



Quiquiriqui

Diane de Anda

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In the stillness of the early morning, a single finger of sunlight slips into the darkness of a bedroom closet. Suddenly, the suburban silence is cracked open by a resounding “Quiquiriqui!” that shoots from the closet like a sonic comet. The whole house is awake in a second, stumbling to see the cause of the racket.

This is the hilarious central scene in this charming picture book, which features Kiki, the handsome rooster, and the two young girls who are trying to save him from becoming Sunday dinner. When their *Abuela* brings him home, with his curling black tail and coquettish wink, the sisters immediately fall to his charms. Never having met a rooster before (and perhaps never considering where chicken nuggets come from) the girls can’t conceive of serving Kiki as a main dish. With angelic faces feigning ignorance, they hatch a plot to save him, but even when the jig is up, all may not be lost for Kiki.

This is as much a story about compassion as it is a prankish tale. The girls sympathize with Kiki and demonstrate an unswayable drive to save him. In turn, the adults listen to and sympathize with the girls. In a brief but touching moment, the father is saddened because he knows his girls will be saddened by an unforeseen event. It seems to be a loving family where all the members are valued and taken into consideration.

The author has previously published several children’s books, including short story collections and the bilingual *Dancing Miranda / Baila, Miranda, Baila*, as well as books on youth psychology and multiculturalism. She is the editor of the *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work* and is a professor in the Department of Social Welfare at UCLA.

In this book, she employs simple and confident language that carries the tale both in Spanish and in the English translation. The narrative unfolds just as beautifully through the illustrator’s vibrant watercolor pictures. Lechón has previously illustrated a number of children’s books with Hispanic themes, including *The Desert is My Mother / El Desierto Es Mi Madre*. His art in this volume is filled with lovely details, such as the undulating palm tree and ocean waves mural in the girl’s room and Kiki’s brilliant plumage.

Piñata Books is an imprint of Arte Público Press, dedicated to authentically presenting U.S. Hispanic culture in literature. The Hispanic heritage and culture of the characters is ever present in *Kikiriki / Quiquiriquí*, but never commented on. It presents the characters as everyday people rather than “other.” This serves to present a normalized portrait of a strong cohesive family for young readers, making it universally appealing. It also allows Kiki to shine as the star of this engaging tale about a sly rooster and his friends.

NAOMI MILLÁN (September / October 2004)

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