

# “Saying Goodbye to El Senor Espanol”

Based on true events

By Sofia R.

The year was 1955 when Matilde walked to school with her friend Camila. It was a sunny Monday in Marfa Texas as they talked about their weekend and of course, about what would be waiting for them at school. Her and Camila talked in spanish, for that was their first language. Matilde knew how to speak a little bit of English, but Camila didn't. They began to practice simple words and phrases they could use on a daily basis, because know they would need it more than ever. When they got to school there was a banner that said “Goodbye Mr. Espanol”. Looking at it made Matilde sad and mad at the same time, then she realized it was really happening. Today would be the burial of the spanish language. She looked over to see her friend, who's face looked as hurt as she felt. She said “*no te preocupes*” to her friend, then told her to translate to English. Camila, hesitated then said “ummm...don't worry?”. Matilde smiled, hugged her, and said “muy bien”. Ms. Jones heard them then chastised them about speaking spanish. Matilde walked off to class with her head hanging low. Her homeroom teacher Ms. Anderson was handing out little slips of paper when they walked in. She got one, walked to her seat, and sat down. When everyone settled, Ms. Anderson called on Andres. She looked at him and said “Andres? What is it?”. He asked what the slips of paper were for. The teacher with a smile and a tone of excitement said “Thank you for starting us of with a great question! Like all of you know, today we are going to hold Mr. Espanols funeral. The school will gather outside and participate, but the only way we can do that is if we all put in a

little something. So class, in these slips of paper you will write, I will not speak Spanish at school. So now I expect you all to get writing, ceremony starts at 10:00.” Matilde didn’t just feel sad and mad now, she felt *furios* and *devastated*. Just before she could react, she heard a loud bang. She looked over to find Andres standing up. He looked at Matilde and with pride said “Ms. Anderson, I will not write that. I will not stop speaking spanish at school, and you can’t force me too.” The entire class went silent. Matilde sat at her desk jaw dropped. Ms. Anderson walked over to Andres, grabbed his arm, and walked him to the principal's office. He did not fight back or even make a sound. He just let the teacher take him away. Matilde could not believe what she had just witnessed. A few minutes later the teacher came back by herself, with a little box. She passed by each row and told the kids to put their papers in the box. The clock said 9:45. It was time to go. Matilde walked alone until she saw Camila in the hall. Together, without saying a word, they walked outside. When they got to the courtyard, the principal, stood there with shovel. All the teachers took their little boxes, which held the childrens broken voices, and sad words up to the front. They dumped the papers into a bigger box, a *coffin* like box. You could hear the whispers of Mr. Espanol. You could hear the kids’ sadness. Mr. Brown grinned and placed the box in a hole in the ground. He buried him, then said “Children, let this be the start of a new era! Let us forget the past, and focus on what’s coming. Let today be a good day for you, and let it *define* you. Thank you all very much for coming.”. Camila looked like she was about to cry, then Matilde looked at her and in a strong firm voice she said “ *No pueden hacer que no hable espanol. Nadie me va parar de hablar espanol.*”. A teacher swept up from behind her and stared at her.

Matilde just stood there, she just stared back. The teacher took her to the principal's office where she saw Andres still sitting there. She waited for the principal to arrive. About five minutes later, he walked in. He was aware about what she had done for the teacher told him everything. He looked at Andres and told him to leave, then he signaled Matilde to sit down. He sat at his desk, with great disappointment on his face, and began to speak. "Matilde, after everything I just said and what we just did, you still refuse to follow simple instructions? It's not hard it really isn't. All you have to do is forget Spanish while you're here at school. You see it's a distraction. Spanish is a distraction to your learning experience, so we got rid of it. He's gone. I'm going to let you off with a warning, but next time such behavior comes out of you, you can ask your friend Andres what happens and you will have to come see me again." Matilde looked at him, anger rushing through her veins and said "I guess I'll have to find out what happens, and I guess I'll have to come see you again." She walked out as fast as she could to try and avoid the consequences. Even though she wore pride as a mask, she was scared, and sad, and unsure of what would happen. She left the principal's office and walked back to class with her head high. She knew his words were wrong and cruel, but she also knew she *would* let it define her; she was not about to leave her culture, past, and language in the dark because of unfair rules. And most importantly, she knew she was not letting go of El Senor Espanol. She was holding on for as long as possible. He was not gone.