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## El Sombrerón

by Richard Wilding

“You need a line on my hand to tell you this?” Yolanda asked.

“And see, your life line and your head line do not touch. See? Here?”

“Means I’m going to die tonight?” She looked mock-worried.

“On the contrary, my love. It means your life will be one of adventure. You are restless and will not be tied down; you will not settle.”

“I am a wild horse,” she said, and shook her long, blond mane.

I caught her hair in my fingers as I would a butterfly and let her hair run through them like water made of silk. “I should call you Goldilocks,” I said, caressing it.

“I have tried many beds and yours is the one I prefer, no?” She turned to lie on her front, one leg bent. Her foot swayed in the air. “You know what happened when Goldilocks was discovered asleep in the bed and ran into the woods?”

I turned to lie on my front, our hips touching. “Tell me,” I said.

“Well, Goldilocks was a wild spirit but that didn’t mean she wasn’t afraid. And the sight of that great big daddy bear made her run as fast as the wind until she was so deep in the jungle that she feared she would never find her way out again. After running for three days and three nights, she came to a clearing where the great brown river divided the jungle in two. On the river a man in a sombrero with a huge black dog at his side sat fishing in his boat.”

“Señor,” Goldilocks called, “I am tired and lost. Can you help me find my way back to my town where I will be safe once again?”

“The man turned towards her. His hat was pulled so low on his head that his face was hidden in deep shadow. She could make out nothing but his eyes, which glowed red as the skin of a coral snake. ‘I can help you,’ the stranger said, ‘but there is a price.’

“Just then, Goldilocks heard a crash and roar from the jungle behind her and saw the daddy bear hurtling towards her with the mummy bear not a yard behind him. ‘What is your price?’ she asked.

“Your dreams’, he said. ‘My dog can only eat a child’s dreams.’ He unfolded a paper heart which he had been keeping in his pocket. ‘Place this over your heart and every time you have a dream, be sure to write it down. When you have written it down, remember this very moment and what you feel in your heart now. That memory will fly to my dog and she will have as much food as she needs until your next dream. It is a small price: your dreams for your life. Is it one you wish to pay?’

“Goldilocks paid the price, and was saved.”

“Phew.”

“But, Herc, I think it is you who is Goldilocks. It is you who has the paper heart.”