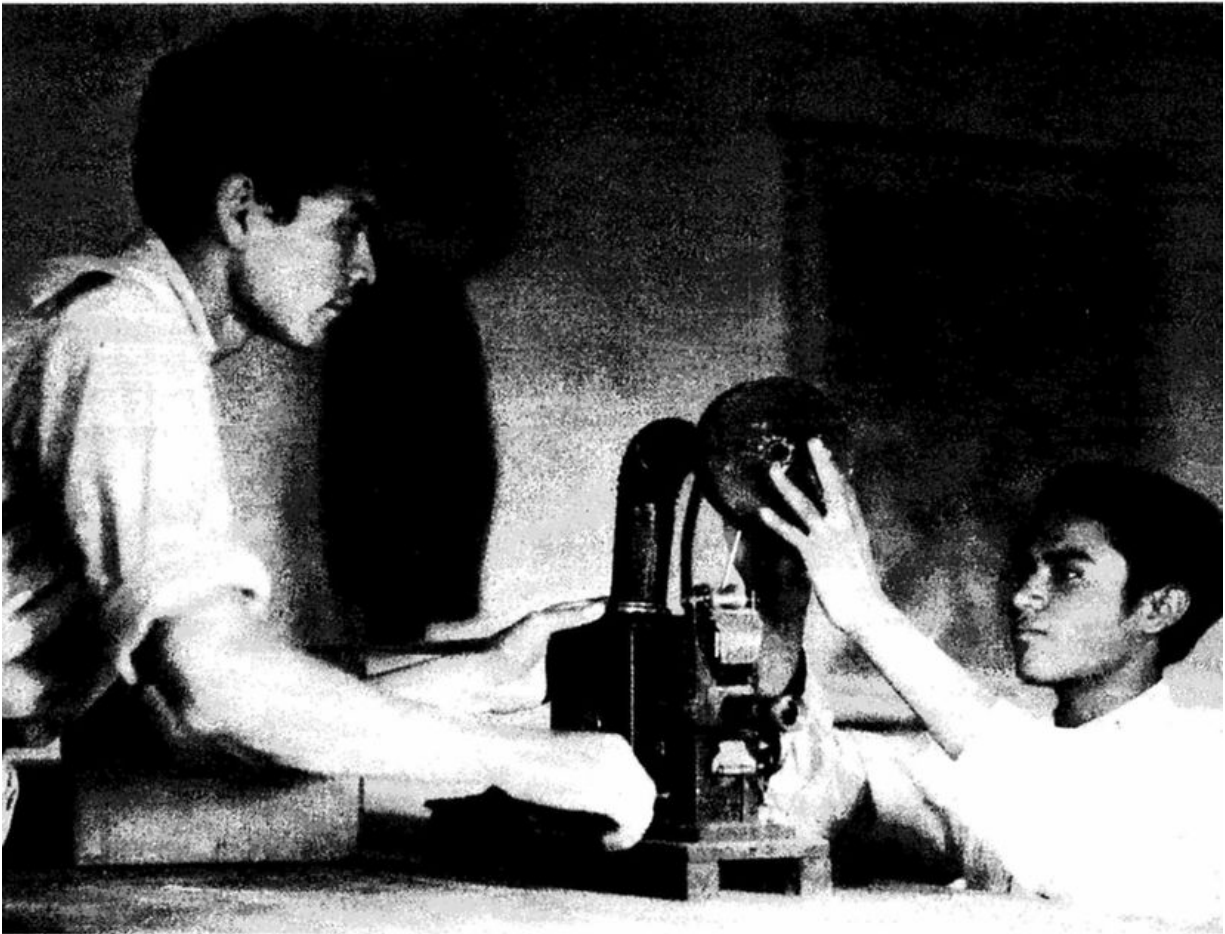
Save us from this sorrow.

Save us, Santiago, Save us, Lord Jesus.”

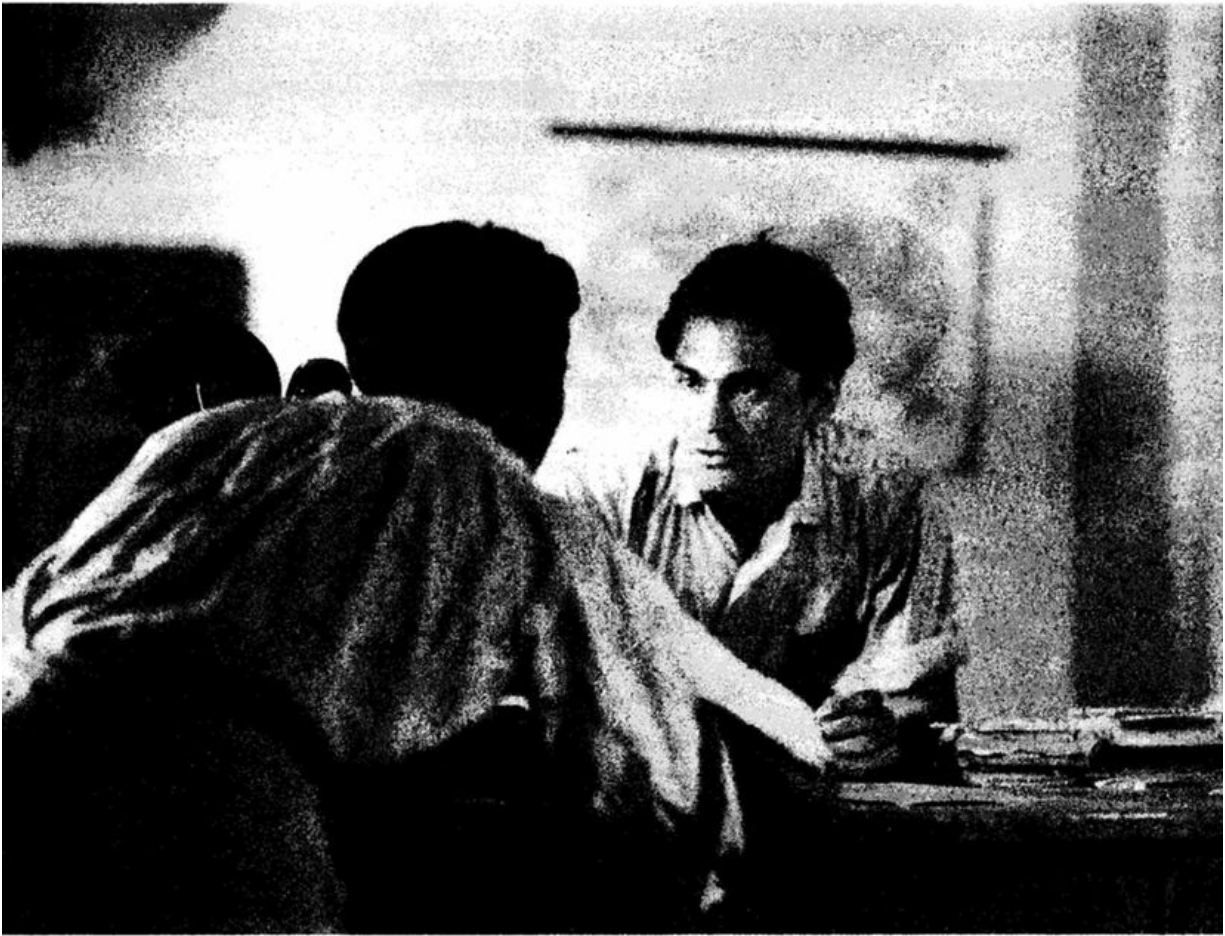
But the children sickened and new sorrow fell upon the people.



At the school Juan Diego and the teacher prepared, with a borrowed kerosene-lamp projector and scratched film, to show the people what caused the sickness and how it could be cured.



They made a petition to the medical authorities in the distant capital.



Then the teacher gathered the people in the school. And he amused them first with cartoons so that they might not be against him.



Then he told them of the doctors who visit the villages when they can. He told them invisible little animals cause many sicknesses- typhoid, smallpox, and malaria.



“Here in our village, there are little animals that live in the water. They are the murderers of the children. But there is a way to cure it. We must clean up the water and cure the children. The serum from an infected horse can cure the children.”



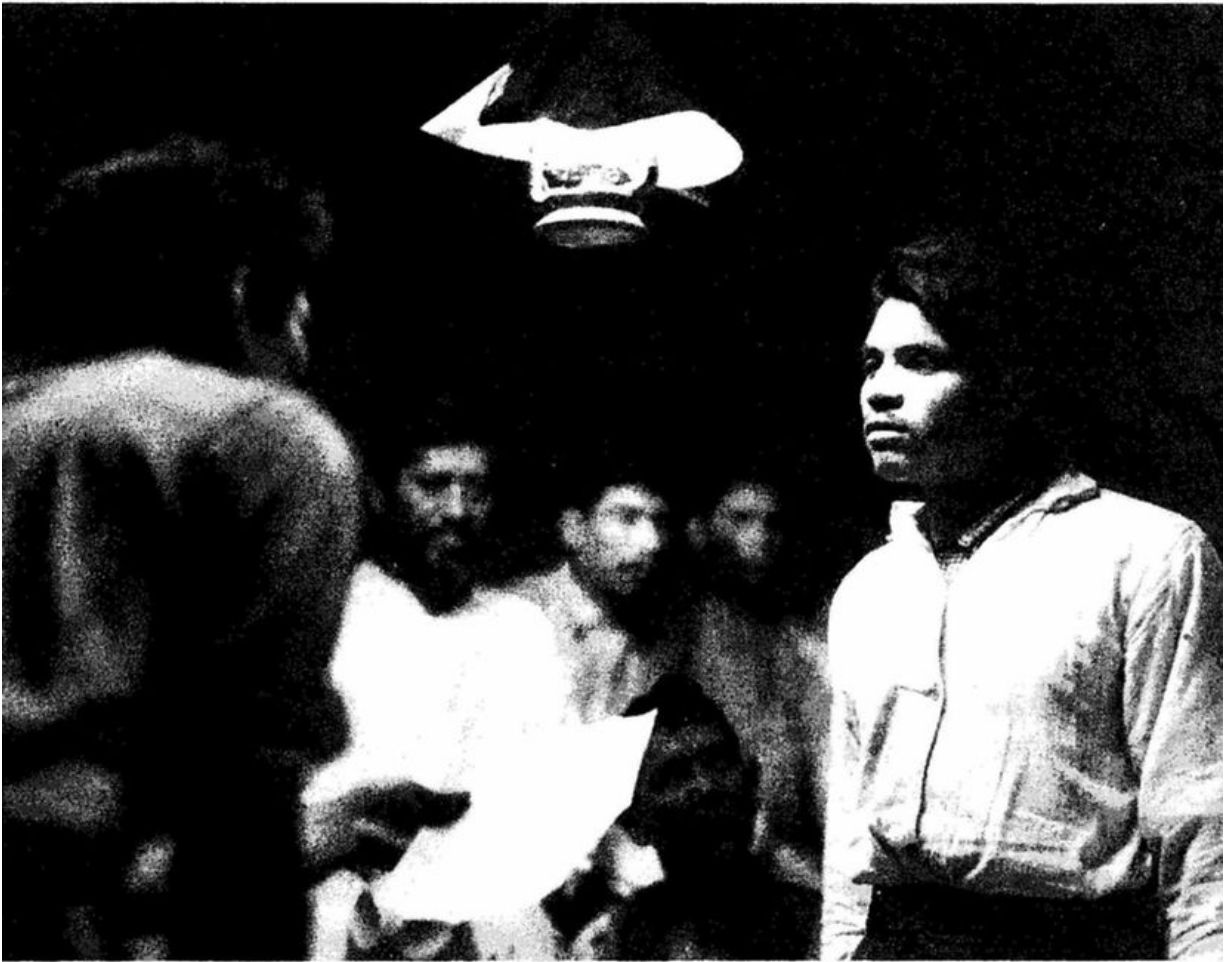
"Horses' blood!" the chief said. "Are we animals? Are we horses or dogs or rats? What is this horses' blood? What is this new nonsense?"



The teacher said, "We want to help you, not to hurt you. The men of science are working to cure the children. Now you have seen the cause of the sickness and you have seen the cure. The men of science work to help you, but first you must help yourselves. If you, the people of the village, will sign this petition, the doctors will come and cure the children and help us to clean the water."



But the chief protested. "We do not want horses' blood. Are we horses?" And another said, "Truly, some of the children die and go to heaven. Perhaps it is intended that way. We do not like these new things."



Juan Diego spoke for the teacher, "The children are dying. The curandera cannot cure them. Listen to the teacher. He knows."



The chief cried then, "I am tired of babies telling their elders! I am tired of these new things—this horse blood."



At the house, the little sister, Maria, had taken the illness.



The Wise Woman brought another ancient cure for her—one that was oldest and strongest of all, a snakeskin to draw the pain. Juan Diego went out of the house and walked to the little school.



Juan Diego said to the teacher, "They have put a snakeskin on my sister. They are using charms as they did with Paco." "They rejected the petition," the teacher said. "What is done we must do ourselves. We must send the letter ourselves." "I will take the letter to the doctors," Juan Diego said, "I myself."



Then Juan Diego, who had never been more than ten miles from his own village, went out into a strange new world, among people he did not know. He was frightened, but he had to do it.



He walked into a new world.



When at last he was tired and thirsty, he stopped at a military post to ask for water.



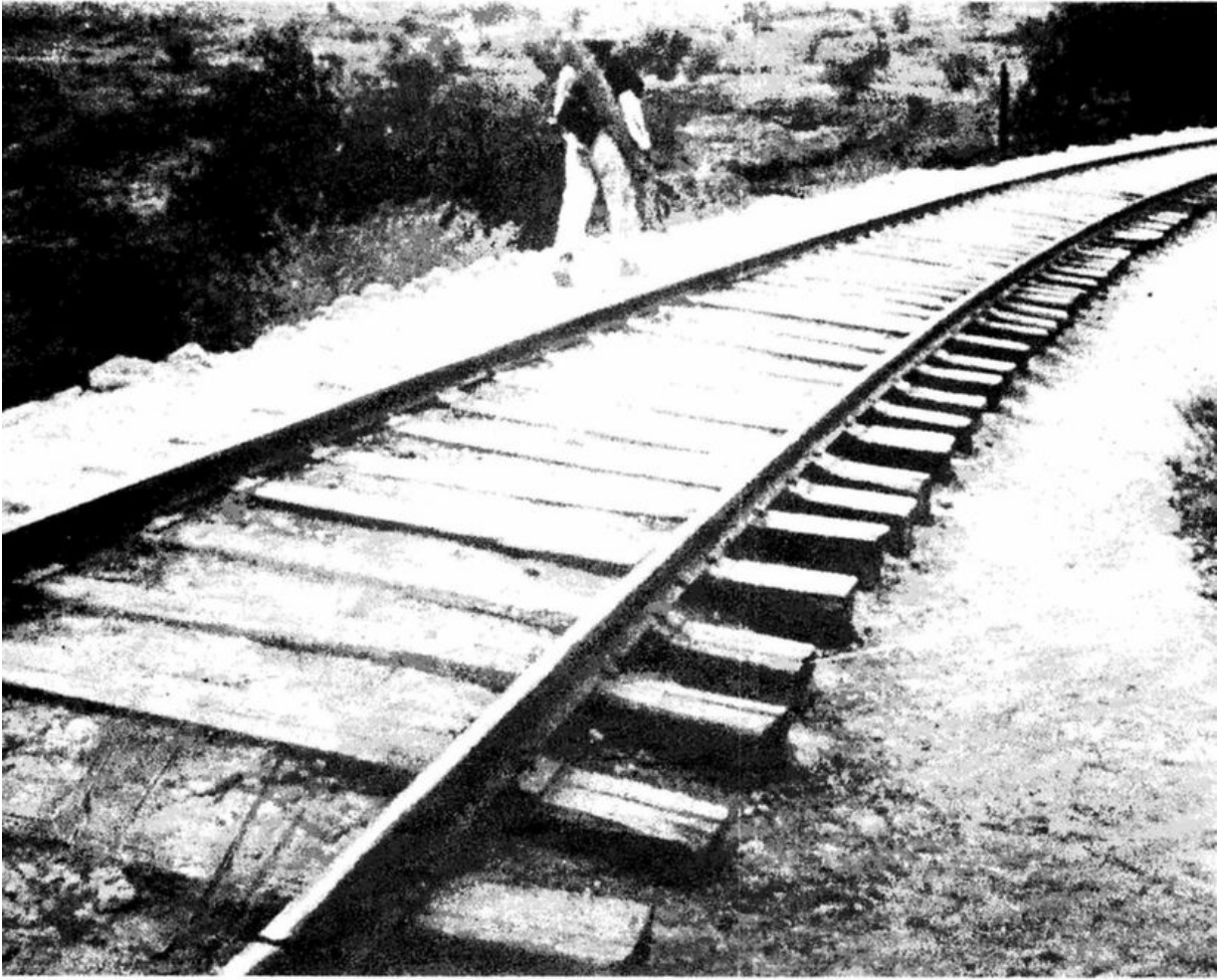
The soldier said, "Here is water. Where do you travel?"
"I go to the city. The babies of my pueblo are dying. I go to bring the doctors to save the children." A man had said the doctors would not come. The village was too far away and it was a waste of time.



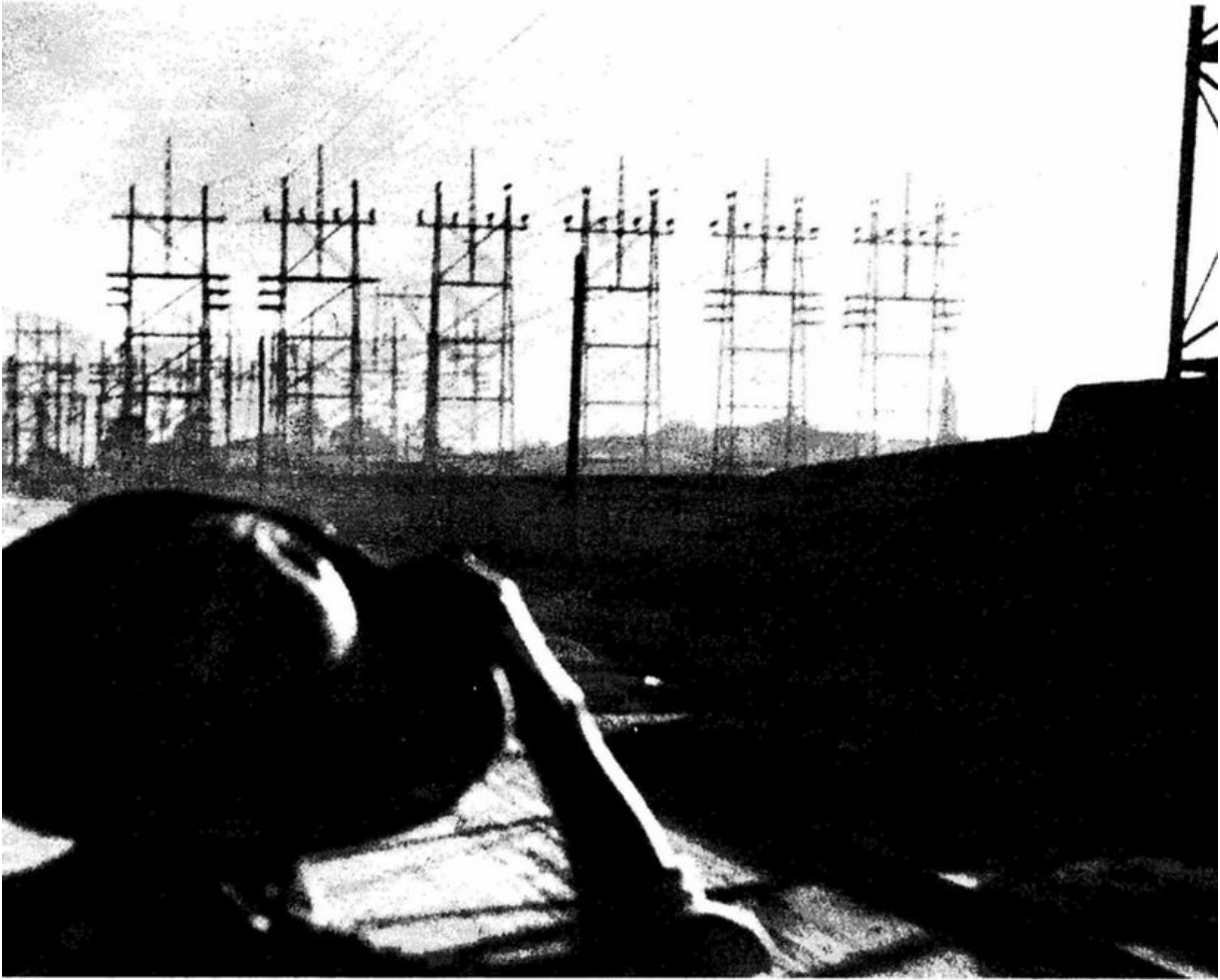
"You will think I who am a soldier should like to fight. I am an old soldier. I was a boy from a village like you before I was a soldier. Yours is the true people's work," the soldier said; "saving, not killing ; growing, not dying. That is the people's work, yours and mine. And now a straight path for your feet and benevolence on your task."



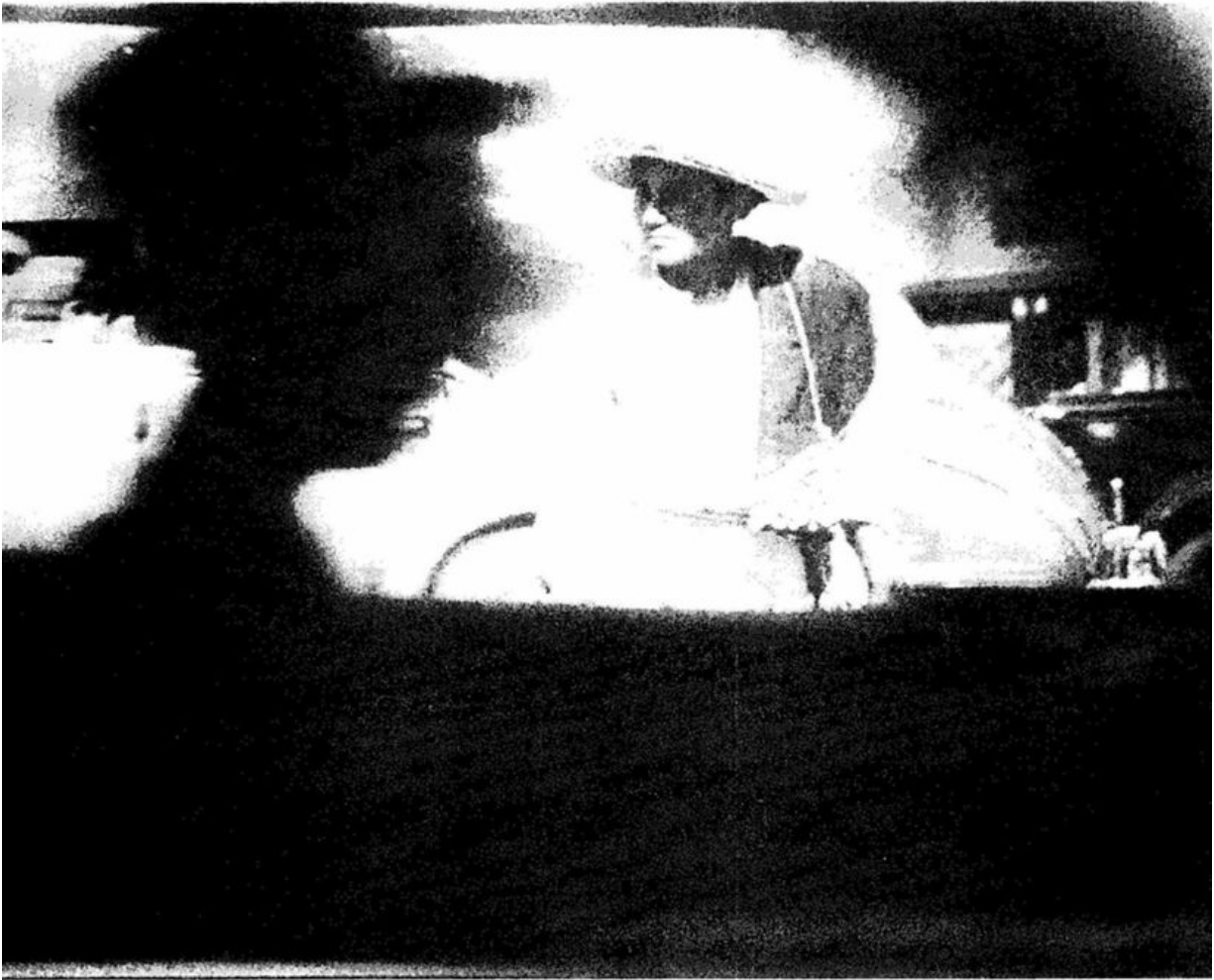
Then Juan Diego walked on in country that was strange to him.



The city was terrible to him.



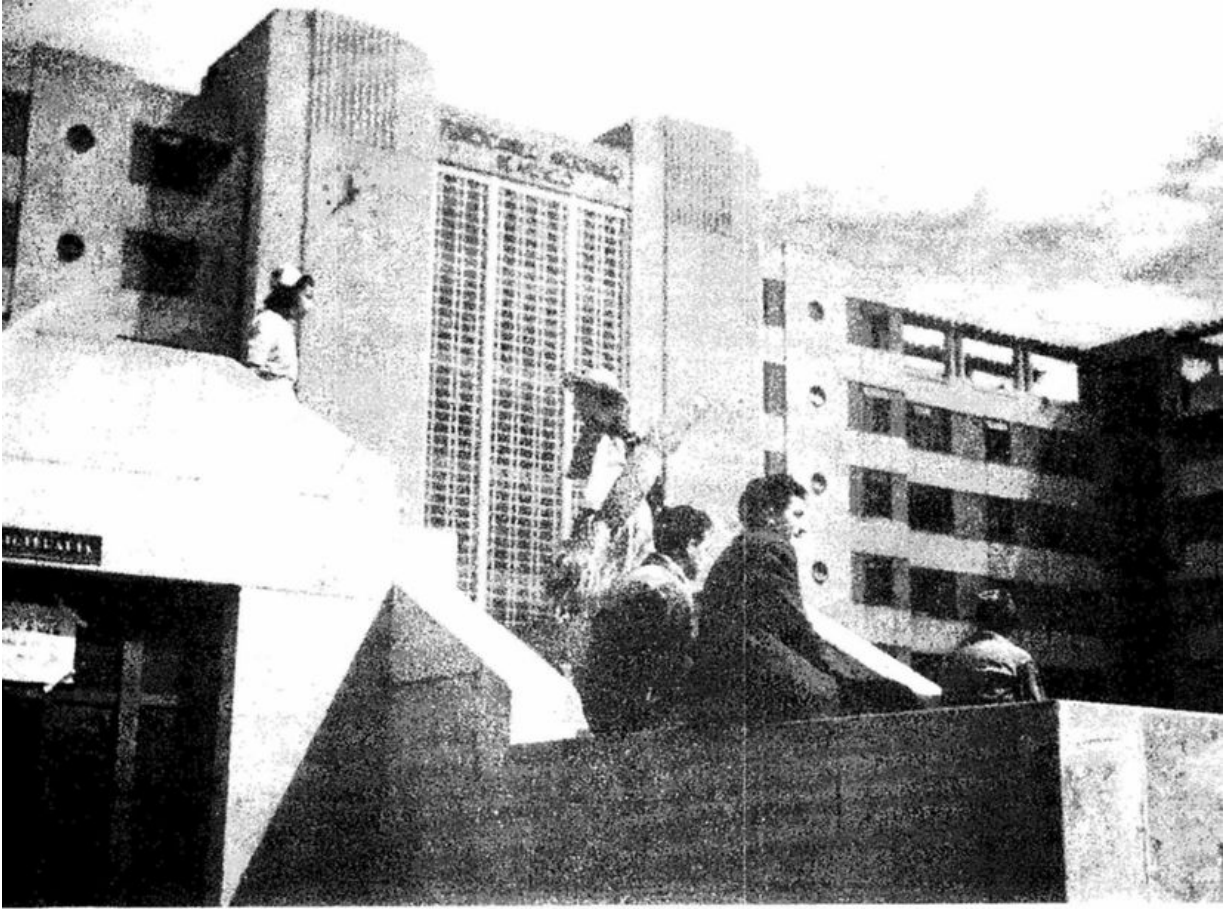
He saw buildings fantastic and unbelievable. People whose lives he could not imagine. He was frightened.



But the children were sick. He asked his way to the hospital.



Finally he found his way to the hospital. The doctor said, "The medical trucks are all out at other villages. There is no one to send." And Juan Diego pleaded with him, "The children of Santiago are sick. More every day. My own sister. My brother is dead."



"We need your help. We think it is the water. The people go to the Wise Woman. She says it is the airs. She is treating my own sister with a rattlesnake skin." "What can we do?" the doctor asked. "The medical trucks are all out. There is no one to send." "The children are dying-more every day. And we can do nothing!" cried Juan Diego. "You can save the children. You must come to Santiago."



They set out for the village in a rural service car. They took an interne and a nurse, equipment for water-test, serums.



They came to the village to save the children.



Trini saw them and was afraid for her business. She called, "The horse-blood men are here."



And the people hid their children from the doctors.



The doctor examined Maria. "Snakeskin! This will never cure her," he said.



“She is very ill. I think I know her illness. But I must see the other sick children before I can be sure. I will come back when I’m sure. This medicine will reduce the fever—nothing more.”



And when he left the house, the mother put the snakeskin back on Maria's belly.



The warning of Trini had gone through the village. The strangers—the horse-blood men—are here. The village was against them, for the rumor had run through the village: they bring horses' blood for the children.



The people hid the children. "There are no sick children here."



And only a few received them.



The father was courteous, but he said, "We do not want horses' blood here." "But she will die without the injection," the doctor warned.



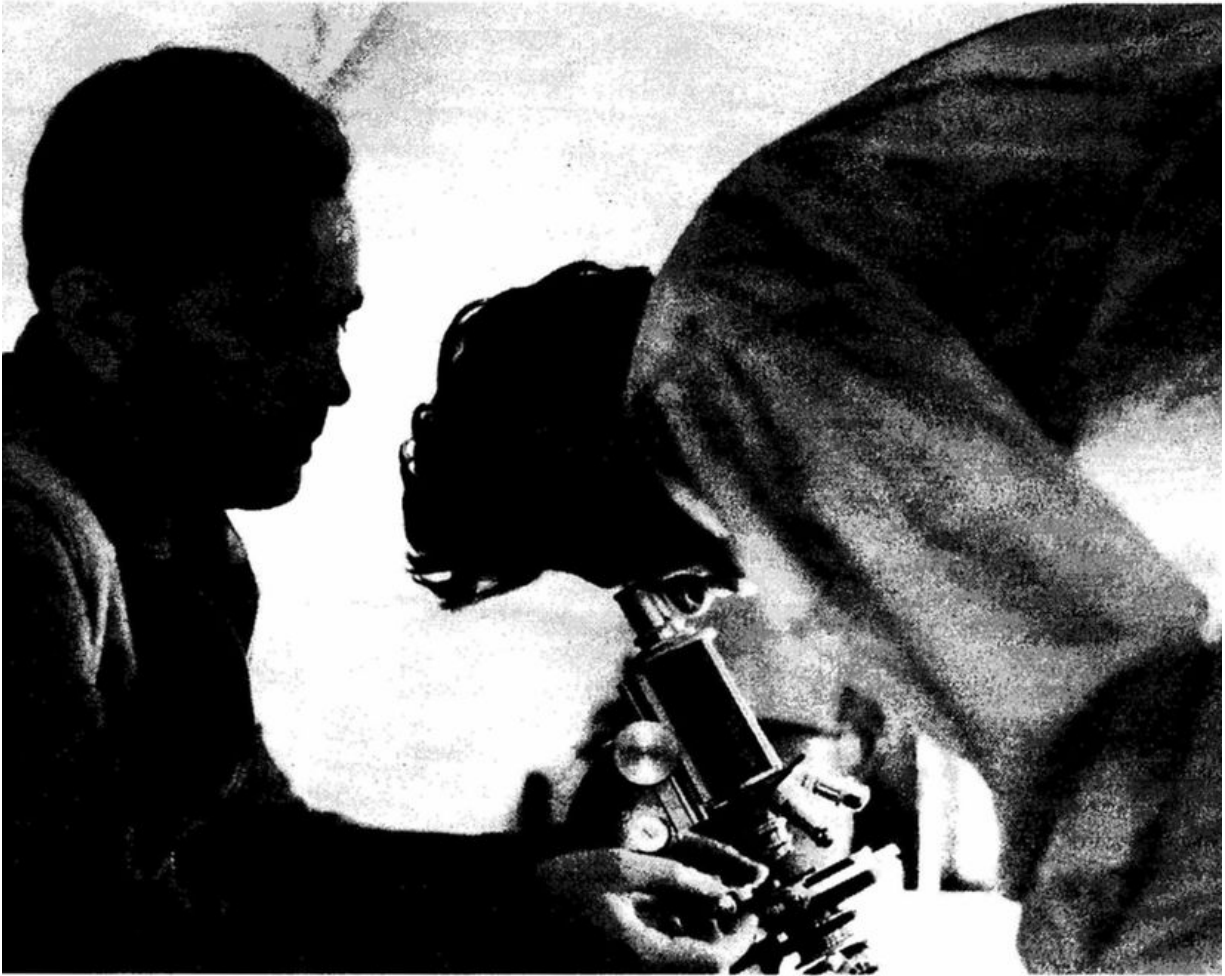
Ventura said, "Then she will die by God's will, not by horses' blood. You may not enter my house nor poison my children."



At the medical tent the interne set up a microscope. He said, "Here they are. I have them on the plate, the little murderers. This is the water of your well. Come, look at them."



And Juan Diego and the teacher looked at the entero bacilli which caused the sickness.



Then they went to the well to disinfect it. "We'll kill the murderers first," the doctor said, and he gave the disinfectant to the teacher.

"You must do this every day until no more children sicken," he said.

"Our regular medical trucks will come with more soon. We must kill the little murderers at the source."



Trini saw them pour the powder into the well, and when they had gone she tasted the water and spat it out. "They have poisoned the well! It is not enough that they bring horses' blood. They must poison us too."



She collected the people under the churchyard tree. "The strangers have poisoned the water," she said. "The well is poisoned." Then the people grew angry because they believed the well was poisoned.



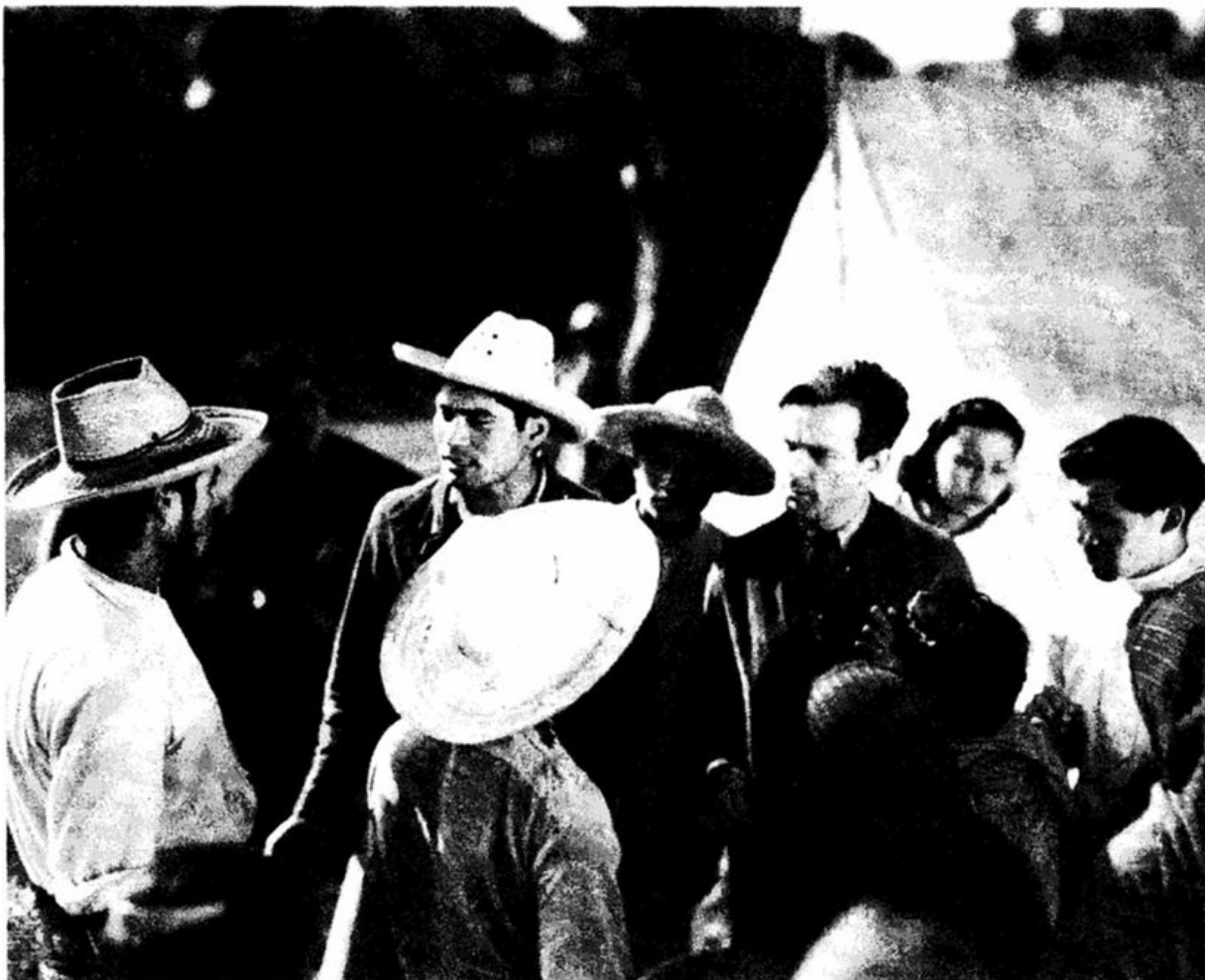
They moved angrily down to the medical tent.



They shouted, "You have poisoned the water! We have no water now. This woman's baby has just died of your poison. You have killed her baby. Look at her."



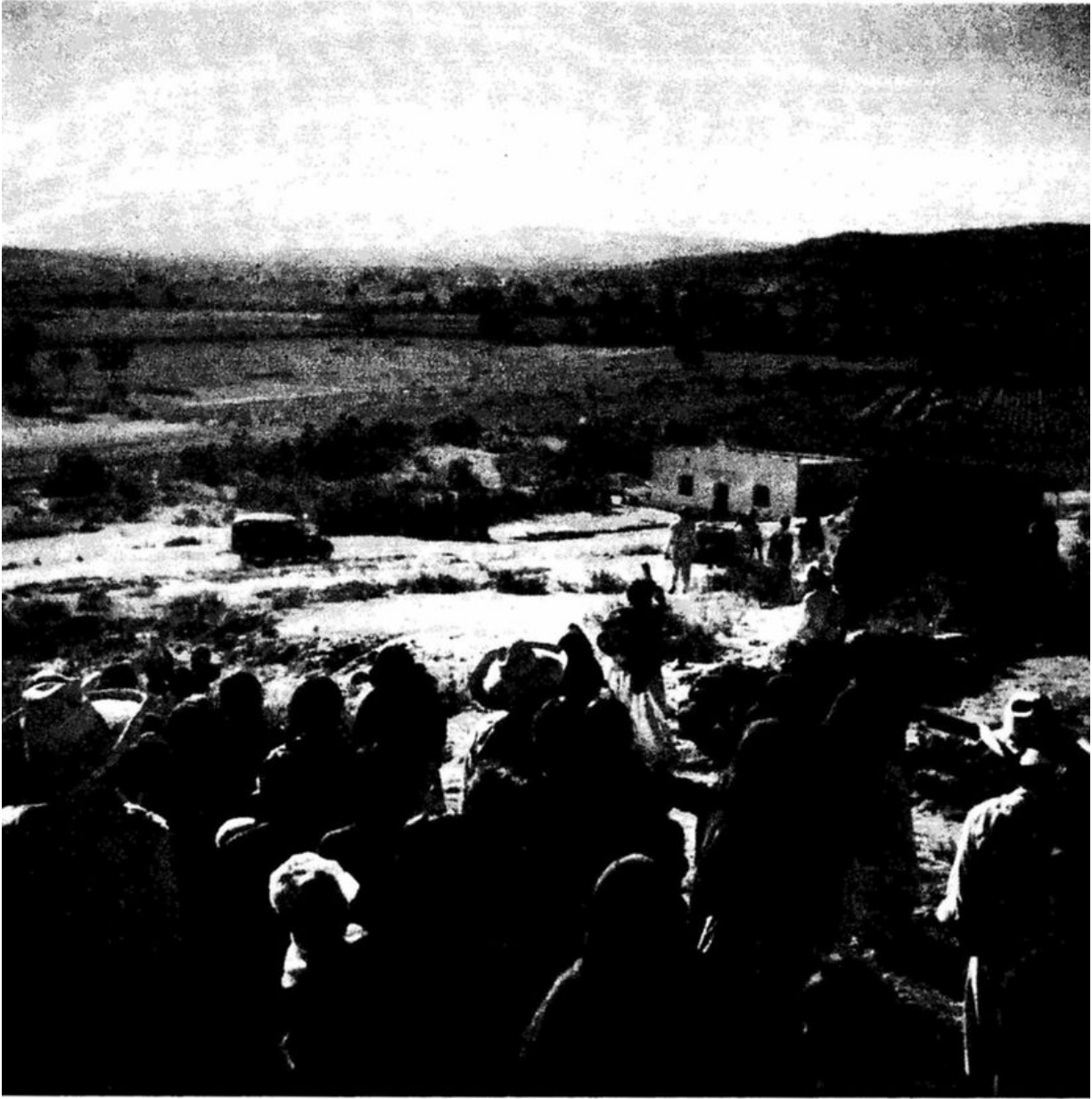
“The water is safe now,” the doctor said. “We have made it safe. The little animals are dead.”



And the people cried, "We do not want you—poisoners!" Trini turned on Juan Diego and struck him in the face. "And you, traitor to your own people, why do you deal with strangers?"



“We must drive them out before they kill us all. Drive them out-the poisoners! Drive them out!” Then the people drove the doctors out of the village with curses.



The father said to Juan Diego, "You are disgracing me with our own people. I am a laughing stock to the great men of Santiago."



In the night, Juan Diego stole his little sister from the house, and he carried her out of the village. The doctor and the teacher waited for him.



"We can save her," the doctor said. "It is soon enough. She will be well again. She will be well." And he gave the little girl the saving injection.



"Here are medicines," he said to the teacher. "Use them when you can. And do not forget the well, even if you must disinfect it at night.... You can take her back. She will be well."



Juan Diego crept back to his own house, carrying his sister.
And the father waited in the door.



"You are against your village and your family," the father said. "You are a friend of the poisoners. You do not belong to us. Go to your friends." And he struck him and pushed him from the house.



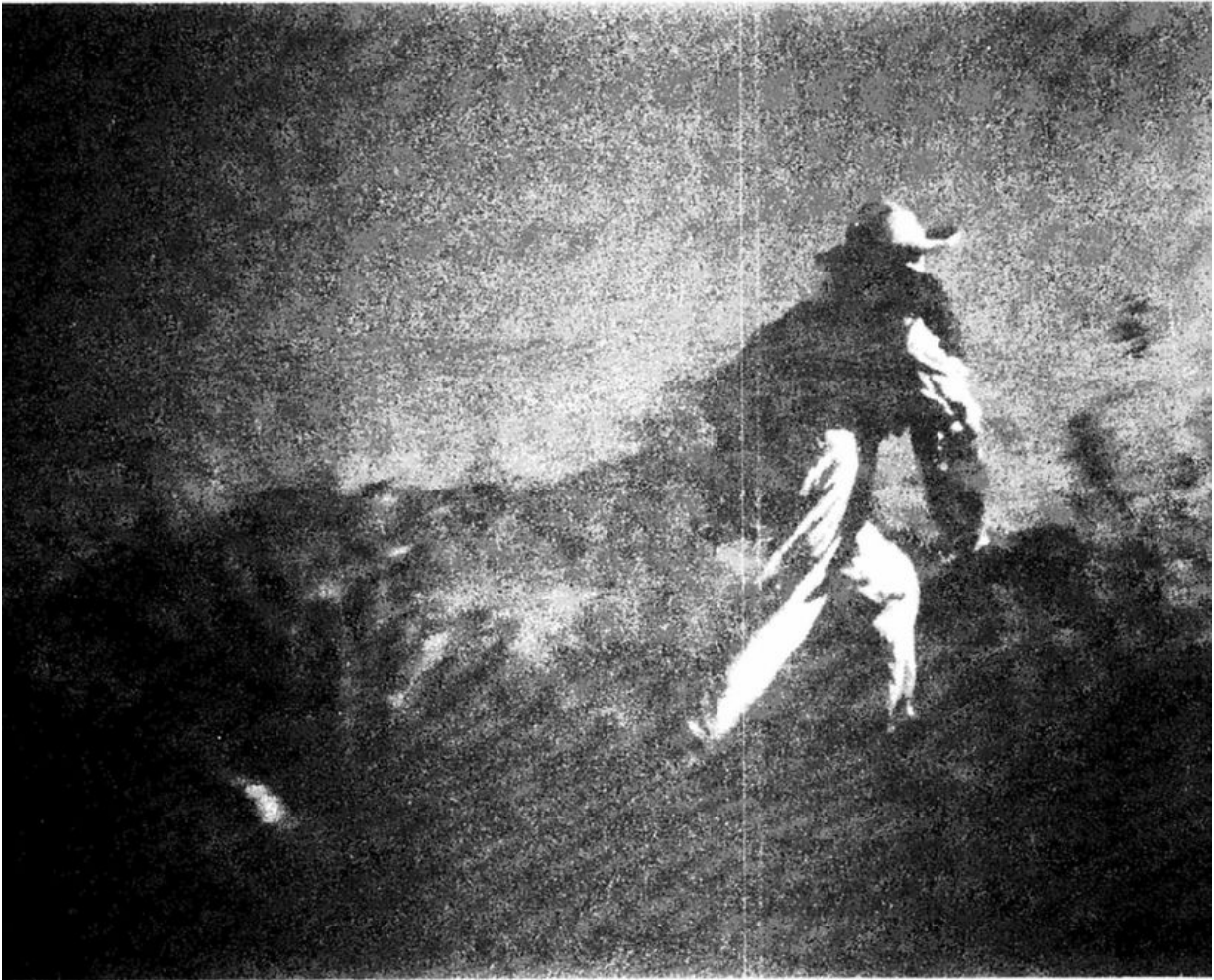
Then Juan Diego went sadly to the teacher. "My father said I must never return again."



“We thought it would happen,” the teacher said. “You have broken the law of your father. You have hurt his pride in the village. The doctors said they would place you in school in the city.



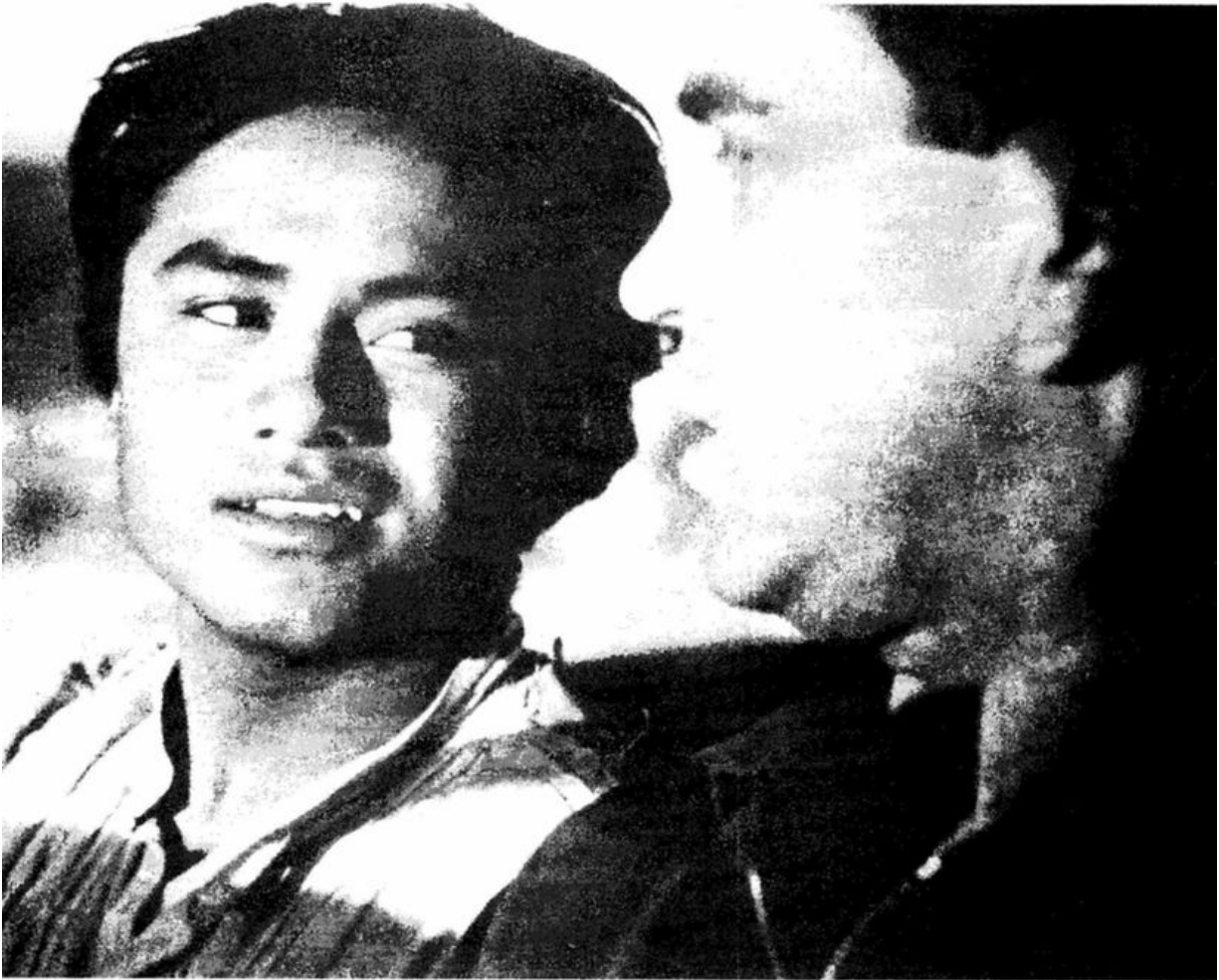
"You must take the short-cut over the mountains to meet the medical car. But you must hurry. Hurry. You will come back to your own people later, when you know enough. Hurry."



Then Juan Diego ran over the mountains and he met the car returning to the city.



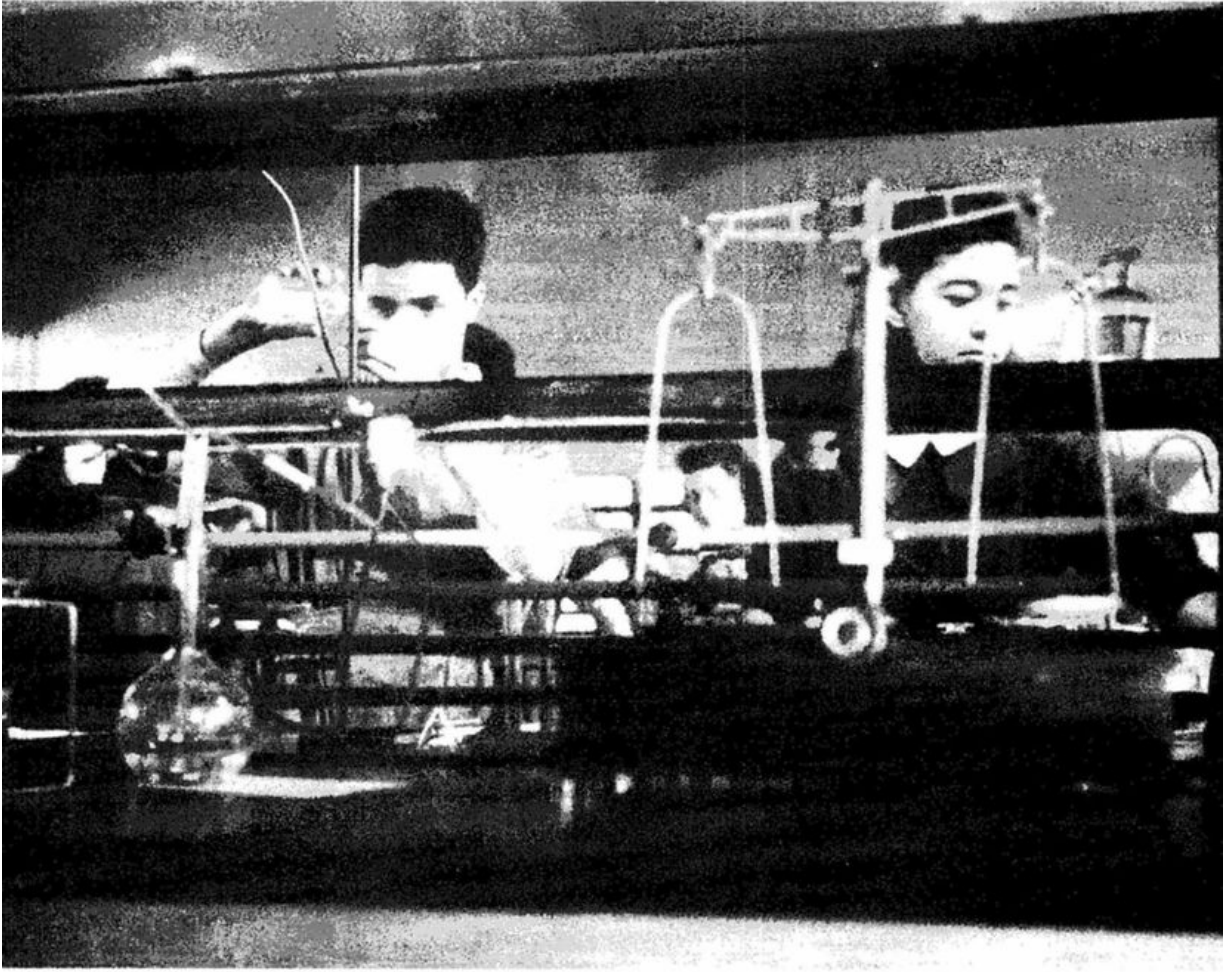
He sat wide-eyed in the car and listened to the doctor. "Do not worry about your sister—she will get well," the doctor said. "The teacher has medicine enough until our regular medical service truck gets back to the village. When the people see that your sister is well, they will accept the medicine. Do not blame them. It is the young people who will change them," the doctor said.



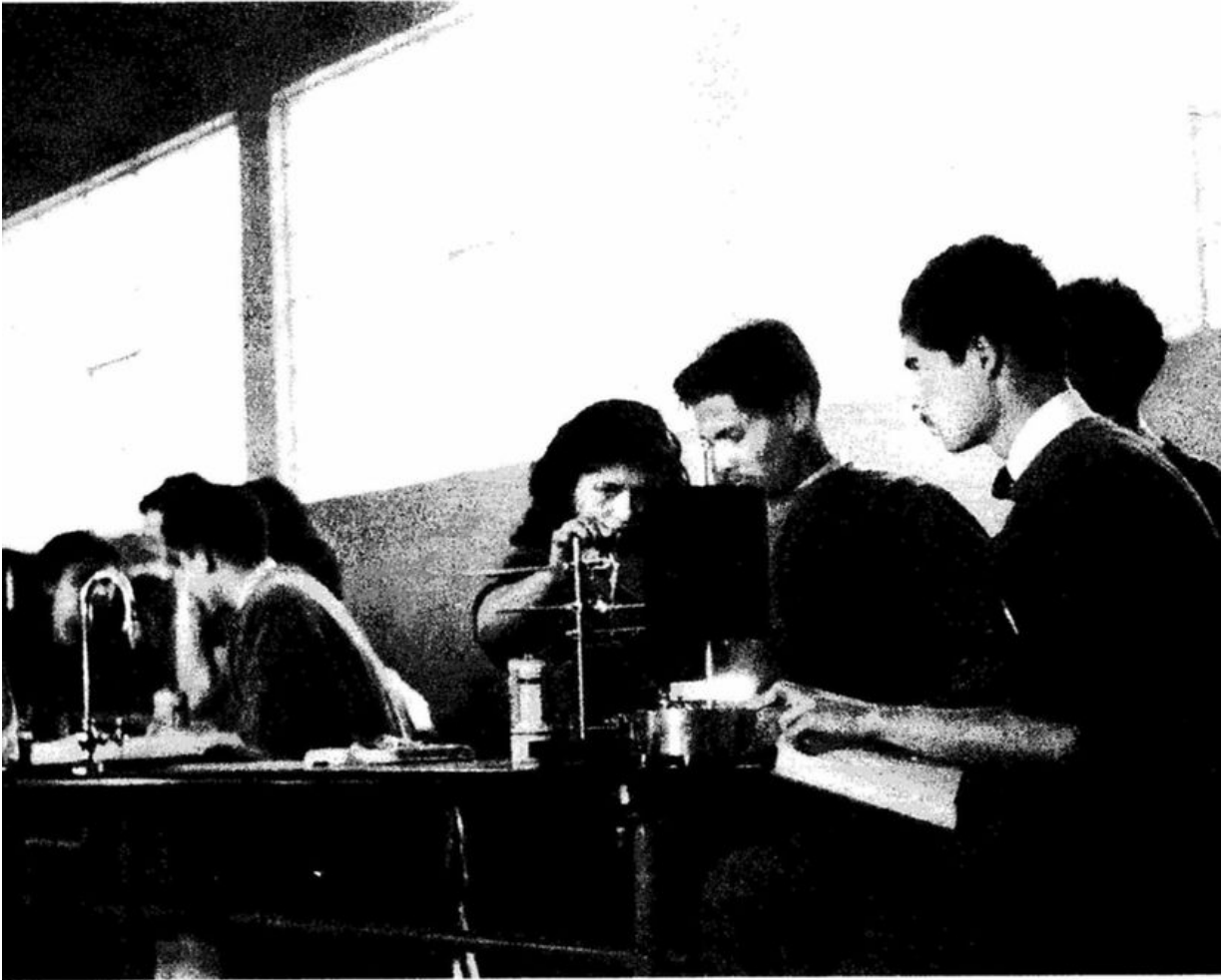
"They come from the villages to learn, boys like you, Juan Diego, and girls. They learn not for themselves, but for their people. It will not be quick, Juan Diego; learning and teaching are slow, patient things.



“Changes in people are never quick. But the boys from the villages are being given a chance by a nation that believes in them. From the government schools, the boys and girls from the villages will carry knowledge back to their own people, Juan Diego.



"And the change will come, is coming; the long climb out of darkness. Already the people are learning, changing their lives, learning, working, living in new ways.



"The change will come, is coming, as surely as there are thousands of Juan Diegos in the villages of Mexico."



And the boy said, "I am Juan Diego."

