Quinta Temporada

1966

First Performance: At Delano, California, during a grape strikers' meeting in Filipino Hall.

Characters:

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The farm labor contractor, satirized as the archetypical DON COYOTE in this acto, is one of the most hated figures in the entire structure of agri-business. He is paid by the growers for having the special skill of rounding up cheap stoop labor in the barrio and delivering it to the fields. The law stipulates that he must provide safe transportation and honest transactions. The sorrowful reality is something else again, ranging from broken down buses that are carbon monoxide death traps to liquor and meager lunches sold at exorbitant prices to the workers. In the field, DON COYOTE sits in his air conditioned pickup while the workers suffer the blistering heat or freezing cold of inclement weather. He originally appeared in this acto with the name of real-life contratistas. DON COYOTE has earned the unrelenting hatred of the campesino, but it is ultimately agri-business that condones and protects him. The only solution to the injustices of the farm labor contracting system is the union hiring hall.

In addition to DON COYOTE, the seasons appear in "Quinta Temporada" as characters. It is necessary to emphasize the effect of summer, fall, winter and spring on the survival of the farmworker. If it rains he is out of a job, and there is no unemployment compensation. Winter or "El Invierno" is thus almost a living, breathing creature to the campesino—a monster, in fact bringing with him humiliation, starvation and disease. If the strikers laughed at winter in this acto, it was because of the real hope offered by the United Farmworkers Organizing Committee, which created a new "fifth" season.

Enter FARMWORKER to center stage from S.L. He addresses audience.

WORKER: Oh, hello—quihúbole! My name is José. What else? And I’m looking for a job. Do you have a job? I can do anything, any kind of field work. You see, I just got in from Texas this morning and I need to send money back to my familia. I can do whatever you want—pick cotton, grapes, melons. (DON COYOTE enters while FARMWORKER is talking. He smiles and comes toward the FARMWORKER.)

COYOTE: My friend! My name is Don Coyote and I am a farm labor contractor.

WORKER: En la madre, ¡me rayé! Un contratista. (The FARMWORKER kisses the contractor’s outstretched hand.)

COYOTE: So you want work, eh? ¿Busca jale? Bueno, vénge pa’ca un momento. (COYOTE pulls FARMWORKER over to S.R.) Mire, this summer is coming fat, fat! Covered with money! Dollar bills, five dollar bills, ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred dollar bills and all you have to do is . . . (COYOTE gestures above FARMWORKER’s head as if
holding a wad of money which he now releases.) catch!
(FARMWORKER pretends to catch money in his hat.
COYOTE moves downstage center.) Well, what do you say? Will you work for me?
WORKER: ¡Oh, sí, patroncito! ¡Sí, señor! (Approaches COYOTE's hand out.)
COYOTE: (Grasping hand, shaking it.) A deal is a deal. (The PATRONCITO enters on S.R., stomps downstage smoking a cigar.)
PATRON: Boy! (DON COYOTE shoves FARMWORKER aside and leaps toward the PATRON, landing at his feet and kissing his boots. He rises dusting off the PATRON.)
Like your patron, eh, boy?
COYOTE: ¡Oh, sí, patrón!
PATRON: Good. You got my summer crew ready, boy?
COYOTE: Sí, señor. (He motions to FARMWORKER, who hesitates, then comes over to PATRON. COYOTE points to his hat.) El sombrero, tonto. (The FARMWORKER removes his hat and stands beside the contractor, both smiling assininely toward the PATRON.)
PATRON: Well, I don't much care what he looks like, so long as he can pick.
COYOTE: Oh, he can pick, patrón! (The PATRON stomps over to S.L. COYOTE elbows the FARMWORKER and makes a gesture, holding his hands widely apart as if describing how fat summer will be. The PATRON at S.L. calls in SUMMER.)
PATRON: Summer! Get in here. (SUMMER is a man dressed in ordinary workshirt and khaki hat. His shirt and hat, however, are completely covered with paper money: Tens, twenties, fifties. He walks in with his arms outstretched, and continues across the stage at a normal pace.)
SUMMER: I am the Summer.
WORKER: ¡Ajú! ¡El jale!
COYOTE: ¡Entrale, mano! (The FARMWORKER attacks the
SUMMER, and begins to pick as many dollar bills as his hands can grab. These he stuffs into his back pockets. DON COYOTE immediately takes his place behind the FARMWORKER and extracts the money from his back pockets and hands it over to the PATRON, who has taken his place behind the contractor. This exchange continues until SUMMER exits. The PATRON then moves to S.R., counting his money. DON COYOTE takes the FARMWORKER to S.L. Enthusiastically.) ¡Te aventastes! Didn't I tell you we're going to get rich? Didn't I tell you? (DON COYOTE breaks off abruptly and goes over to his PATRON's side.) How'd we do, boss?
PATRON: Terrible! We're going to have to ask for a federal subsidy. (The FARMWORKER searches his pockets for money and panics when he can't find a single dollar bill. He spots the PATRON with handfuls of money and his panic turns to anger.)
WORKER: (To DON COYOTE.) Hey! Where's my money?
COYOTE: What money?
WORKER: Pos, what? The money I work for all summer.
COYOTE: You know what's wrong with you? You're stupid. You don't know how to save your money. Look at my patrón, how come he always has money?
WORKER: (Lunging toward PATRON.) That's my money!
COYOTE: (Stops him.) No! I know who has your money. Come here. (He takes FARMWORKER to S.L. again.) It's... (He points out toward the audience, making a semi-circle from S.L. to S.R., finally stopping at the PATRON and pointing at him inadvertently.)
PATRON: Hey!
COYOTE: No! Not my patrón! It's Autumn! Autumn has your money.
WORKER: Autumn?
COYOTE: El otoño.
WORKER: Puras papas. I don't believe you.
COYOTE: You don’t believe me? (Faking his sincerity.) But I swear by my madrecita! (Pause.) Still don’t believe me, eh? Okay. Do you want to see the truth in action? Well, here’s the truth in action! (DON COYOTE makes a flourish with his arms, and spits on the floor, then stomps vigorously on the spit with his foot. All in a grandiose manner.)

WORKER: That’s it?

COYOTE: (Retreats momentarily, decides to suppress his anger.) No matter. Look, mano, this autumn is coming FAT! Fatter than last summer. You go to work for me and you’ll be rich. You’ll have enough money to buy yourself a new car, a Cadillac! Two Cadillacs! You’ll be able to go to Acapulco! Guadalajara! You’ll be able to send your kids to college! You’ll be able to afford a budget! You’ll be middle-class! You’ll be Anglo! You’ll be rich! (The FARMWORKER responds to all of this with paroxysms of joy, squeals of delight.) So, what do you say? Will you work for me?

WORKER: (Suddenly deadpan.) No.

COYOTE: (Turns away, goes to D.S.C.) Okay, no me importa! I don’t give a damn. Anyway, winter’s coming.

WORKER: (Suddenly fearful.) Winter?

COYOTE: El invierno!

WORKER: No! (He rushes toward the contractor, hand outstretched. DON COYOTE grabs it quickly, before the FARMWORKER can think twice.)

COYOTE: Lío es lío, yo soy tu tío, grillo.

PATRON: (At S.R.) Boy!

COYOTE: (Whirling around.) Yes, patrón?

PATRON: (Stuffing money into his pockets.) Is my fall crew ready?

COYOTE: Sí, patrón. (DON COYOTE motions the FARMWORKER over to S.R. The FARMWORKER steps forward, hat in hand, with a smile on his face. The PATRON moves forward with a grunt and the FARMWORKER steps in front of him. The PATRON tries to move around him and the FARMWORKER moves in front of him again. The PATRON finally shoves the FARMWORKER aside and goes S.L. The COYOTE yells to FARMWORKER.) A un lado, suato!

PATRON: Fall, come in here, boy. (FALL comes in. He is a thinner man than SUMMER. His work shirt is covered with money, though more sparsely than SUMMER’s.)

COYOTE: ¡Entrale, mano! (With a shout, the FARMWORKER leaps to his work, picking money off the shirt that FALL wears. The same FARMWORKER-DON COYOTE-PATRON arrangement is used until FALL is almost off stage at S.R. At this point, the FARMWORKER reaches back and accidentally catches DON COYOTE’s hand in his back pocket. Spotting this, the PATRON rapidly crosses to D.S.L.)

WORKER: Hey! That’s my money! You’re stealing my money! Pos, mira, qué hijo de ... (FARMWORKER strikes at contractor. DON COYOTE knocks him down and kicks him three times. The PATRON stands watching all of this, then finally calls out.)

PATRON: You, boy!

COYOTE: (In a sweat, fearful of reprimand.) ¡Sí, patrón! I didn’t mean it, boss. (Pointing to his foot.) Mira, rubber soles, patrón. (DON COYOTE obsequiously slides over to the boss. The PATRON is expansive, beaming, pleased.)

PATRON: I like the way you do that, boy.
COYOTE: You do? Oh, I can do it again, patrón. (He runs over to the FARMWORKER and gives him one final kick in the ribs. The FARMWORKER groans.)

PATRON: (With corporate pride.) Beautiful! If there’s anything we need in our company, boy, it’s discipline and control of our workers!

COYOTE: Sí, señor, disciplina, control de los mexicanos!

PATRON: And just to show you our appreciation for what you do for the business, the corporation, I am going to give you a little bonus. (Above the flat behind PATRON and contractor, a hand appears holding a huge bone with big black letters spelling out the word “bonus.” The PATRON picks this up and hands it to the contractor.)

COYOTE: (Overcome with emotion.) ¡Oh, patrón! ¡Un hueso! (There is a loud rumbling noise backstage. Snowflakes come tumbling over the flats. COYOTE runs to S.R.) Winter is coming! (The FARMWORKER picks himself up off the floor and cowers at U.S.C. PATRON stands S.L., undisturbed by the advent of WINTER. With a final rumble WINTER leaps into the scene around the corner of the flat at S.L.)

WINTER: I am Winter and I want money. Money for gas, lights, telephone, rent. (He spots the contractor and rushes over to him.) Money! (DON COYOTE gives him his bonus. WINTER bites the bone, finds it distasteful, throws it backstage over the flats. He whirls around toward the PATRON.)

COYOTE: Money!

PATRON: (Remaining calm.) Will you take a check?

WINTER: (Rushing over to him.) No, cash!

PATRON: Okay, here! (Hands him a small wad of bills.) Well, that’s it for me. I’m off to Acapulco ‘til next spring. (Exits S.L.)

COYOTE: And I’m off to Las Vegas. (Exits S.R.)

WORKER: And I’m off to eat frijoles! (WINTER nabs the FARMWORKER as he tries to escape.)

WINTER: Ha, ha, Winter’s got you! I want money. Give me money!

WORKER: I don’t have any. I’m just a poor farmworker.

WINTER: Then suffer! (WINTER drags the FARMWORKER D.S.C., kicking and beating him, then dumps snow on him from a small pouch. The FARMWORKER shivers helplessly. SPRING enters at S.L., singing a happy tune.)

SPRING: (Skipping in.) La, la, la, la. (Stops, sees WINTER maltreating FARMWORKER.) What are you doing here?

WINTER: Mamasota, who are you?

SPRING: I am Spring, la primavera, but your time is past. You have to go!

WINTER: Some other time, baby.

SPRING: Aw, come on now, you’ve had your turn. You’ve got to leave. (WINTER ignores her with a grunt.) Get the hell out of here!

WINTER: All right, I’m going for now, but I’ll be back again next year, campesino. (Exits S.R.)

SPRING: (Crosses to FARMWORKER and helps him to get up.) There, there, you poor, poor farmworker, here, now, get up. You mustn’t let this happen to you again. You’ve got to fight for your rights!

WORKER: You mean I’ve got rights?

SPRING: Sure!

WORKER: Ahora, sí. I’m going to fight for my rights like Pancho Villa, like Francisco I. Madero, like Emiliano Zapata ... (SPRING startles him by touching his shoulder.) Ta-ta-ta-ta! (From backstage is heard the cry: Campesino!)

SPRING: Oh, my time has come ... (Crosses in front of FARMWORKER.) I must go now. But, remember, fight for your rights! La, la, la, la. (Exits S.R., singing and skipping.)

WORKER: She’s right! From now on I’m going to fight for my rights, my lefts, and my liberals. (DON COYOTE enters S.L.)

COYOTE: Amigo ...
Luis Valdez

WORKER: (Turns, frightened. Runs to S.R. after SPRING.) Pri...

COYOTE: Pri, what?

WORKER: Pri... prepare yourself! You robbed me!

COYOTE: No! No, I'm your friend.

WORKER: Ni madre! You're a thief!

COYOTE: ¡No! Soy tu amigo. ¡Somos de la misma raza!

WORKER: ¡Simon, eres rata! (He swings at DON COYOTE.)

COYOTE: ¡Calma, hombre! ¡Ahí viene mi patrón!

PATRON: (Enters S.L.) Boy!

COYOTE: (Running over to him.) Yes, boss?

PATRON: You got this year's summer crew ready?

COYOTE: (Hesitating, hat in hand.) Well, you see, patron, it's this way...

PATRON: Well?

COYOTE: (With a forced smiled.) Sure, boss, it's all ready.

PATRON: Good! (He turns and crosses to corner of flat at S.L., anticipating the entrance of SUMMER. DON COYOTE rushes to FARMWORKER at S.R.)

COYOTE: ¡Andale, mano! You got to work. Havent I always give you work? Don't I always treat you good?

WORKER: ¡No!

COYOTE: Andale, hombre, be a sport! Do it for old times sake!

WORKER: ¡No, te digo! (He spots SUMMER coming in at S.L.) ¡Estoy en huelga! (He squats.)

PATRON: What's going on? Why isn't he working?

COYOTE: He says he's on strike.

PATRON: Strike? But he can't be! Summer's going by! What does he want?

COYOTE: (To FARMWORKER.) ¿Qué quieres?

WORKER: Un contrato bien firmadito.

COYOTE: He wants a signed contract!

PATRON: He's crazy! We need some more workers! Find me some more workers! Find me some more workers!

Summer's passing! (To audience.) Five hundred workers! I need five hundred workers! (Meanwhile, SUMMER continues to cross the stage and finally exists S.R. The PATRON is frantic, hysterical. He ends up following SUMMER off stage. There is a silence. The PATRON re-enters in shock and disbelief.) He's gone. Summer's gone. My crop! Ahhhhhhh! (He leaps and snorts like an animal.)

COYOTE: (Fearfully.) ¡Patrón! ¡Patrón! (The PATRON is on the floor, kicking and snorting like a wild horse. DON COYOTE leaps on his back and rides him like a bronco until the PATRON calms down and settles on all fours, snorting and slobbering incoherently. COYOTE pats the side of his head like a horse.) Chihuahua, cada año se pone más animal mi patrón. It's okay, boss. He can't last, because he's getting hungry. (FARMWORKER doubles over with pangs of hunger.) And anyway, here comes Autumn! (AUTUMN crosses the stage and the FARMWORKER approaches him with one hand on his stomach and his other arm outstretched.)

WORKER: Con esto me compro un taco.

COYOTE: (Slapping his hand down.) None of that! Put it here first! (Stretches out his hand.)

WORKER: No, I can't. I'm on strike!

COYOTE: No work, no eat! Put it here!

WORKER: No, I... (He hesitates. He is almost ready to take the contractor's hand. SPRING enters S.L. dressed as a nun representing the churches.)

CHURCHES: Wait! (Crosses to FARMWORKER.) I am the Churches. I bring you food and money. (She hands him some cash and fruit.)

PATRON: (Back to his senses.) You... you lousy contractor! You lost me my summer crop and my fall crop. You're fired! And you, you communist farmworker. (Points to nun.) You, too, you Catholic communist! (A rumbling noise backstage. The FARMWORKER is frightened. He tries to
run but the nun holds him. The PATRON cowers U.S.C. SUMMER enters dressed as “unions” and carries a contract and an oversized pencil.)

UNIONS: (D.S.C.) I am the Unions. We’re with you, brother! Keep fighting! (Crossees to FARMWORKER and shakes his hand and stands by his side. There is another rumbling noise backstage. FALL re-enters dressed as a Mexican revolutionary representing “la raza.”

LA RAZA: La raza está contigo, mano. Sigue luchando. (He also joins the ranks around the FARMWORKER. One final gigantic rumble from backstage. With snow spilling over the flats, WINTER enters with a vengeance.)

WINTER: ¡Llegó el lechero! And my name ain’t Granny Goose, baby! Money, give me money! (He charges toward the FARMWORKER and is repulsed by the CHURCHES, LA RAZA, and the UNIONS who shout “No!”) That’s what I like, spunk! (He tries again and is repulsed a second time.) God damn!!! (He tries one final time, making himself as big and as frightening as possible, but he fails again. He asks them.) Who has money? (CHURCHES, UNIONS and LA RAZA point at PATRON and shout: “he has.” With a gleeful shout, WINTER assails the PATRON, demanding money. The PATRON pulls out money from all of his pockets, wads and wads of it, until he runs out.) More!

PATRON: That’s all I have!

WINTER: More!

PATRON: I don’t have any more. Except what I have in the bank. (With a savage look in his eyes, WINTER takes a step backward and gets ready to leap at the PATRON’s throat. The PATRON is transfixed with fear. He is unable to move until WINTER grabs him by the throat and drags him D.S.C.)

PATRON: But I don’t have any money.

WINTER: Then freeze to death! (WINTER kicks and beats the PATRON and pours snow all over him. The PATRON shivers and looks up toward the CHURCHES, UNIONS and RAZA.)

PATRON: Help me!

UNIONS: (With RAZA and CHURCHES.) Sign a contract!

WORKER: ¡Firma un contrato!

PATRON: (After a pause.) All right! (UNIONS hand the FARMWORKER the contract and the pencil. The FARMWORKER comes forward and hands them to the PATRON. In panic, DON COYOTE comes around and kneels beside his boss.)

COYOTE: No, patron, don’t sign! I’ll be out of a job. I brought you wetbacks. They’re communists. Nooooo! (The PATRON signs the contract and hands it to the FARMWORKER who looks at it in disbelief.)

WORKER: $2.00 an hour ... rest rooms in the fields ... vacations with pay ... GANAMOS!!! (The FARMWORKER’s supporters give out a cheer and pick him up on their shoulders and carry him out triumphantly. The PATRON crawls out on his hands and knees in the opposite direction. DON COYOTE tries to sneak out with the crowd, but WINTER catches him.)

WINTER: Ah-hah! Winter’s got you!

COYOTE: (Bluffing.) Winter? Hah! Winter’s already past! (WINTER slaps his forehead stupidly. DON COYOTE laughs and starts to walk out. Then suddenly WINTER snaps his fingers as if realizing something.)

WINTER: The fifth season! I’m the fifth season!

COYOTE: What fifth season? There are only four!

WINTER: (Tearing off the top layer of the sign hanging from his neck, revealing a new sign underneath.) ¡La justicia social!

COYOTE: Social justice? Oh, no! (WINTER kicks DON COYOTE offstage, then turns toward the audience.)

WINTER: Si alguien pregunta que pasó con ese contratista chueco, diganle que se lo llevo la quinta chin ... ¡¡¡La quinta temporada!!! (Exits S.L.)