

Edmundo and Emilia Martínez didn't know how to read or write, but they did know how to work the land.

They worked it very well but, like so many other families of El Capulín, one of Granada's rural districts, they made very little money at it. When they already had a marimba of children, three boys and three girls, they decided to move to the city of Granada to see if things would go better there.

José Dennis, the last of the litter, was born in the city. He was bronze-skinned and skinny as a rail, with pitch-black Indian hair that stuck straight out from his head. But quick as lightning, he began to stretch out and grow very tall.



Edmundo y Emilia no sabían ni leer ni escribir. Sí sabían trabajar la tierra. Lo hacían muy bien, pero ganaban muy poco, como tantas otras familias de El Capulín, una de las comarcas rurales de Granada.

Cuando ya tenían una marimba de chavalos, tres varones y tres niñas, decidieron moverse a la ciudad para ver si allá les iba mejor.

En Granada nació el cumiche, José Dennis, un indio chirizo y flaquito, que muy pronto, como relámpago, empezó a estirarse y a hacerse muy alto.



There were no toys in his house, because there was no money to buy any. His first toy, and always his favorite, was a slingshot, homemade in those days with a strip of inner-tube rubber. His brothers didn't play with him; they were too big by then.

When Dennis wasn't playing with his slingshot, he threw rocks to perfect his aim. One day he saw a tiny sparrow high up in a tree. "I wonder if I can hit it," he thought to himself and made a lightning decision to try. He aimed and threw. As the little bird fell to the ground, a tear fell from his eye. But his aim also amazed him.

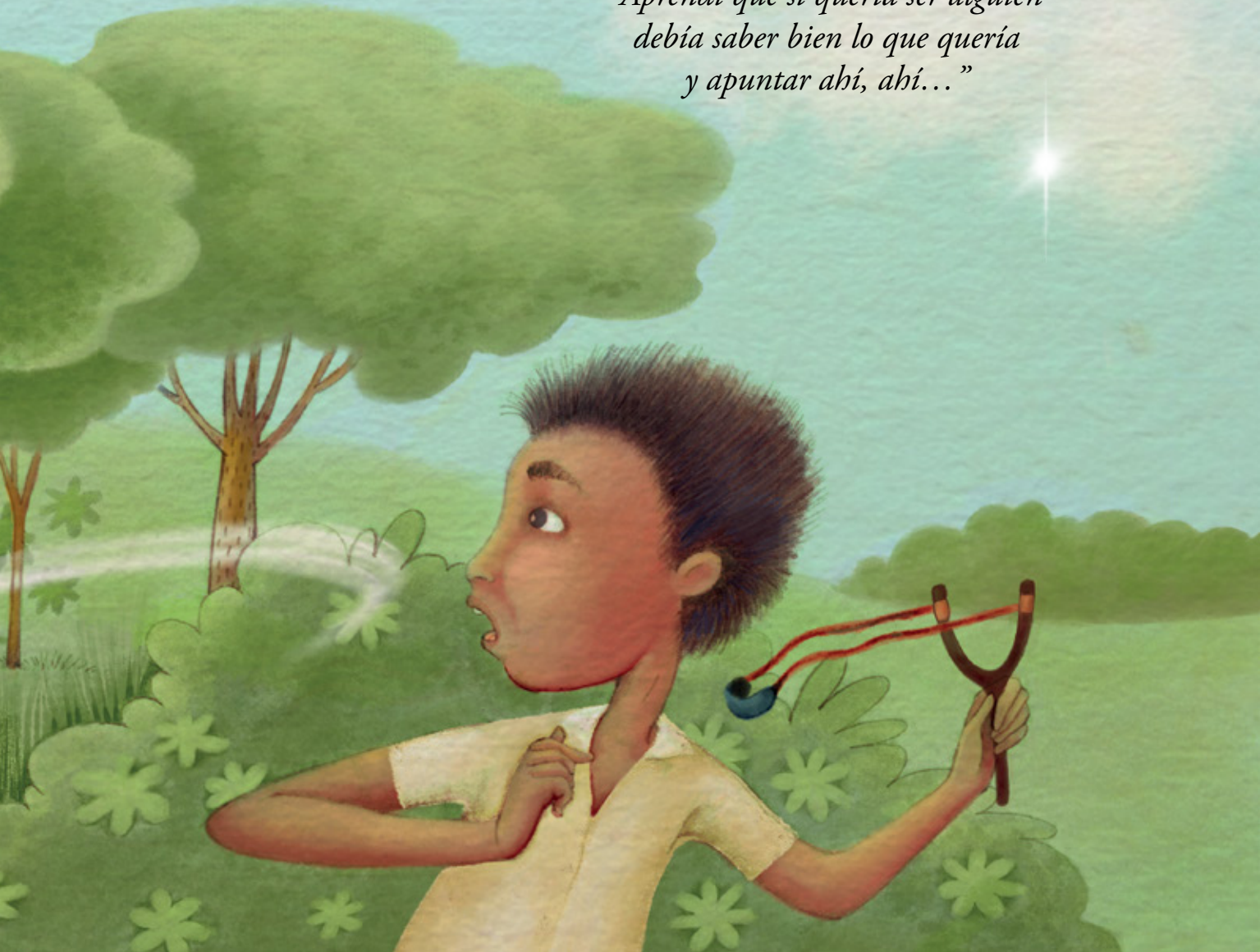
*"I learned that
if I wanted to be somebody,
I had to figure out what I wanted
and aim right at it..."*



No tenía juguetes. En su casa no alcanzaba para comprarlos.
El primero, y el que más le gustó siempre, fue una tiradora.
De las de entonces, de las que se hacían con hule.
Sus hermanos no jugaban con él, eran ya macizos.

El juego de Dennis era tirar piedras para afinar puntería.
Un día miró un gorrión muy diminuto en lo alto de un palo...
“¿Le tiro, no le tiro...?”, se preguntó. Como relámpago decidió apuntarle,
le apuntó y le dio. Cayó el pajarito, a él le cayó una lágrima...
y se asombró de su puntería.

*“Aprendí que si quería ser alguien
debía saber bien lo que quería
y apuntar ahí, ahí...”*





Doña Emilia decidió ir a vender al mercado de Granada para ganarse unos reales. Vendía arroz, frijoles, chiltomas, cebollas, mangos... Ella no sabía de letras, sus otros hijos apenas, no habían podido estudiar. Al menos uno, Dennis, el cumiche, debía aprender. Ése era el afán de ella.

Un peso a la semana le costó la escuelita en donde lo puso para que le enseñaran. Y enseguida, como relámpago, juntaba las letras en los libros de “Paquito y Paulito”.

*“Aprendí que tenía que retribuirle
a mi mama lo que ella hacía por mí.
Quería que ella se sintiera orgullosa de mí...”*

His mother Emilia decided to sell things in Granada's market to earn a bit of money. She sold rice, beans, green peppers, onions, mangos... She still didn't know how to read and her other sons barely did, since they hadn't been able to study. But she was determined to give Dennis, her last born, a chance to learn.

The little school that would teach him cost her a peso a week. And right away, quick as lightning, he started putting the letters together in the “Paquito y Paulito” books.

*“I learned that I had to pay my mother back
for what she had done for me.
I wanted her to be proud of me...”*