



Video Story Transcript

THREE SISTERS

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Link to YouTube Video:
<https://youtu.be/c2j9Dy6lil0>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hi, my name is Jim Stowell and the story of “Three Sisters” is from an evening of stories, entitled, “Talking Pictures,” which was produced by The Great American History Theater.

Three Sisters

In 1988, my wife, Jessica and I lived with a Canali family in León, Nicaragua. León, is, uh...in the northeast central part of the country and is the second largest city in Nicaragua. And when we were there, Nicaragua was very, very poor, rating only above Haiti. In the Canali family was Luis the father, Maria Elena the mother; she was a wonderful lady. They had three daughters, Gloria who was 15, Dominique who was 12, and Maria, named after her mother, was nine. And they all lived in a little cluster of houses called, “El Colectivo.” And every house was designed to look exactly the same. And they were all very small made out of gray brick with red tile roof and a red tile floor.

One day, at Maria’s school, they received a kind of care package from a religious organization in the United States and every child in school was getting something from the package. And Maria was given a single stick of Wrigley’s Juicy Fruit chewing gum. She raced home after school. I just happened to be sitting in the living room when she ran in and she saw me and she looked at me. She has this gorgeous smile and she opened the bottom drawer of the chest of drawers. This is the only piece of furniture like this in the house, and she shares this drawer with her two older sisters. And she pulled out a very precious possession, a plastic baggie that still seals. And then I watched as she pulled the chewing gum out of the little paper sleeve. And I watched

as she very, very carefully unwrapped the tin foil from around the chewing gum, set the chewing gum aside and then she, kind of, straightened the tin foil out. And she took the side, the inside, the side that had been wrapped around the chewing gum and she put it right to her nose and gave this big sniff. SNIFF! Oh, I can see on her face that this was such a sugar rush for her. But she only sniffed once. And then I watched as she very, very carefully rewrapped the chewing gum in that tin foil, put it back on the little paper sleeve, put that in the plastic baggie, sealed the baggie and put that in the bottom drawer.

That evening, just before she went to bed, Luis and I were sitting in the living room talking and Maria came walking in. And she looked at her father; she looked at the drawer. She looked at her father; she looked at the drawer. She looked at her father; he started to laugh. "Ya, ya, si, si, si!" So she opened the drawer, she pulled out the baggie, opened it, and then she pulled the chewing gum out of the little paper sleeve. Very, very carefully unwrapped the chewing gum, set it aside, took the tin foil, SNIFF! Oh, such sweetness! This was for her, her bedtime snack. And then I watched as she very, very carefully, trying not to touch the tin foil too much, being very gentle, rewrap the chewing gum; put it back in the paper sleeve, put it in the baggie, in the drawer. The next day, she chewed that gum and she chewed it all day!

That evening, Jessica and I were sitting in the living room and, you know, this room is about 10 x 12. It's not very big. And the three sisters were there in their school dresses, sitting on the floor. And Maria Elena was there and Luis. And they were sitting in chairs, helping their daughters with their homework. And they did all the homework with chalk on the red tile floor. And so they did all the figuring and re-spelling, things like, that on the floor. And then they take a wet cloth and wipe the floor. The floor was like this big Etch-A-Sketch because paper was so expensive and so hard to find only the answers could go down on paper.

So after all the homework was done, Maria opened the drawer, brought out the plastic baggie, inside was the tin foil. And I looked, and there was Gloria and Dominique, and they knew what the tin foil was. And they saw that tin foil and I knew that for them, this was gonna be a very sweet treat! So Maria handed the tin foil to her oldest sister, first. Gloria was so excited! She had this big smile on her face. And she gave a mighty sniff. SNIFF! But the tin foil was getting a little older now and a little looser. And so when she gave this sniff, part of it actually rattled at the bottom of her nose. Ra, ta, ta, ta, ta! And it was like it sounded like a window shade going around. Ra, ta, ta, ta, ta! And it tickled the bottom of her nose and she started to laugh. And Dominique, she took the tin foil and she gave a mighty sniff. And it did smell sweet but it tickled her nose and she started to laugh. And Maria took the tin foil and she sniffed. Ra, ta, ta, ta, ta! And then she started to laugh. And the three sisters put their arms around each other's shoulders and they were sitting in this dim light on the red tile floor, in their white school dresses with the red sash and their long black hair laughing. It starts to rain, an instant tropical downpour... drumming on that red tile roof. And the sisters were laughing and their laughter rose up, rose up to meet, to mix, to dance, with the Nicaraguan night rain.