

The tortilla curtain



Chris Farley English A Wilson October 30, 2010 TC Essay In the novel, *The Tortilla Curtain*, by T. C. Boyle a couple experiences life in California and never know what's going to happen. They find out life as they thought it would be, really isn't how they imagined. They go through some great hardships that will forever change their lives and change their thoughts on things. Candido and America went through the most hardest times in this novel, they are illegal immigrants, they have no money, and Candido turns into a criminal doing all he can to survive. They came to the United States in hope of fulfilling their dreams.

When they got here they thought they would be able to make a life for themselves and be able to live happily. Their views on that really changed when they had no place to live and hardly any food to eat. Being illegal immigrants there was really not much that they could do about food, money, a real job, and a place to live and call their home. He had to allow America to go and try and get work from the labor exchange when she made a very clear point when she said " We have maybe a cup or rice left, half a twelve-ounce sack of dry beans, six corn tortillas, no eggs, and no milk"(28).

At this point Candido lost some of his pride and his manhood and he had no idea what he could do to earn it back. There was no way that Candido could have got a decent job and earn the house that he had promised his wife America before they came here seeing as he was illegal. He had promised her a house that was described as " A clean white one made out of lumber that smelled like the mountains, with a gas range, a refrigerator, and maybe a little yard for a garden and a place for the chickens"(28-29).

He had to allow America to go and try and get work from the labor exchange when she made a very clear point when she said “ We have maybe a cup or rice left, half a twelve-ounce sack of dry beans, six corn tortillas, no eggs, and no milk”(28). With everything already being as bad as it was, America was pregnant and how would he be able to provide for his wife and his baby when she was born? Later in the novel it comes to a part where Candido and America leave their camp in the canyon and head for the city.

Once they are there they come across a guy who asked them if they needed a place to stay, saying his aunt’s house was just around the corner. The guy led him into a trap where they beat him up and as he says “ They got everything, every penny” (234). He fell for the trap and it made him think that he could not really trust anyone else but himself and his wife. There was no way that they could have gotten anything now and they had to make their way back into the camp in the canyon that they had left in the first place.

Once Thanksgiving came around Candido had gotten a little bit of work and while he was at the market he was given a turkey. When he returned with the turkey they had fixed it all up so they could try and cook it. While that was all happening the flames from the fire had leapt to the trees and everything went up in a blaze. After they managed to get away from the fire and after they had a drink from the chinamans water hose they found themselves in a clump of bushes. While laying there Candido heard a noises from the leaves around them and in that instant America whispered to him “ I think my water broke.

The baby's coming I can't help it"(278). He had no idea what he was doing when he was delivering his baby, after all they were in the maintenance shed and he had to make do with what was there. After the baby was born, it was time for them to move out of the shed and Candido had to make a house out of what he could. He finally made it out of some pallets that were held together with some nails. He turned into a criminal and was stealing dog dishes, dog food, and among other things. At this point he was climbing into peoples backyards and taking what he needed.

He happened to take a piece of green plastic from a greenhouse that one of them managed to have in their yards for his roof. After he made several trips to make something out of what he had he finally brought America and even though she didn't want to be there she had no choice. While he was hungry he was thinking that some stew would be good and out of nowhere the cat appeared(Delaney's cat) and Candido called out to it " Here kitty"(308). America wanted to know what was next after all of that and she asked Candido and he shrugged and said " I'll find work I guess"(323).

She made up her mind and told him " I want to go home and I don't care if you come or not, it's you they want not me. You're the one"(323). She did not want to raise her daughter like that and Candido couldn't do anything about their situation at all. He stood by the post office for hours trying to attract the attention of every pickup that pulled into the lumberyard, but he had no luck at all. He was making his way back to America when he noticed that someone was on the shoulder of the road up ahead.

It was Delaney that was off on the side of the road and Candido froze. As he was thinking about the accident all over again he heard Delaney shout " You

stay right there! ”(331). Candido had made himself back to America and their little makeshift home, not realizing he was being followed by Delaney. Once he came in America told him that it looked like he saw a ghost and he responded with “ I wish it was only a ghost”(349). He told her “ it was the one with the red hair who hit me with his car, he scares me”(349).

After eating and his clothes dried up America had told him that there was something wrong with Socorro’s eyes and she couldn’t see. Candido thought she was crazy and didn’t want to believe that his baby was blind. In that next instance Delaney appeared from nowhere and he held a gun but then he dropped it once he heard the roar of what was happening. Their homemade house fell to nothing and crumbled within the flood. They rode a pallet all the way down to the roof of the post office and that is when it hit Candido hard. He asked America “ Where’s the baby? ”(355) and she didn’t answer him.

He was “ numbed right through to the core”(355) and in that moment he saw the white face come up through the dark water and he reached down and took a hold of it. He saw that his baby girl Socorro was gone, lifeless and nothing could have changed that no matter how much he cursed about it and got angry. That was the worst thing that he could have had happen to him and he was angry, angry that his daughter would never be able to live the way he wanted her to and the way they should have lived. Candido and America went through a great deal of hardship over this novel and no one deserves to live like that.

They had to make changes so that they could live and be able to try and live for what they came to the U. S. for. Neither of them got the dream life that they imagined but America sure grew from the experience. You can say that

Candido was able to learn that your dreams in life don't come as easy as you thought they would. You are going to have to make some kind of plan for life so you can go from that and know what you are doing.

Works Cited Boyle, T. Coraghessan. *The Tortilla Curtain*. New York: Penguin Group, 1995. Print.