"Las Dos Caras del Patroncito"
("The Two Faces of the Boss")
by Luis Valdez
1965

First Performance: The Grape Strike, Delano, California on the Picket line

Characters:

Esquirol

Patroncito

Charlie: Armed Guard

In September, 1965 six thousand farmworkers went on strike in the grape fields of Delano. During the first months of the ensuing Huelga, the growers tried to intimidate the struggling workers to return to the vineyards. They mounted shotguns in their pickups, prominently displayed in the rear windows of the cab; they hired armed guards; they roared by in their huge caruchas, etc. It seemed that they were trying to destroy the spirit of the strikers with mere materialistic evidence of their power.

Too poor to afford la causa, many of the huelguistas left Delano to work in other areas; most of them stayed behind the picket through the winter; and a few returned to the fields to scab, pruning vines. The growers started trucking in more esquiroles from Texas and Mexico. In response to this situation, especially the phony "scary" front of the ranchers, we created "Dos Caras." It grew out of an improvisation in the old pink house behind the huelga office in Delano. It was intended to show the "two faces of the boss."

A FARMWORKER enters, carrying a pair of pruning shears.

FARMWORKER
(To audience.) ¡Buenos dias! This is the ranch of my patroncito, and I come here to prune grape vines. My patron bring me all the way from Mexico here to California, the land of sun and money! More sun than money. But I better get to jalar now because my patroncito he don't like to see me talking to strangers. (There is a roar backstage.) Ay, here he comes in his big car! I better get to work.
(He prunes. The PATRONCITO enters, wearing a yellow pig face mask: he is driving an imaginary limousine, making the roaring sound of the motor.)

PATRONCITO

Good morning, boy.

FARMWORKER

Buenos dias, patroncito. (His hat in his hands.)

PATRONCITO

You working hard, boy?

FARMWORKER

Oh, si patron. Muy hard. (He starts working furiously.)

PATRONCITO

Oh, you can work harder than that, boy. (He works harder.) Harder! (He works harder.) Harder. (He works still harder.) Harder.

FARMWORKER

Ay, that's too hard, patron! (The PATRONCITO looks downstage then upstage along the imaginary row of vines, with the farmworker's head alongside his, following his movement.)

PATRONCITO

How come you cutting all the wires instead of the vines, boy? (The FARMWORKER shrugs helplessly frightened and defenseless.) Look, lemme show you something. Cut this vine here. (Points to a vine.) Now this one. (FARMWORKER cuts.) Now this one. (FARMWORKER cuts.) Now this one. (The FARMWORKER almost cuts the PATRONCITO's extended finger.) Heh!

FARMWORKER

(Jumps back.) Ah!

PATRONCITO

Ain't you scared of me, boy? (FARMWORKER nods.) Huh, boy? (FARMWORKER nods and makes a grunt signifying yes.) What, boy? You don't have to be scared of me! I love my Mexicans. You're one of the new ones, huh? Come in from . . .

FARMWORKER
Mexico, senor.

PATRONCITO
Did you like the truck ride, boy? (FARMWORKER shakes head indicating no.)
What?!

FARMWORKER
I loved it, señor!

PATRONCITO
Of course, you did. All my Mexicans love to ride in trucks! Just the sight of them barreling down the freeway makes my heart feel good; hands on their sombreros, hair flying in the wind, bouncing along happy as babies. Yes, sirree, I sure love my Mexicans, boy!

FARMWORKER
(Puts his arm around PATRONCITO.) Oh, patron.

PATRONCITO
(Pushing him away.) I love 'em about ten feet away from me, boy. Why, there ain't another grower in this whole damn valley that treats you like I do. Some growers got Filipinos, others got Arabs, me I prefer Mexicans. That's why I come down here to visit you, here in the field. I’m an important man, boy! Bank of America, University of California, Safeway stores, I got a hand in all of 'em. But look, I don't even have my shoes shined.

FARMWORKER
Oh, patron, I'll shine your shoes! (He gets down to shine PATRONCITO's shoes.)

PATRONCITO
Never mind, get back to work. Up, boy, up I say! (The FARM WORKER keeps trying to shine his shoes.) Come on, stop it. Stop it! (CHARLIE "la jura" or "rent-a-fuzz" enters like an ape. He immediately lunges at the FARM WORKER.) Charlie! Charlie, no! It's okay, boy. This is one of my Mexicans! He was only trying to shine my shoes.

CHARLIE
You sure?

PATRONCITO
Of course! Now you go back to the road and watch for union organizers.

CHARLIE
Okay.

(CHARLIE exits like an ape. The FARMWORKER is off to one side, trembling with fear.)

PATRONCITO

(To FARMWORKER.) Scared you, huh boy? Well lemme tell you, you don't have to be afraid of him, as long as you're with me, comprende? I got him around to keep an eye on them huelguistas. You ever heard of them, son? Ever heard of huelga? or Cesar Chavez?

FARMWORKER

¡Oh si, patron!

PATRONCITO

What?

FARMWORKER

¡Oh, no, senoir! ¡Es comunista! Y la huelga es puro pedo. Hola de colorados, arrastrados, huevones! No trabajan porque no quieren!

PATRONCITO

That's right, son. Sic'em! Sic'em, boy!

FARMWORKER

(Really getting into it.) Comunistas! Desgraciados!

PATRONCITO

Good boy! (FARMWORKER falls to his knees, hands in front of his chest like a docile dog; his tongue hangs out.

(PATRONCITO pats him on the head.) Good boy. (The PATRONCITO steps to one side and leans over. FARMWORKER kisses his ass. PATRONCITO snaps up triumphantly.) 'At's a baby! You're okay, Pancha.

FARMWORKER

(Smiling.) Pedro.

PATRONCITO

Of course you are. Hell, you got it good here!

FARMWORKER
Me?

PATRONCITO
Damn right! You sure as hell aint' got my problems, I'll tell you that. Taxes, Insurance, supporting all them bums on welfare. You don't have to worry about none of that. Like housing, don't I let you live in my labor camp, nice, rent-free cabins, air-conditioned?

FARMWORKER
Si, señor, ayer se cayó la puerta.

PATROCITO
What was that? English.

FARMWORKER
Yesterday the door fell off, senor, And there's rats tambien. Y los escusados, the restroorns, ay, señor, fuchi! (Holds fingers to his nose.)

PATRONCITO
Awright! (FARMWORKER shuts up.) So you gotta rough it a little. I do that every time I go hunting in the mountains. Why, it's almost like camping out, boy. A free vacation!

FARMWORKER
Vacation?

PATRONCITO
Free!

FARMWORKER
Qui bueno. Thank you, patron!

PATRONCITO
Don't mention it. So what do you pay for housing, boy?

FARMWORKER
Nothing! (Pronounced naw-thing.)

PATRONCITO
Nothing, right! Now what about transportation? Don't I let you ride free in my trucks? To and from the fields?
Si, señor.

What do you pay for transportation, boy?

Nothing!

(With FARMWORKER.) Nothing! What about food? What do you eat, boy?

Tortillas y frijoles con chile.

Beans and tortillas. What's beans and tortillas cost, boy?

(Together with PATRON.) Nothing!

Okay! So what you got to complain about?

Nothing!

Exactly. You got it good! Now look at me, they say I'm greedy, that I'm rich. Well, let me tell you, boy, I got problems. No free housing for me, Pancho. I gotta pay for what I got. You see that car? How much you think a Lincoln Continental like that costs? Cash - $12,000. Ever write out a check for $12,000, boy?

No, señor.

Well, lemme tell you, it hurts. It hurts right here! (Slaps his wallet in his hind pocket.) And what for? I don't need a car like that. I could throw it away!

(Quickly.) I'll take it, patron.
PATRONCITO
Get you greasy hands off it! (Pause.) Now, let's take a look at my housing. No free air conditioned mountain cabin for me. No sir! You see that LBJ ranch style house up there, boy? How much you think a house like that costs? Together with the hill, which I built? $350,000!

FARMWORKER
(Whistles.) That's a lot of frijoles, patron!

PATRONCITO
You're telling me! (Stops, looks toward house.) Oh yeah, and look at that, boy! You see her coming out of the house, onto the patio by the pool? The blonde with the mink bikini?

FARMWORKER
What bikini?

PATRONCITO
Well, it's small, but it's there. I oughta know, it cost me $5,000! And every weekend she wants to take trips. Trips to LA., San Francisco, Chicago, New York. That woman hurts. It all costs money! You don't have problems like that, muchacho, that's why you're so lucky. Me, all I got is the woman, the house, the hill, the land. (Starts to get emotional.) Those commie bastards say I don't know what hard work is, that I exploit my workers. But look at all them vines, boy! (Waves an arm toward the audience.) Who the hell do they think planted all them vines with his own bare hands? Working from sun up to sunset! Shoving vine shoots into the ground! With blood pouring out of his fingernails. Working in the heat, the frost, the fog, the sleet! (FARMWORKER has been jumping up and down trying to answer him.)

FARMWORKER
You, patron, you!

PATRONCITO
(Matter of factly.) Naw, my grandfather, he worked his ass off out here. But, I inherited it, and it's all mine!

FARMWORKER
You sure work hard, boss.

PATRONCITO
Juan...?
I'm going to let you in on a little secret. Sometimes I sit up there in my office and think to myself: I wish I was a Mexican.

You?

Just one of my own boys. Riding in the trucks, hair flying in the wind, feeling all that freedom, coming out here to the fields, working under the green vines, smoking a cigarette, my hands in the cool soft earth, underneath the blue skies, with white clouds drifting by, looking at the mountains, listening to the birdies sing.

(Entranced.) I got it good.

What you want a union for, boy?

I don't want no union, patron.

What you want more money for?

I don't want . . . I want more money!

Shut up! You want my problems, is that it? After all I explained to you? Listen to me, son, if I had the power, if I had the power . . . wait a minute, I got the power! (Turns toward FARMWORKER, frightening him.) Boy!

I didn't do it, patron.

How would you like to be a rancher for a day?
Who me? Oh no, señor. I can't do that.

PATRONCITO
Shut up. Gimme that. (Takes his hat, shears, sign.)

FARMWORKER
No, patron. por favor, señor! Patroncito!

PATRONCITO
(Takes off his own sign and puts it on farmworker.) Here!

FARMWORKER
Patron . . . cito. (He looks down at the "patron" sign.)

PATRONCITO
All right, now take the cigar. (FARMWORKER takes cigar.) And the whip. (FARMWORKER takes whip.) Now look tough, boy. Act like you're the boss.

FARMWORKER
Si, señor. (He cracks the whip and almost hits his foot.)

PATRONCITO
Come on, boy! Head up, chin out! Look tough, look mean. (FARMWORKER looks tough and mean.) Act like you can walk into the governor's office and tell him off!

FARMWORKER
(With unexpected force and power.) Now, look here, Ronnie!

PATRONCITO
That's good. But it's still not good enough. Let's see. Here take my coat.

FARMWORKER
Oh, no, patron. I can't.

PATRONCITO
Take it!

FARMWORKER
No, señor.

PATRONCITO
Come on!
FARMWORKER
Chale. (PATRONCITO backs away from FARMWORKER. He takes his coat and holds it out like a bullfighter's cape; assuming the bullfighting position.)

PATRONCITO
Uh-huh, toro.

FARMWORKER
Ay! (He turns toward the coat and snags it with an extended arm like a horn.)

PATRONCITO
'Ole! Okay, now let's have a look at you. (FARMWORKER puts on coat.) Naw, you're still missing something) You need something!

FARMWORKER
Maybe a new pair of pants?

PATRONCITO
(A sudden flash.) Wait a minute! (He touches his pig mask.)

FARMWORKER
Oh, no! Patron, not that! (He hides his face. PATRONCITO removes his mask with a big grunt. FARMWORKER looks up cautiously, sees the PATRON's real face and cracks up laughing.) Patron, you look like me!

PATRONCITO
You mean... I... . look like a Mexican?

FARMWORKER
Si, señor! (FARMWORKER turns to put on the mask and PATRONCITO starts picking up FARMWORKER's hat; sign, etc. and putting them on.)

PATRONCITO
I'm going to be one of my own boys. (FARMWORKER, who has his back to the audience, jerks suddenly as he puts on PATRONCITO's mask He stands tall and turns slowly, now looking very much like a patron. Suddenly fearful, but playing along.) Oh, that's good! That's... . great.

FARMWORKER
(Booming, brusque, patron-like.) Shut up and get to work, boy!

PATRONCITO
Heh, now that's more like it!
FARMWORKER
I said get to work! (He kicks PATRONCITO.)

PATRONCITO
Heh, why did you do that for?

FARMWORKER
Because I felt like it, boy! You hear me, boy! I like your name, boy! I think I'll call you boy, boy!

PATRONCITO
You sure learn fast, boy.

FARMWORKER
I said shut up!

PATRONCITO
What an act. (To audience.) He's good, isn't he?

FARMWORKER
Come here boy.

PATRONCITO
(His idea of a Mexican.) Si, senior, I theeenk.

FARMWORKER
I don't pay you to think, son. I pay you to work. Now look here, see that car? It's mine.

PATRONCITO
My Lincoln Conti . . . oh, you're acting. Sure.

FARMWORKER
And that LBJ ranch style house, with hill? That's mine too.

PATRONCITO
The house too?

FARMWORKER
All mine.

PATRONCITO
(More and more uneasy.) What a joker.

FARMWORKER
Oh, wait a minute. Respect, boy! (He pulls off PATRONCITO's farmworker hat.) Do you see her coming out of my house, onto my patio by my pool? The blond in the bikini? Well, she's mine too!

PATRONCITO
But that's my wife!

FARMWORKER
Tough luck, son. You see this land, all these vines? They're mine.

PATRONCITO
Just a damn minute here. The land, the car, the house, hill, and the cherry on top too? You're crazy! Where am I going to live?

FARMWORKER
I got a nice, air conditioned cabin down in the labor camp. Free housing, free transportation . . .

PATRONCITO
You're nuts! I can't live in those shacks! They got rats, cockroaches. And those trucks are unsafe. You want me to get killed?

FARMWORKER
Then buy a car.

PATRONCITO
With what? How much you paying me here, anyway?

FARMWORKER
Eighty-five cents an hour.

PATRONCITO
I was paying you a buck twenty five!

FARMWORKER
I got problems, boy! Go on welfare!

PATRONCITO
Oh no, this is too much. You've gone too far, boy. I think you better give me back my things. (He takes of FARMWORKER's sign and hat, throws down shears and tells
the audience.) You know that damn Cesar Chavez is right? You can't do this work for less than two dollars an hour. No, boy, I think we've played enough. Give me back...

FARMWORKER
Get your hands off me, spic!

PATRONCITO
Now stop it, boy!

FARMWORKER
Get away from me, greaseball! (PATRONCITO tries to grab mask.) Charlie! Charlie! (CHARLIE the rent-a fuzz comes bouncing in. PATRONCITO tries to talk to him.)

PATRONCITO
Now listen, Charlie, I . . .

CHARLIE
(Pushes him aside.) Out of my way, Mex! (He goes over to FARMWORKER.) Yeah, boss?

PATRONCITO
This union commie bastard is giving me trouble. He's trying to steal my car, my land, my ranch...

CHARLIE
(Turns around, an infuriated ape.) You touched a white woman, boy?

PATRONCITO
Charlie, you idiot, it's me! Your boss!

CHARLIE
Shut up!

PATRONCITO
Charlie! It's me!

CHARLIE
I'm gonna whup you good, boy! (He grabs him.)
PATRONCITO
(CHARLIE starts dragging him out.) Charlie! Stop it! Somebody help me! Where's those damn union organizers? Where's Cesar Chavez? Help! Huelga! Huelgaaaaa!
(CHARLIE drags out the PATRONCITO. The FARMWORKER takes off the pig mask and turns toward the audience.)

FARMWORKER
Bueno, so much for the patron. I got his house, his land, his car. Only I'm not going to keep 'em. He can have them. But I'm taking the cigar. Ay los watcho. (Exit.)