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TARSO & LUCERO SUPPING IN "MACARIO"  
The stranger laughed tears of dust.

## Dinner with Death

**Macario** (Azteca). The Day of the Dead. All over Mexico, children are laughing and eating candy skulls. All over Mexico, Death is grinning and eating children. Through the village streets the peons carry *La Muerte* in sugar sculpture,

larger than life. Through the land *La Muerte* strides, the hollow specter of starvation. It pauses at the hut of Macario the woodcutter (Ignacio Lopez Tarso). Six mouths to feed, and only a fistful of frijoles left. Bitterly, Macario cries aloud: "All my life I have been hungry—never once have I had enough to eat! Now I swear I will not eat again until I can have a turkey all to myself. I would rather die than be always hungry. But before I die, I want so much to feel full, just once . . ."

The woodcutter's wish is the golden key that opens one of the gloomiest and loveliest volumes of European legend. Translated to a Mexican setting by B. Traven, a mysterious recluse (TIME, Aug. 16, 1948) who lives in Mexico and writes masterly proletarian novels and short stories, the legend has been transformed by two gifted Mexicans, Director Roberto Gavaldon and Cameraman Gabriel Figueroa, into a fragile but profound little picture that abounds and delights in the black-and-white magic of the magic lantern.

Macario's wish is instantly fulfilled by his wife (Pina Pellicer). She steals a turkey, kills and cooks it, tells her husband to eat it while his hungry children are asleep. Stomach overcomes conscience, and Macario runs off to the woods. But just as he opens his mouth to eat the bird, the Devil appears, dressed as a dashing *caballero*.

"If you will give me a piece of your turkey," the demonic dandy announces, "I will give you my gold buttons." Macario refuses, runs deeper into the woods. But just as he opens his mouth to eat the bird, God appears, dressed in white robes. "Please give me a piece of your turkey," God beseeches. "I am so very hungry." Macario refuses, runs deeper into the woods. But just as he opens his

mouth to eat the bird, Death appears, dressed in a black serape.

"I beg you," Death (Enrique Lucero) groans in a voice like breaking bones, "give me a piece of your turkey. I have not eaten for a thousand years." Grimly the woodcutter chops the bird in half, grimly he sits down to sup with Death. "I knew," he murmurs sadly, "that I should never have a turkey all to myself." Death eyes him quizzically. "Why," he wonders, "did you share the bird with me?" Macario grins a sly peasant grin. "When you appear, there is no time left. I figured that while you ate your half I'd have time to eat mine." Death throws back his head and laughs till the tears of dust run down his stony cheeks. "You have fed me," he says then, "and you have even made me laugh. For that I shall give you what no man has ever had before." A spring leaps out of the ground, and with its occult water, Death replenishes Macario's gourd. "With this water," he says solemnly, "you can cure any illness—if I don't object."

Clutching the gourd, Macario runs back to life, runs on to fame, to wealth, to power. All the things he never had, the gift of healing gives him. But in his noon of glory he is suddenly struck down; and in the darkling and poetic end of all, he learns that the paths of glory lead to the same lowly grave he would in any case have lain in. Yet it might have been otherwise. "Macario," Death says sadly, "you misunderstood the gift." He misunderstood the gift of life—the turkey, which is meant to be shared with other men. He misunderstood the gift of spirit—the water, which heals where God wills and is not meant for any man's profit.