

PEPITA TALKS TWICE

Pepita was a little girl who spoke Spanish and English. "Come, Pepita, please help us:" people would say. Everybody called on Pepita to talk for them in Spanish and English. And she did what they asked without a fumble. Until today. Today she didn't want to help anyone. She wanted to get home before her brother Juan [HWAN]. She wanted to teach their dog Lobo a new trick. She wanted to teach him to fetch a ball. But if she didn't hurry, Juan would teach Lobo first.

She ducked behind the fence as she went by her neighbors' house, but not low enough. "Pepita," Miguel called and said in Spanish, "my mother wants you to talk on the telephone in English.

Please tell her what the man wants." Pepita did what Miguel asked. But deep inside of her the grumble grew larger. And when she went into her own yard and found her brother Juan teaching Lobo to return a ball, the, grumble grew so big that it exploded. "If I didn't speak Spanish and English," she burst out, "I would have been here first!"

Pepita raced by the grocery store that belonged to Mr. Hobbs, but not fast enough. "Pepita," Mr. Hobbs called. "Come speak to this lady in Spanish. Tell me what she wants!" Pepita did what Mr. Hobbs asked. But deep inside of her a grumble began. She tiptoed by the house where her Aunt Rosa lived, but not softly enough. "Pepita," her aunt called in Spanish. "Come talk to the delivery

man in English. Tell me what he wants!" Pepita did what Aunt Rosa asked. But deep inside of her the grumble grew.

That night as Pepita lay in bed, she thought and thought. By morning she had decided what she would do. She slipped out of bed and tiptoed by Lobo, who was sleeping on the floor. She hurried into the kitchen, where her mother was cooking breakfast and Juan was eating. "I am never, ever going to speak Spanish anymore," Pepita said loudly. "That's pretty dumb," Juan said. "My, oh my, Pepita. Why?" her mother asked. "Because I'm tired of talking twice." "Twice?" her mother asked. "Yes! Once in Spanish and once in English. So I'm never going to speak Spanish anymore."

Juan took a bite of tortilla and grinned. "How will you ask for enchiladas and tamales. . . and tacos with salsa?" he asked. "They are all Spanish words, you know." "I will find a way:" Pepita said with a frown. She hadn't thought about that before. After breakfast, Pepita kissed her mother, picked up her lunch box, and started to school. Outside, she put her lunch box down and closed the gate to the fence, but not tight enough. Lobo pushed the gate open and followed at her heels. "Wolf:" Pepita scolded, "Go home!" But Lobo just wagged his tail and followed her to the Corner.

Mr. Jones," Pepita said to the crossing guard, "will you please keep Wolf for me? If' take him back home, I'U be late for school." "I'll walk him home when I'm through," Mr. Jones said. "But , thought

his name was Lobo?" "No," Pepita said. "His name is Wolf now. 'don't speak Spanish anymore. "

"That's too bad," said Mr. Jones, picking up his red stop sign. "' thought it was a good thing to speak two languages." "It's not a good thing at all, Mr. Jones. Not when you have to speak twice!"

At school her teacher, Miss Garcia, smiled and said, "We have a new student starting today. Her name is Carmen and she speaks no English. We must all be as helpful as we can." Miss Garcia looked at Pepita and said, "Pepita, please tell Carmen where to put her lunch and show her where everything is." Carmen smiled at Pepita and Pepita just wanted to run away and hide. Instead, she stood up and said, "I'm sorry, Miss Garcia, but I can't. I don't speak Spanish anymore." "That is

really too bad," her teacher said. "It's such a wonderful thing to speak two languages." Pepita mumbled to herself, "It is not a wonderful thing at all, not when you have to speak twice!"

When Pepita walked into her yard after school, she found Lobo sleeping on the front porch. "Wolf, come here!" she called. "Wolf, wake up!" But he didn't open an eye or even wiggle an ear. From the sidewalk behind her, Juan shouted, "¡Lobo! ¡Ven acá!" Like a streak, Lobo raced to the gate and barked. Juan laughed and said, "Hey, Pepita, how are you going to teach old Lobo tricks if you don't speak Spanish?" "I'll find a way," Pepita said with a frown. She had not thought about this either.

Pepita's neighbor Miguel was on the sidewalk

bouncing a rubber ball. His brothers and sisters were sitting on their front porch singing. When they saw her, they called, "Come, Pepita! Sing with us!" "I can't," she called. "All of your songs are in Spanish, and I don't speak Spanish anymore." "Too bad," they said. "How will you help us sing at the birthday parties?" "I'll find a way," Pepita said with a frown. This was something else she had not thought about.

At the supper table, Pepita's mother told everyone that Abuelita, their grandmother, was coming the next day. "Abuelita says she has a new story for Pepita." Juan laughed. "Abuelita tells all her stories in Spanish. What are you going to do now?" "Nothing," said Pepita. "I can listen in Spanish." "¿Que pasa? ¿Que pasa?" Pepita's father said.

"What is going on?" . Pepita swallowed hard. "I don't speak Spanish anymore, Papa," she said. "Too bad," her father said. "It's a fine thing to know two languages." "It's not a fine thing at all," Pepita said and then stopped. Her father was frowning at her.

"She even calls Lobo 'Wolf!'" Juan said. "Wolf?" her father said, and his frown grew deeper. "Well then, Pepita, we'll have to find a new name for you, won't we? How will you answer to Pepita if that is no longer your name?" "I'll find a way," Pepita said with a long sad sigh. This was something she had never ever thought about before. That night when she went to bed, Pepita pulled the blankets up to her chin and made a stubborn face. "I'll find a way," she thought. "If 1

have to, I can call myself Pete. I can listen in Spanish. I can hum with the singing. I can call a taco a crispy, crunchy, folded-over, round corn sandwich! And Wolf will have to learn his name!" With that she turned over and went to sleep.

In the morning, when Pepita was leaving for school, her friend Miguel threw his ball into her yard. Lobo fetched it and dropped it at Pepita's feet. "You're a good dog, Wolf," she said. She put her lunch box down and threw the ball back to Miguel. The little boy laughed and clapped his hands. Just as she was opening the gate, he threw the ball again. This time it went into the street. Like a flash, Lobo ran after it. . "Wolf!" Pepita yelled. But Lobo didn't listen and went through the gate. "Wolf! Come here!" Pepita shouted. But

Lobo darted right into the street. A car was coming!

Pepita closed her eyes. "¡Lobo!" she screamed. "¡Lobo! ¡Ven acá!" Lobo turned back just before a loud screech of the car's brakes. Pepita opened her eyes in time to see the ball roll to the other side of the street. A red-faced man shouted out the window of the car, and Lobo raced back into the yard! Pepita shut the gate firmly behind Lobo and hugged him. "Lobo, oh, Lobo, you came when I called in Spanish!" She nuzzled her face in his warm fur. "I'll never call you Wolf again," she said. "Your name is Lobo. Just like mine is Pepita. And, oh, Lobo, I'm glad I talked twice! It's great to speak two languages!"