

Yake Yirio

I was hanging out as usual in my favorite Lake Chapala bar, *El Castillo*, playing a little “look ahead” eight ball with the bartender, Fred. *El Castillo* was the only pool bar in the lake area. It was two o’clock in the afternoon. He and I were the only ones in the bar while the rest of Mexico ate and had a siesta. The only sound was my favorite rooster, Melvin, across the street, crowing his butt off, pursued by a dozen of his girlie friends, no doubt. Then I heard it.

Far away, music, mariachi music, the tuba and trumpet getting louder by the minute as it approached. I was about to go out to see what it was all about when the doors burst open and a band....well, a small band....well, two men with enormous sombreros and a hoard of followers...crammed into the little bar, dancing, yelling, singing.

The tuba player put down the big instrument, looked around while the crowd ordered drinks, then looked at me. “*Hola!!!*” he shouted, “*Amigo!!!*” And he rushed across the room and embraced me, kissed me on both cheeks. I looked under the huge hat.

“José!” I yelled, hugging him back as his twin brother, Josb, came bounding over, the three of us bellowing and hugging and dancing to no music at all now. I couldn’t believe it. I used to play pool with these guys at a bar in Manhattan Beach, California. They were always out for some big deal that would make a bundle of money for the Mexican economy.

When we finally calmed down, the rest of the bar still singing and drinking, I asked José, “How did you get here, *amigos*? I thought you were still in LA.”

“We be born here, in San Juan Cosalá, José said. “How come you here?”

“I came here on vacation, liked it and moved. So *que pasa*, you guys? Last I saw you was when you had a big business going with your kid brother’s hot-shot technological sombreros making you invisible to the surveillance stuff they have at the boarder.”

“Jes,” he looked at me stoically. “See?” He touched the top of his hat and....disappeared. He actually vanished right in front of my eyes. When my jaw bounced off the floor, in complete disbelief, I yelled, “Where the hell are you?” Josb was laughing so hard tears were running down his cheeks. Across

the bar José reappeared with a flair, waving the enormous sombrero. He ran back, jumped up with his brother, bumped chests and sat down with a beer.

“My God,” I whispered. “It really works. Your brother is way ahead of the military stuff they are working on. I read where the Pentagon says it will be years before they can make anything bigger than a needle seem to disappear. How did he do it?”

“He be bery big henius with doctor degree from MIT.” José said. “We sell techno-sombreros franchise to TelMex, make huge pile Pesos.”

“You mean ‘genius?’” I asked.

“Si,” Josb said. “Henius.” The Hose brothers often had trouble with “l”s, “j”s, “g”s and “v”s in English and they mixed a little Spanish in every so often to complicate their syntax. But they said my Spanish was so bad and unintentionally amusing, they insisted we should converse in English only.

“So I guess you both are rich now,” I speculated. “So no more ladder schemes?” When the border wall was proposed by the US, the Hose brothers got into ladder production big time.

“Yadder business be gangbusters now. We sell millions for damn wall.”

“So what scams are you planning now?”

They looked wounded. “Not scam,” José said. “Yake dying.”

“Yake?” I asked, bewildered.

“Jes,” Josb chimed in. “Yake Chapala in bery bad shape. Yots of metal in water.”

“So I’ve heard,” I said, finishing my beer. “Lots of industrial waste and agricultural runoff. We all have to drink bottled water. Pretty expensive, but that’s what we have to do. So what have you guys got in mind?”

“Yittle *hermano*, Josc, know how make yake *agua* clean again, we make big Peso killing,” they said synchronously, high fiving each other. Before I could get some clarification, José jumped up, went over to the bar to stir up their entourage, ordered more beers and began playing the trumpet. The bar noise

began to increase, went well past jet aircraft strength approaching the hearing threshold of pain. Geeze, I thought. Five minutes of this and it will blow out all my ear wax.

Wherever the Hose brothers went, the bartenders loved them. They brought in more followers than John the Baptist.

Josb shouted in my ear, “Yittle brother fix problem *con* yirios.”

“Yirios?” I asked, not knowing if I wanted the answer.

“Si,” he screamed over the din “Yittle brother Josc, invent new kind of yirio. It spread like crazy and eat *mucho* metal.”

I was completely at sea.. but we got another beer and waited for the weird Aztec line dance the Hose brothers taught at every bar they drank and played in, to simmer down.

“Jes,” Josb said when he had regained his breath, downing another beer with one giant, spinning motion. This never failed to impress me. They would rotate the bottle to get the liquid to swirl and drink the entire bottle in about five seconds. “Josc, who make sombrero, also be big time botanist.,” he explained. “Discover metal eating yirio. Clean up yake in two months.”

“But what the hell’s a Yirio?” I asked.

“Yirio...jou know, ‘Water hyacin’ in Inglés.”

“Come on, you guys. You’re putting me on. I know what lirio is and it’s a Spanish word, so you would pronounce it ‘lirio’, not ‘yirio.’”

“Jes, jou right,” Josb said with a straight face. “It be ‘yirio’ yike jou say.” He high fived his brother and downed another beer.

When I finished laughing, I said, “Ok, it’s ‘yirio’. But how do you guys make money with that? Big companies don’t care where they dump. You may get your reward in heaven, but you won’t get beans here.”

“Not so,” they said in unison, double high fives and some complex hand shake with elbows and shoulders. “We get *mucho* beans and maybe heaven too” José said.

“Jes,” Josb chimed in. “Because yake dead, we buy all fish rights cheap with sombrero money. Nobody eat yake fish now...too much metal in fish too. When yirio suck metal out of yake, fish get bery tasty again. We give fish rights to poor towns free and charge big fish companies big beans. This be cleanest yake in world soon.”

“Si,” José said whirling another beer in one great flamboyant swirl, slamming down the empty bottle on the table. Josb whacked his brother on the back and shouted, “Jou set new record, *hermano*...*cuatro* seconds!”. Everyone in the bar started clapping and yelling appreciatively. The bartender ordered a free round of drinks, the brothers got up to dance and I was left pondering the ramifications of what they said. I wondered if it would work, even if genius brother Josc could do what they said.

Sweating, new beers in hand, they sat down again. Then José leaned over to me whispering conspiratorially. “We get *agua* rights too. Will be purest *agua* in world. Soft drink companies Coke and Pepsi go bust and out of *agua* business.”

“Wow,” I said admiringly. “You can buy water rights for a whole lake?”

“Si,” Josb said. “For secret yirio stuff, Mexico be big environment honcho in world. Everybody happy. UN love us. Besides, *Tio* Ramón know somebody.” They did the secret handshake thing again.

“Your uncle is well connected in government?” I asked. They didn’t answer, just rolled their eyeballs and gave me the “incredibly dumb question” look.

Then José continued: “Yisten to this, *amigo*. Church buy rights to *mucho* pure Yake Chapala *agua* for holy water. Everybody get good health y holy at same time.”

I coughed so hard my beer came out of my nose.

“Jou get holy water rights too?” I asked, incredulously. As always, my English pronunciation and syntax began to mimic theirs when I had too much beer.

“Ob course,” Josb said, giving me the eyeball roll again. “*Tio* Padre Miguel be big wheel in Vatican.”

They got up grabbing the tuba and trumpet and began wailing away on some new bizarre polka. I staggered over to them, hugged and said at the top of my voice, "Gotta go. See you yater." Josb oompah-ed me a couple of times and José blew the horn so loud in my direction I was sure I saw a wad of ear wax shoot out the door.

I lurched out onto the Carretera. I nearly tripped over Melvin and his hen harem while dialing my cell phone. I had to get hold of my broker fast to get rid of all my Coke and Pepsi stock.