

A comedy describing an American family's encounter with illegal immigrants.

Su Casa Es Mi Casa

2020 Revised Edition

by Frank Kyle

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Frank Kyle



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Revised Edition

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The day begins much like any other day, with my reading the newspaper. And then the doorbell rings. I go and open the door. Before me stands a short, dark brown, thickly built woman holding an infant in her arms. My wife, Anne, arrives and gives me a questioning look because no one like the woman lives in the neighborhood. For a moment the three of us stand in silence looking at one another. Anne and I wait for the woman to say something, but she just stands there silently. Finally I say, "Can I help you." She responds in Spanish, which I don't understand. I shake my head and say, "No *comprenday*." Then she says, "No *tengo casa*," and then apparently attempts to elaborate in a flood of Spanish, which again neither Anne nor I understand.

I turn to Anne, who gives me a nervous look, and then turn back to the woman, who continues talking to us in Spanish. I can hear desperation in her voice, but I don't understand a word and she just keeps talking. I let out a sigh. *Why doesn't she shut up! Doesn't she realize that we don't understand?* Then the baby starts crying. She has awakened the baby. I noticed her hand moving under the baby's blanket just before it started crying, and every time her hand moves the baby lets out a loud cry. *She's pinching the baby!* Suddenly the baby is having a crying fit. *Jesus Christ, what's going on?* I turn to Anne, who looks at me with raised eyebrows as if to say, *Do something, Jeffrey!*

"What do you want me to do?" I ask.

"Tell her to go away. I don't want her here. She looks like a Gypsy. I don't trust her. Something's not right." I'm thinking the same thing and feel myself becoming nervous, but I am not sure whether it's because of the woman or because of Anne.

"Sorry, we can't help you. Sorry. Go away!" I say and start to close the door.

Then the woman begins to let out a strange high-pitched yell. "*Aiheee! Aiheee!*" She isn't crying; there are no tears. It's a wail of some kind, a wail of exasperation perhaps. The combination of the woman's wailing and the baby's crying creates a tremendous racket. I look beyond the woman to see if any of the neighbors have come to investigate the noise, but the street's empty. Finally I shake my head and say, "No, no. Please go away. We can't help you."

"We ... *can ... not ... help ... you*," I say very deliberately, but she pays me no attention. It's as if she is in some kind of trance.

"Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee!" she continues, the wails growing louder and more rhythmic, finally becoming a chant. *JESUS CHRIST!* flashes in my mind like a Las Vegas neon. Now the woman's baby is crying in unison with the wails of its mother, the cacophony becoming unbearable. Just for a moment I think the baby is a midget and this whole thing is a setup, like the time when a woman with two kids walked up to me in a mini-mall parking lot and said that she was stranded and needed money to get back home, which of course was some place hundreds of miles away like Fresno. Though I knew I was being duped, I asked her how much money she needed, thinking she would say something like five dollars. But no, she said she needed fifty dollars but that seventy-five would be even more helpful because she and her children could buy something to eat on way back home. I stared at her in disbelief then turned and walked away as she hurled expletives at me in front of her children. I thought *you can't go anywhere anymore without encountering beggars or con artists of one kind or another. What's the country coming to?*

Back to the present, Anne puts her face near mine and says, "Jeffrey, for God's sake just do something... Just shut the door."

So I try shutting the door, gently but firmly because the woman has crossed the threshold and is pushing against the door while holding the baby that is still screaming at the top of its lungs between herself and the door. But the door gives only a little and then won't budge. I give it a big push, forcing the woman back. I feel a sense of relief as the door almost shuts, but then it stops. *Damn it!* I push again but it won't close any further. *Why is the damn thing stuck?* I push harder and suddenly the woman lets out a terrific yell and begins screaming *"Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee!"* *What the hell!* I look down and see that she has her foot wedged between the door and frame. *No wonder she's screaming!*

So I open the door slightly and in a begging voice say, "Go away, please. Please go away." My face is no more than six inches from hers, but she continues to scream, *"Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee!"* and then gives the door a great shove, which catches me off guard and allows her to squeeze back in between the door and the frame. Becoming desperate I push on her face with the palm of my hand, pushing her head backwards until it must be touching her back. Still her body won't move. *She'd allow me to break her neck before she'd back off.*

Next I put the full weight of my shoulder against the door. But she doesn't budge and the baby continues to scream full throttle. Then the woman starts

wiggling forward like a pit bull trying to get in. *If I push on the door any harder I'll crush the baby. Then the cops will come and arrest me for infanticide.*

"What's going on, Jeffrey?" Anne asks as she tries to look over my shoulder. Suddenly she shouts, "Just shut the goddamn door." Shocked by her tone of voice, I turn to her. She has the expression of someone who had just seen a ghost. *What the hell!* I look back at the woman. Eyes wide open and wearing a fiendish, determined grin, she strains against the door. *Yeah, she is kind of scary.*

Looking back at Anne while struggling with the door, I say, "That's what I'm trying to do, Anne, but I can't. The woman won't budge and the baby is between her and the door. Do you want me to crush the baby?"

"Oh my God, she's mad!"

"No, I think she's desperate," though I immediately think that she could be both desperate and mad.

Our daughter walks in and says, "What going on? Why all the yelling? Dad, what are you doing?"

"There's a mad woman trying to get into the house," Anne tells her. Kelly then comes up and squeezes in as much as she can between me and her mother. What she sees is the woman and baby both screaming to high hell. *Aiheee, Aiheee! Waaah! Waaah! Waaah! Aiheee! Aiheee! Waaah! Waaah! Waaah!* The noise has become unbearable.

"God she has a kid with her and she's pushing on the door with it. She's crazy, Dad. Shut the door and call the police. They'll do something. Dad, *shut the door!*"

"I can't, Kelly. Can't you see the kid?"

"Yeah, but what are you going to do, spend the whole day in a shoving match with the woman? Who is she anyway?"

"I don't know." Then I see a door across the street open and a man in either a bathing suit or in his boxer shorts looking at us. A woman at the same house stares through a window. Another woman appears with her dog. *Jesus! The whole neighborhood is watching.* Then the racket suddenly stops. *What a relief.* I look at the woman and she stares back at me. Her baby is asleep. I'm thinking *this is impossible.*

"I am lost, please help me," she says in English.

"I thought you couldn't speak English," I say.

"Just a little." I hear Kelly laugh behind me. "I don't believe this," she says.

"May I come in for a little bit?" I sigh and turn to Anne.

"She wants to come in."

"Jeffrey, that's not a good idea."

"She says just for a little bit."

"How is it she's now fluent in English?"

"I don't know. Do I let her in?"

"Daaaad! She's already in." I look back and see her standing next to Kelly.

"Listen lady..."

"My name is Imelda and this is my baby Aniceto. I am very sorry to disturb you, but my husband is coming for me."

"I thought you said you were lost."

"Not exactly. I'm looking for my house."

"You don't know where your house is? How can that be?"

"My husband knows and he's coming here to get me. Very soon my husband will come."

"Her English is pretty good," Kelly chimes in. "I thought I'd have a chance to use my Spanish."

"He's coming here? I don't understand." She ignores me and turns to Kelly.

"Do you speak Spanish?" the woman asks Kelly.

"Yes, some. I studied Spanish in high school."

"That's very good. You will find it very useful."

"That's what my Spanish teacher said. 'If you take Latin,' he said 'who are you going to talk to? All the Latin speakers are dead. If you take French, when will you use it? Only when you eat at a French restaurant. But here in San Diego you can use Spanish every day, everywhere.'"

"Your Spanish teacher is a very smart man."

"I guess so, but..."

"Hey guys, I hate to interrupt but let's get back to the problem at hand."

"Yes, Señor Thomas, that's a very good idea. I would like to tell you my situation."

"You know my name. How do you know my name?"

"I asked a girl outside who lived in this house and she said Jeffrey Thomas and his family."

"Why did you do that?"

"I stopped in front of your house because it is a very nice house and the little girl was playing next door, so I asked her."

"I still don't get it. Why did you come to our house?"

"Like I said it is a very nice house and I thought you would help me. Was I wrong, Señor Thomas?"

"I don't know. If you need money to get to your husband, I'll give you money. I'll even call you a cab."

"No, no, no. I don't know where he is. We've just arrived."

"Arrived?"

"Yes, and my husband has relatives who will help us."

"Help you to do what? I thought you were trying to get to your house."

"Yes, that's true. I mean to help us with the car."

"I see. But how did you get *here*?"

"I walked."

"You and your husband walked?"

"Yes."

"I thought you had a problem with your car?"

"Yes, yes."

"Yes, *yes* what?"

"The car, it broke down, Señor Thomas."

"So you walked from where?"

"From the border."

"The Mexican border?"

"Yes, that's it."

"Are you here illegally?"

"No, no, just for work and to visit my husband's family."

"Family? I don't know about this. It all sounds pretty shady to me."

"No, no. It's not shady. You must help me." And then she started screeching again. "*Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee!*"

"Please stop. I can't think while you're doing that."

"Dad, what are you doing? Just tell her to leave."

"Kelly, what do you think I am trying to do?"

"I don't know, Dad. What *are* you trying to do?"

"I'm trying to figure out what's going on."

"I'm calling the police," says Anne. Well that really sets off Imelda.

"*Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee! Aiheee!*" Then the baby starts crying "*Waaah! Waaah! Waaah!*"

"Okay, everyone just shut up for a second. I need to think. We can find a solution to this problem." Then the woman walks over to the sofa and opens her blouse and starts nursing the baby and talking to it in Spanish.

"I'll feed the baby while you think, Señor Thomas."

"The baby's kind of cute, huh Dad?" says Kelly. I glare at her. Anne has her hand to her face as if she is wiping away a cobweb. She does that when she gets really frustrated. Finally I go over to the woman and sit next to her so that I won't be staring at her breast, which has poured out when she unbuttoned her blouse.

"Listen... uhh, Imelda. I think we can help you. You need to meet up with your husband, but you don't know where he is and you have no one to call. What about his relatives? Could you call them?"

"No, no, I can't. I don't know the number."

"We could call information and get their number."

"They don't have a phone. They use the pay phone at the store to call us."

"Well, let's see, uhh... uhh" I stammer as I try to think of something. "You know the police could really help in this matter. The police are not the Border Patrol. They will not arrest you if you are here illegally. In fact they don't want to know about any of that. They would just help you."

I am not really sure that is the case but to be honest I don't care if they call the Border Patrol. I know that sounds cold-hearted but I even thought of dragging her out of the house, but didn't. I mean what's more sacred than a mother and child?

Kelly and Anne stand silently. They look at Imelda and then at me, expecting a decision, as if I'm the man-of-the-house, which I am.

"When do you expect your husband back, Imelda?" I ask, glancing at Anne, who seems displeased by the question.

"He will be here anytime."

"Hmm. Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am certain."

I turn to Anne and say, "I suppose she could wait here for him." I smile looking for some sympathy. Anne walks off into the kitchen the door swinging shut behind her.

"What's wrong with your mother?" I ask Kelly.

"What do you think, *Dad*? You're going let this woman stay here, aren't you?"

"Just until her husband returns."

"I'm going to check on Mom," she says and leaves the room.

I turn to Imelda and notice that the baby has fallen asleep, its head lying between her breasts, one partly covered, the other in full view. Imelda looks at

me with grateful adoration like a puppy. I think to myself *why doesn't she cover the exposed breast*. I know a nursing woman's breast should be seen only as a source of food for a baby and not as a sexual object, and I'm trying very hard not to see it that way, not having much luck.

Maybe in her village the women go topless, like Tahitians before the Europeans arrived and spoiled all the fun, the men of the village paying them no mind. But this is San Diego, city of porn shops and strip bars. I've never been to either but I admit a few times I've been tempted to go to the latter just to see what they're like. But I always thought they're probably like the bar in the *Sopranos*, young women twisting like snakes around metal poles to sultry music while men of all ages wearing sick looks stare at them as if under a voodoo spell. One such place in Point Loma is called The Animal Farm. The name seems appropriate. Some things will never change. Perhaps they can't, which is a really depressing thought.

"Imelda!" I say almost shouting, realizing I had fallen under the spell of her breast.

"Yes, Señor Thomas," she says, startled by my sudden outburst.

"Your husband should be here any time, yes?"

"That's right. He should be here any moment." I go to the front door and open it, hoping that he would be standing there but of course he isn't. Not only that, it's dark outside. *Where did the day go?* I return to Imelda and tell her that it's getting late, that she might as well spend the night. "You can sleep on the couch. I'll bring you blankets and pillows"

"Gracias, Señor Thomas, I'm very sorry to be such a bother. I'll wait here."

"Yes, of course."

After giving Imelda blankets and two pillows I leave her sitting on the couch smiling gratefully and go to the bedroom, take off my clothes and get into bed next to Anne who seems to have already fallen asleep. Lying in bed, I look at the dim light coming through the open door and think I've made a big mistake allowing Imelda into our home. Then she appears in the doorway. She has followed me to the bedroom. She begins to remove her clothes. All I can see is the silhouette of her body. She approaches and climbs into bed next to me. I move away closer to Anne. Fortunately we have a king-size bed. None of this seems to awaken Anne. I wonder where Imelda has put her baby. I also wonder if Anne is really asleep but I don't move, only lie quietly thinking about the big mess I have made of the whole affair.

The next day I find Imelda waiting on the sofa, her baby in her lap. She smiles when I enter the room. I begin to blush and look away. Anne and Kelly are also in the room, Kelly sitting in one of the chairs, Anne pacing about. Finally she stops and says, "Jeffrey, we've waited a day and a night for her husband to show up but he hasn't come. How long is this going to continue?"

"Her husband will be here anytime. Just be patient."

"How do you know that, Jeffrey? Is that what *she* told you? Have you forgotten that's what she said yesterday? *Be patient?* The woman spent the night in our bed for God's sake. *Be patient!* You must be mad."

"Señora Thomas, I'm very grateful to you for allowing me to stay in your home and to sleep in your bed."

"I bet you are," Anne snaps back.

"Anne, please. Let's try to remain cool."

"Señora, there's no reason to be angry. Señor Thomas did nothing."

"What is she talking about, Jeffrey?"

"Nothing. She's just trying to calm you down."

Kelly gets up from her chair. "You two are pathetic. I'm going to my room," She then storms out.

I turn to Anne. She looks at me angrily. I turn to Imelda, who smiles sweetly. *Why must she smile like that? God!* Suddenly I feel a wave of abhorrence sweep over me.

Then there's a knock at the door. "He's here! My husband is here," Imelda says joyfully.

"Thank God," says Anne.

I go to the door and open it. A dark little boy and girl holding hands stand in front of me. "Who are you?" I ask. But they don't respond.

I turn to Imelda, who is now standing next to me holding my hand. I jerk my hand away and ask, "Do you know these children?" But before she can answer the children cry, "Mamma, Mamma" and hurry to her, hugging her and talking in Spanish. Anne lets out a sarcastic laugh and walks back to the living room. I turn to Imelda.

"Imelda, are these your children?"

"Yes, yes, they are. Aren't they beautiful?"

Under the circumstance I don't see them as beautiful, but say "Yes, they're beautiful. But what about their father? Where is he?"

"Oh they are not my present husband's children. They are children of my second husband, who remains in Mexico."

"You're divorced?"

"Not exactly."

"You have two husbands!"

"Yes, in a way, but my second husband could not come with us."

"I don't really want to know any more about your marital situation, Imelda. Tell me, who is the father of the baby?"

"My husband, of course."

"The one we are waiting for."

"Yes, yes, in a way."

"In a way?" *JESUS CHRIST!* "Forget about who's the father of the baby. Is one of your husbands here? That's what I want to know." Imelda then speaks in Spanish to the children.

"Yes, he is here and will soon arrive."

"Arrive?" I look up and down the street but see no one. "What do you mean he's here but hasn't arrived?"

"He is close by and will soon arrive here," she says.

I feel tired and want to lie down just for a while. I close the door and walk back into the living room. I begin to explain to Anne but she says, "I heard. So what are you going to do, Jeffrey? There are now more of them than there are of us. What are you going to do? We just can't have them stay here. *This* can't continue."

"I know, I know. Let's wait until her husband comes. He'll be here any minute. Isn't that right, Imelda?"

"Yes, Señor Thomas." I hate the way she addresses me, but say nothing.

"*Ooo-kay*, let's wait. *Hey*, these children look hungry. What about fixing them something to eat?" I say this as cheerily as I can but know it must have sounded hollow to Anne, since it did to me.

"We're very hungry," says the little boy.

"You speak English?" I ask.

"Not too good, but some."

"Hmm," I murmur.

"They're your children, Jeffrey, why don't *you* feed them," Anne says, apparently steamed by my suggestion.

"What do you mean they are *my* children?"

"You let this woman into our home and now these children."

"What else could I do?" I respond lamely.

"You could try being the-man-of-the-house."

I can see that she's really... well, pissed off. She's never said anything like that to me before. Turning to the children, she says, "Come into the kitchen you two. I'll make you sandwiches." She then walks away, Imelda's children following behind.

Imelda returns to the sofa. I follow and sit in a chair across from her. At the moment I can't face either Anne or Kelly, so I watch Imelda, looking for some clue as to what is going on. She smiles sweetly and opens her blouse for the baby to feed but the baby is still asleep. She holds her breast as if to offer it to the baby but the baby is still fast asleep. I watch mesmerized. Is she trying to bewitch me or simply repay me for my kindness?

I think I must have fallen asleep because I seem to hear a voice in a dream.

"What in the fuck are you doing, Jeffrey?!!!" It's Anne's voice and I'm no longer dreaming. I awake and find myself sitting next to Imelda.

"I was dreaming I was nursing."

"Nursing! Jesus Christ, have you lost your mind? No wonder you don't want this woman to leave."

"I'm sorry. I don't know what has come over me."

"She's a fucking witch! She's got you under her spell."

"Hey bitch, don't you call my mother a fucking witch or else I'll cut your throat while you sleep tonight." We both turn to the little boy.

"What did he say?" Anne asks, her eyes opening wide with shock.

"Gonzalo, you shut your mouth. These good people saved your mama. Say you're sorry."

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm real sorry." Then the little boy starts sobbing uncontrollably.

"What's happening?" Anne asks, still very much dazed by the boy's outburst and now by his sobbing.

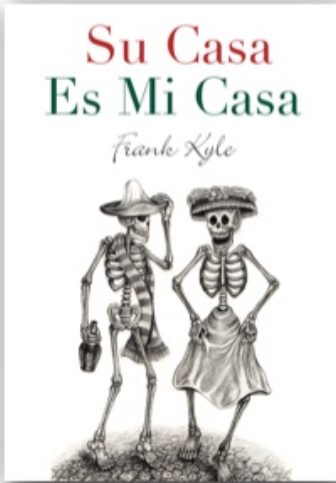
"You must forgive him, Señora Thomas. He has seen bad things."

"Bad things?" Anne says in an inquisitive tone of voice, though I don't think she really wants an answer.

"Bad things in Mexico."

"Don't say any more. I don't want to know. I'm sorry that he has seen bad things but I really don't want to know about them. I'll be upstairs, Jeffrey," she says as she leaves the room.

I was right. She didn't want to know. I get up wearily and walk to the front door and open it. It's dark. I turn to Imelda. He's not coming, is he, Imelda?"



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