

La Llorona’s Question in the Dark

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A woman in white asks a night watchman the time, then cries for her children. One old collected version lets La Llorona appear in impossibly distant places at once.

STATUS	A recorded story, with its history attached
CLASSIFICATION	STR
MATERIAL	Mexico and wider Latin American tradition
DISPOSITION	PUBLIC / SOURCED STORY
CATEGORY	Strange Files
RECORD TYPE	Ghosts & hauntings
STORY HISTORY	Older oral tradition collected in print by the early twentieth century

THE ACCOUNT

In Thomas Allibone Janvier’s collected version, La Llorona is not confined to a riverbank. She moves through Mexico City at night in white clothing, her head covered by a rebozo. Sometimes she wakes a watchman and asks the time. Then she announces that she must reach a distant city, cries out for her missing children and vanishes. Other tellings in the same account put her in several far-separated places during one night. The question sounds ordinary enough to answer. That is its trap: a moment of conversation opens onto a journey no living pedestrian could make.

FOLLOWING THE TRAIL

Janvier’s Legends of the City of Mexico preserves this version and describes collecting oral traditions with his wife from Mexican informants. The book is evidence of a long-lived story in circulation, not a death register for one identified woman. Its older claims about a single ancient origin should not erase the tradition’s many regional forms.

WHY IT STAYS WITH US

This version’s unsettling feature is distance. The grieving voice belongs everywhere and nowhere, crossing the map faster than a listener can work out what has just been asked.

WHERE THIS TELLING COMES FROM

Legends of the City of Mexico: Legend of La Llorona

Thomas A. Janvier; Project Gutenberg transcription

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/45852/pg45852-images.html>

RETURN TO THE STORY

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<https://u225x.com/record/STR-GHOST-026>