

Introductory Note

This is a story about Kino, his wife Juana and their baby Coyotito. Kino was a poor Mexican-Indian. He made his money by fishing for pearls – valuable stones found inside the shell of oysters. Kino's life was poor and simple until he found the largest pearl in the world. He thought that the pearl would bring happiness to his family. But instead of happiness, the pearl brought fear and danger.

Kino, Juana and Coyotito

Kino woke up early in the morning. The stars were still shining in the sky. The cockerels were beginning to crow¹ and the pigs were looking for something to eat. Outside the little wooden house, some birds were singing and moving in the bushes.

Kino opened his eyes and looked at the light coming in the door. Then he looked at the box where his son, Coyotito, was sleeping. The box hung on ropes from the roof. Lastly, Kino turned his head towards Juana, his wife. Juana lay beside him on the mat. Her shawl covered her body and half her face. Juana's eyes were open. Her eyes were always open when Kino woke up. Juana had eyes like little stars. She was looking at Kino as he woke up.

Kino could hear the sound of the waves on the beach². The sound of the waves was like music in the early morning. Kino's blanket covered his nose because the air was cold. He turned his head and saw Juana. She was quietly getting up. She went to the hanging box where Coyotito slept. She bent over and comforted Coyotito. The baby looked up for a moment, then closed his eyes and slept again.

Juana went to the little fire. She took a piece of coal and blew it until it started to burn. Then Juana put pieces of wood on the fire. Kino got up and pulled his blanket around his head and shoulders. He pushed his feet into his sandals and went outside. He stood and watched the sun come up.

Kino sat down outside the door and pulled the blanket round



Kino's blanket covered his nose because the air was cold.

his knees. He looked at the little red clouds high over the sea. A goat came near and looked at Kino. Behind Kino, the fire began to burn brightly. Kino could see the flames and the light through the door. He could see the flames through the holes in the walls of his little house, too. Juana was busy making corncakes³ for breakfast.



Suddenly, the sun came up out of the sea. The sun was so bright that Kino covered his eyes. He could see Juana making the corncakes. Kino could smell the corncakes cooking, too. A thin, frightened dog came up and lay down next to Kino. The morning was beautiful, like every other morning.

Kino heard Juana take Coyotito out of his hanging box. Juana washed the baby and pulled her shawl round him. She held Coyotito close and fed him. Kino could hear these things without looking at them. Juana was singing an old song. She sang the song in many different ways. The song comforted Kino. The song comforted Coyotito, too.

There was a wooden fence around Kino's house. On the other side of the fence, there were some more houses. Smoke came from these houses and Kino could hear people having breakfast. But these sounds were not like the sounds in Kino's house. His neighbours⁴ wives were not like Juana, either.

The morning air was not so cold now and Kino pulled the blanket from his face. Kino was young and strong. His black hair hung down over his brown forehead. He had hard, bright eyes and a thin, strong moustache.

Yellow sunlight fell on the house. Near the wooden fence, two cockerels started to fight. Kino watched the cockerels for a moment. Then Kino watched some birds flying towards the hills. The world was awake now. Kino got up and went into his little wooden house.

Juana was sitting near the fire. She got up as Kino came through the door. Juana put Coyotito back into his hanging box. Then she combed her black hair and tied it back with thin, green ribbon.

Kino sat by the fire and ate a hot corncake. He only had corncakes and milk for breakfast. When Kino had finished eating, Juana came back to the fire. She ate her breakfast, too. Kino and Juana were both happy. There was no need to talk.

The sun was warming the little house. The light shone through the holes in the walls. The light shone on Coyotito. Coyotito was in his hanging box. Something moved on one of the ropes. Kino and Juana stood quite still and looked. A scorpion was coming slowly down the rope and its tail was straight out behind. A scorpion's tail has a sting in the end, a sting that kills. The tail can bend over the scorpion's head, when it wants to sting somebody.

Kino was breathing loudly through his nose, so he opened

his mouth to stop the noise. The scorpion moved slowly down the rope, towards the box. Juana prayed silently. Kino moved very quietly across the room, with his hands in front of him. His eyes were on the scorpion. Under the scorpion, in the hanging box, Coyotito laughed and put up his hand. The scorpion saw the hand and stopped. The scorpion's tail bent over its head. Kino could see the sting in the end of its tail.



Kino stood very still and moved his hand forward very slowly. The scorpion's tail bent over again. At that moment, Coyotito touched the rope and the scorpion fell. Kino put his hand forward very quickly, but the scorpion fell past Kino's fingers, onto the baby's shoulder. The scorpion stung Coyotito.

Kino cried out like an animal. He took the scorpion and pressed it between his hands. Kino threw the scorpion down and beat it into the ground. Coyotito screamed with pain in his box.

Juana took the baby in her arms. She found the red wound⁵. She put her lips over the wound and sucked. Juana sucked hard and spat out the poison. She sucked again and Coyotito screamed. Kino stood and watched. He could do nothing.

The neighbours heard the baby's screams and they came out of their houses. Kino's brother, Juan Tomas, stood in the door with his fat wife, Apolonia, and their four children. All the neighbours tried to look into the room. One small boy was trying to see between the neighbours' legs. The people in front spoke to the people behind.

'A scorpion!' they said. 'A scorpion has stung the baby!'

Juana stopped sucking the wound for a moment. The wound was red and getting bigger. All of these people knew about scorpions. A man can be very ill from the poison, but a baby can easily die. First, the wound gets bigger, then the baby is hot and has a pain in the stomach. A baby can easily die if enough poison goes into the wound.

The pain of the sting was going away. Coyotito stopped screaming and began to cry quietly. Juana was a little woman, but she was very strong. She always did what Kino wanted and she was always happy. She could work hard and go without food, almost better than Kino could. When Juana was ill, she didn't need a doctor. But now Juana did a very surprising thing.

'The doctor,' she said. 'Go and bring the doctor.'

The Doctor

'The doctor will not come,' the people in the doorway said. 'No,' Kino said to Juana. 'The doctor will not come to us.'

Juana looked at Kino. Juana's eyes were cold. Coyotito was Juana's first baby. He was the most important thing in Juana's life.

'Then we will go to the doctor,' Juana said.

Juana put one end of her shawl over her head. She put the other end of the shawl over the baby's eyes. The people in the doorway pushed against the people behind and Juana went out of the house. Kino and Juana went out of the gate to the little path and the neighbours followed. They were all going to the doctor with Kino and Juana.

They all walked quickly to the centre of the town. Juana and Kino were first. All the neighbours and their children were following. The sun made black shadows on the ground. All the people and the black shadows moved quickly towards the town.

They came to a place where the little wooden houses ended and the stone houses began. The city had houses with big walls and cool gardens. Red and white flowers hung over the walls. Juana and Kino could hear little birds in cages singing in the gardens.

The poor people crossed the square and passed in front of the church. More people were following Kino and Juana now. Everyone was talking about Coyotito and the scorpion. The