The Most Important Job

Jose Gogo Don Rafael

Eduardo Narrating Jose

N Jose: The next morning, Don Rafael and Pedro joined Gogo, Eduardo, and me as we headed for the pastures with a burro and sacks for collecting kitchen fuel. In truth, Pedro didn’t join us. He walked far behind us with his arms crossed looking down and kicking at the dirt.

Eduardo: It’s too bad Pedro didn’t work with them yesterday. Gogo had to help clean up Chaco when he pooped on his mat.

Don Rafael: You’re right, Eduardo. It’s too bad.

Jose: Would Pedro really have to help with that?

Don Rafael: Well, that’s not really one of the rancho jobs. Maybe not. But this morning’s job is a very important one for the rancho, isn’t it.

Eduardo: It is? Why is picking up poo poo important?

Don Rafael: I think you know why. What are the cow chips used for?

Eduardo: Cooking fires.

Don Rafael: That’s right. Isn’t it important to cook our food?

Eduardo: Oooh. If it’s so important, how come it’s only the children that do it?

Don R: You have a point, Eduardo. I suppose it is because it is a job that is easy enough for children to do it.

Gogo: I a-a-always ting it because d-d-de big p-people no want to p-p-pick up de poo poo.

Don R: That’s true also, Gogo.

N Jose: I remembered what Papá Joaquin said about telling Don Rafael what I hoped Gogo would do with again, but wasn’t sure I should bring it up with Gogo listening. What if Don Rafael said something about Gogo being too dumb? I decided to wait.

 When we reached a grassy area, everyone took a sack while the burro took advantage of the grass. Everyone except Pedro. Don Rafael took a sack to him. He even picked up a few cow chips himself.

Eduardo: Boy, Pedro must be pretty dumb if he needs Don Rafael to show him how to collect poo poo.

Jose: I don’t think he’s showing him how. I think he’s showing him that it’s a job even a Don can do

N Jose: We kept picking up cow chips while Don Rafael argued with Pedro. At first, his voice was gentle and reasonable. Pedro’s voice was shrill. Then he started to cry. The two of them walked farther away from us. Then Don Rafael grabbed Pedro by the arm, led him to a spot, and pointed at the ground. Pedro shook his head. Don Rafael shook him by the arm and pointed again. Pedro’s body shook with sobs. Don Rafael kept a hold of Pedro’s arm, and kept pointing.

 Finally Pedro’s shaking body leaned forward and picked up something from the ground. Don Rafael held the sack open with two hands. With his arm now free, Pedro threw the cow chip on the ground and ran back to the adobe.

Don R: (shouting) You can be sure that I will not change my mind, Pedro!

N Jose: Then Don Rafael threw the sack on the ground and plopped down next to it. Drawing his knees up, he hung his arms over his knees and let his head hang down, shaking it slowly back and forth.

 Eduardo and I walked over to Don Rafael.

Eduardo: Why doesn’t Pedro want to pick up poo poo?

Don R: He thinks it’s dirty. He thinks he’s too important to do it.

Eduardo: Didn’t you tell him what an important job it is?

Don R: It didn’t help.

Eduardo: Maybe if you told him he could ride Patas again if he picked up poo poo, he would do it.

Don R: You are a smart boy, Eduardo. But no, I think Pedro has a lot to learn before he will be ready to ride a horse like Patas.

Eduardo: Who’s going to ride Patas?

Don R: Oh, I haven’t decided yet.

Eduardo: Why not?

Don R: To tell you the truth, little man, I haven’t even thought about it.

Eduardo: Why not?

Don R: You ask a lot of questions.

Eduardo: Do I?

N Jose: Don Rafael started laughing again. I saw my chance.

Jose: Don Rafael, do you remember what I said about who would be a good vaquero to ride Patas?

Don R: I think so; you and Gogo both said the other one should ride him.

Jose: That’s right. I’m not old enough, but Gogo is. Señor, Gogo rides so well, and you know Pataslikes him.

Eduardo: Gogo knows what Patas is thinking and what he wants.

Don R: I don’t know, José. I’ve always thought Gogo would learn to work in the smithy, like his Papá. But Mando says he’s not catching on. He is afraid he’s not going to learn it because he’s so d-- , I mean, maybe he *can’t* learn. So I don’t know if he could learn what he needs to know to do vaquero work.

Jose: He doesn’t need to learn it, he already knows it.

Don R: Oh, he does, does he?

Eduardo: How come Gogo knows so much about Patas if he’s a dummy?

Jose: I mean, he doesn’t know everything, but he knows animals, especially horses. Isn’t that the main thing you need to know to be a vaquero?

Don R: Yes.

N Jose: Don Rafael looked up at the sky and I wondered if I had said too much.

Jose: Don Rafael, you saw him ride. You know how he helped me ride Patas. I think he knows more about horses than some of the vaqueros. I don’t know how he knows it, but he knew exactly what I should do so I could ride Patas.

Eduardo: Can I ride him too? I think he likes me too. I talk to him and pet him like José and Gogo.

Don R: Eduardo, you ask too many questions.

Eduardo: I do?

Don R: José, I haven’t decided about this yet. There are other things more important right now, like that boy of mine. But I will remember what you said.

Jose: Thank you, Don Rafael.

Don R: You are a good boy, and a good friend.

Eduardo: I’m a good boy too, aren’t I?

Don R: Yes, now get back to work and finish your important job, Eduardo.