El Retablo de las Maravillas

Summary in English
Chirinos and Chanfalla enter the village with the intention of swindling the townsfolk into paying to see their fake play. Rabelina, the highly untalented musician, is there to provide filler music for the slow parts.

The general returns with her soldiers, and the townsfolk joke about this all being part of the great Tontonela’s plan. Teresa suggests that the Governor dance with Salome again to see if the general is a pure Christian. When she can’t see it, the townsfolk shout that she is an outsider, “one of them.”

The general becomes angry at their accusations, and they begin to swordfight. Amidst the commotion, Chirinos, Chanfalla and Rabelina escape, and leave for the next town, to trick more unsuspecting viewers of the Retablo de las Maravillas!

The Governor, and his city officials, Petra Capacho, Juana Castrada, and Benita Repollo happen upon Chirinos and Chanfalla. Chanfalla introduces herself as Montela and explains to the officials about the magnificent Retablo.

The magical, marvelous Retablo can only be seen under certain conditions. If the viewer has even one drop of Jewish blood in his history, he will not be able to see the magnificent play. If he is of Moorish descent or from an illegitimate union, he will also not be able to see the play. Most importantly, if he has ever attended Michigan Technological University in Houghton, there is no way he will be able to see any of the play!
The next spectacle that arrives is Salome, the most beautiful dancer in the world. She dances with the Governor, and everyone admires her beauty.

A horn sounds in the distance, and an army general enters. Everyone exclaims that they can finally actually see something! Chanfalla and Chirinos realize that this could mean trouble for them, and begin plotting their escape.

The general states that she needs 15 houses for her soldiers right away. They are arriving immediately. The townsfolk believe that this is still part of the magnificent play, and simply believe that they are finally seeing a part of the play. Chanfalla tries to convince them that this is not part of the spectacle and that the general and soldiers are actually real. No one wants to admit that they hadn’t seen anything before now, so they all act as though they have.

The Governor decides the magical play will be held in Juana’s house. Juana pays Chirinos and Chanfalla (Montela) and everyone leaves to prepare for the spectacle!

Chirinos and Chanfalla have set up the magical stage in which the play shall take place. Everyone begins to arrive. First enter the young ladies, Juanita (Juana’s daughter), Rosa, and Teresa. Finally, the city officials arrive and take their seats. Rabelina begins to play, and Chirinos and Chanfalla summon the great Tontonela, the creator of the spectacle.
In the distance, Chirinos and Chanfalla “see” a beautiful temple. The warrior Sampson appears. He seems angry. Chirinos and Chanfalla yell for him to stop, to not hurt these good and pure people. Everyone tries to hide, and yell for him to spare their lives. Chanfalla blows a whistle to signal that Sampson is gone, and it is safe again.

Everyone is shaken up from the encounter with the warrior. Next, Chirinos sees a large bull coming from the stage. It is the biggest in the world! Everyone runs from the bull. The viewers begin to realize that they can’t actually see the bull, and begin to doubt their purity.

Chanfalla once again blows her whistle, and calm is restored. Juana requests from Chirinos and Chanfalla that there no more large, violent creatures emerge from the arch, because it scares the young girls.

They happily oblige, and instead of something large and violent, the next creatures to “appear” are thousands of rats! Everyone screams and stands on their chairs to avoid the disgusting creatures. Again, the townsfolk are not able to see or feel the rats, and are questioning why.

Large clouds appear carrying magical youth-bringing water from the River Jordan. Everyone “feels” younger and more beautiful.

Chirinos and Chanfalla see the next spectacle approaching in the distance. It’s lions, and tigers, and bears, oh my! Juana becomes angry that there are such large, violent creatures in her house, and storms out. Rosa is afraid of the dangerous animals, and follows her.