



Preview



Timeless Stories
of El Salvador

Spanish Mirrors







*You can always build bridges
where none existed before. All it
takes is imagination and the
courage to take the first step.*

DISCLAIMER

Most of this work is fiction. I adapted every story to an international audience using cultural intelligence.

In multiple stories, I provided some fictitious characters, dates, events, and locations as support to understand better the Salvadoran and Spanish contexts. Any resemblance is purely coincidental.

This work is not a history book, and no one should consider it as one under any circumstances. Only a few stories represent real people, events, or dates in history.

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A SHARED HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The stories gathered in this book were born in lands separated by an ocean, yet shaped by the same enduring forces: human nature, belief, migration, fear, loss, conquest, and survival.

Across cultures, peoples face the same fears and hopes, they often arrive at similar answers — even without ever meeting.

When Spain crossed the Atlantic, it carried more than language, culture, and faith. It also brought symbols, demons, moral lessons, and ways of telling stories. Once in the Americas, these elements did not remain unchanged. They blended with local landscapes, memories, and beliefs, slowly transforming into something new.

Until now, there has been little to remind us how much we share, even when the same language flows between us. These stories do not claim sameness, nor do they seek to erase differences. Instead, they reveal echoes — familiar fears, recurring symbols, and shared questions — shaped by different lands and histories.

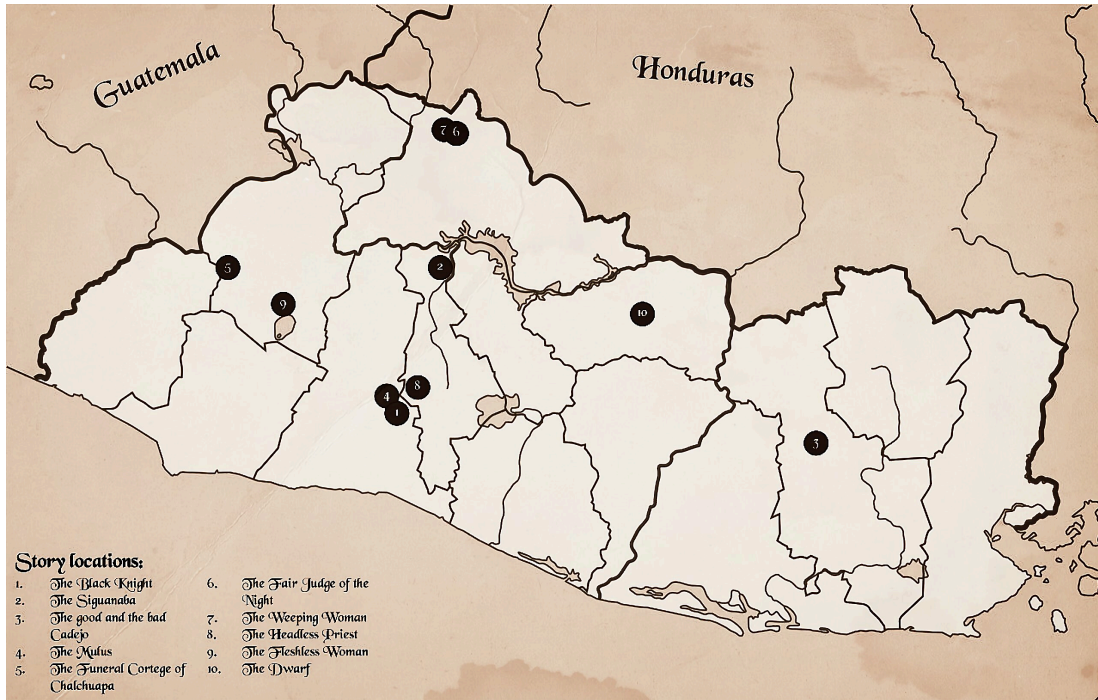
What endured were not identical legends told twice, but reflections: stories that look at one another across time and distance, inviting us to recognize a common human thread woven through both worlds.

Not because they share an origin, but because they were shaped by the same human questions.

Like an imperfect mirror, the world reflects back similar realities we often overlook — reminding us that, despite distance and difference, we are closer than we think.

STORIES MAPS

EL SALVADOR

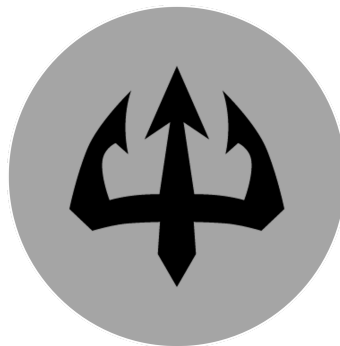


SPAIN



THE DEVIL

FIGURES OF TEMPTATION, CONTRACTS, AND
MORAL TRANSGRESSION.



THE BLACK KNIGHT

SANTA TECLA, LA LIBERTAD, EL SALVADOR



It was a dark and cold night in the middle of 1911. I was riding my horse near the old Guirola estate in Santa Tecla. That night was foggier than I had expected; I could barely see what was in front of me. I had lost track of time, but then I heard the Church of Saint Anthony's clock ringing. It was midnight.

On my way back, I noticed a spectacular light at the top of a hill not far from Guirola's cottage when suddenly, a black rider reared his black horse at a great speed next to me. I would remember that moment for the rest of my life because I had met The Black Knight!

Several myths surrounded the Guirola Family due to their immense wealth and power, which, according to legend, had been granted by The Black Knight. They belonged to an elite group known as *The 14 Families*.

It was clear to me that I had to escape from that place. I spurred my horse to run faster than ever. We needed to reach home. We could not stay here any longer! All legends say, "if The Black Knight catches you, you will never see daylight again!"

I tried to force my horse to run faster, but it seemed something was stopping us. The soil looked different, and for every step forward, we seemed to move three steps backward. I was desperate, and I recalled there was an abandoned ranch not so far from here. We went there to spend the night.

The next morning, I had a terrible headache, and all my body hurt. My horse also seemed affected. We waited until midday to go back home.

When I arrived home, my wife was crying and shocked as if she had seen a ghost. She sobbed, "Last night, The Black Knight was seen and kidnapped one of Mr. Guirola's sons. He was known as a good and humble man. I do not understand why this happened, and you were not here! I was scared he might have taken you too." Suddenly, she hugged me as if there was no tomorrow.

Until that night, I was quite skeptical about this old legend. However, I wanted to know more about it, so I went to visit Mr. José, an old sergeant from the Salvadoran marine. He did not live far, just next to the San Salvador Volcano. Most people said he had lost his mind after many bar fights and battles, but I still thought he was a good man.

When I arrived, he was sharpening his machete in front of his house, and he immediately said, "Hey Juan! Long time no see. What brings you here?"

"Well, Mr. José, do you know what happened to Mr. Luis yesterday?" I asked him.

"If you mean Mr. Guirola's son, yes, Juan, I know. Unfortunately, his time came. It had been seven years since The Black Knight last visited them."

A shiver ran down Mr. José's spine, leaving him uneasy. He hesitated for a moment before continuing, "So, what about you? Did

you meet him?"

"Honestly, yes, yesterday I saw him while he was in their house, and I ran away. Now, I would like to know more about him. Do you know anything?" I asked.

"Hmm," Mr. José thought for a moment. "Well, it is an old legend. They say he is the very beast from hell. Are you sure you want to know more?" he continued.

"I would rather prevent something like that from happening to me, please tell me," I replied.

"Okay, I will tell you what I know. Please take a seat," began Mr. José.

In all the rural areas like Santa Tecla, poverty had been rampant ever since the post-Columbian era. Many people suffered from different illnesses and problems. Some people wanted to become wealthier faster in our society. They were just jealous of the oligarchs' wealth, and they wanted a shortcut to become as powerful as them.

One night, one of these envious men was walking back to his humble home when an elegant man on a black horse approached him and asked, "It is quite late. Do you need a ride on my horse?"

The poor man answered, "Definitely, that would be very kind of you. I am exhausted after work."

On their way back, the elegant man spoke to him for a while, claiming to be a kind of magician who could grant him anything he desired: wealth, happiness, a beautiful wife—anything at all.

The man was suspicious of the offer and asked, "Why would you give me anything I want if you do not know my name? What is the trick behind it?"

"Indeed, I can give you everything you have dreamed of, Miguel, and even more, but there is a small condition. After seven years of prosperity, I will come back and take you with me to another place. If you agree, I will give you everything you desire," the elegant man replied.

Miguel was shocked because the elegant man knew his name, but he did not know his. Terrified and uncertain, he agreed to think about it.

The two men continued riding in silence. After a few moments, the elegant man said, *"If you ever accept my offer, during the full moon, you must go to a secluded place, smoke a cigar, burn some chichipince incense, and say three times, 'Mr. Black, come and give me all that I want!'"*

After those final words, the elegant man left Miguel at his home and vanished before his eyes, as if he had never existed. Only then did Miguel realize that they had already reached his house.

The following months were extremely tough. Miguel lost everything because of El Niño. A severe drought destroyed his small plantation and everything around El Salvador. Also, he lost his job and failed to find another. He was hungrier than he had ever been in his life.

Miguel became angry and desperate because he could not find a solution to all his problems. His debts skyrocketed, and poverty spread throughout the entire country. However, one night, he remembered The Black Knight's words. He pondered for a few days, but in the end, his desperation grew too strong to resist. He followed the elegant man's instructions, invoking him in a lonely place near a river during the blood moon, saying aloud three times, *"Mr. Black, come and give me all that I want!"*

The Black Knight appeared as he had promised and asked, "So Miguel, what do you want?"

Seven years later, all had changed in El Salvador, a Coffee Oligarchy had been born, and it was a prosperous time. Miguel's life was full of happiness, wealth, mansions, servants, a beautiful wife, and everything he had always dreamed of. He was part of the oligarchy, but he had forgotten that he had advocated The Black Knight seven years ago.

One night, an elegant man came to Miguel's estate and requested his presence. One of the servants went inside and informed Miguel

about the visitor. Miguel turned pale and started trembling like a leaf. Instead of facing him, he ordered his servants to protect him and throw the man out. However, The Black Knight was the true devil, and he effortlessly broke through the servants, entered Miguel's estate, and took his soul—making Miguel the first documented victim.

During the following years, more and more people made deals with The Black Knight out of jealousy or because their lives had turned bad. Their dreams of wealth or ambitions to recover everything were more powerful than the fear of bargaining with their souls.

And as always, after they had invoked The Black Knight, he appeared in a black whirlwind as an elegant rider dressed in black riding his powerful steed, granting them everything they desired. The next morning, villagers nearby could always smell burning wood and sulfur. This unmistakable scent became a clear sign of his presence.

As you could guess, Juan, The Black Knight's real business is to exchange people's souls for wealth, power, women, happiness, everything you want in life. However, the curse is not only for the person who invoked him, far from it—it extends to the next seven generations, binding them to the deal and ensuring their misfortune continues.

"And that is all that I know, Juan," said Mr. José, concluding his story.

Juan was scared and only replied: "Thank you for sharing your valuable knowledge, Mr. José. From now on, I will be more careful every night when I return home late."

After Juan left, Mr. José muttered, "Hopefully, you will not be so careful!" Then, he vanished from his cabin, looking for new souls.

THE CAVE OF SALAMANCA

SALAMANCA, CASTILE AND LEÓN, SPAIN

INSPIRED BY WIKIPEDIA'S VERSION



It was early autumn when I arrived in Salamanca. My mother had always warned me not to move so far from Cartagena, but I never listened to her.

I rented a small room near the cathedral while I looked for work. Anything. In those days, everything was still cheap — or at least cheap enough that someone like me, with no plan and little money, could get by without too much trouble.

The owner — an older man with watery eyes and a limp in his left leg — rarely spoke. But the first night I arrived, he gave me two warnings.

First, not to stay out past midnight.

And second, never — *under any circumstances* — to enter the cave beneath the old Church of Saint Cyprian.

He said it plainly, almost like a line rehearsed too many times.

I assumed it was superstition.

Over the next few days, I tried asking what he meant, but each time, he shut down. His body tensed. His hands fidgeted. Eventually, he refused to even say the word *cave*.

One night, in a tavern not far from my accommodation, I was talking over cheap wine with a local bookseller. I asked if he had ever heard of “the cave beneath the church.”

His face froze, just like the tavern owner’s.

“You mean... the Circle?” he asked cautiously.

The bookseller cut the conversation short. “If you are looking for part-time work,” he said, “come by the shop tomorrow morning.” Then he left — abruptly, like a man who had just seen a ghost. A moment later, the tavern’s owner announced he was closing early and asked me to leave.

That was all the temptation I needed. But now, I also had a job waiting for me.

In the following days, I began inspecting the ruins of the old Church of Saint Cyprian after work. I wandered through alleys and courtyards, trying not to look suspicious. One afternoon, the local priest approached and asked what I was doing. I did not answer — just walked away.

It was a weekend when I spotted a peculiar entrance — half-hidden, carved into the stone. Something about it felt unmistakable. This had to be the place.

I approached slowly and saw that it was not locked. I opened the gate and descended cautiously. With each step, the air grew colder, heavier — as if the world above were sealing itself off. The sounds of the street faded until there was nothing left. I just hoped the priest was not down there. Maybe he used it to store wine.

At the bottom, I found a stone chamber — crypt-like, breathless. The kind of silence that presses against your skin and makes your own heartbeat sound too loud.

In the center of the floor, there it was: a perfect circle of black marble. Not chipped. Not cracked. Not even dusty.

It was too clean. Unnaturally so.

Suddenly I heard a strong voice from behind.

"You are not from here, are you?"

I turned.

A man stood behind me — tall, sharply dressed, wearing black gloves and a tailored coat, looking like an important professor. I had not heard him approach. I had not sensed him at all.

His Spanish was nearly perfect. He even pronounced *Madriz* instead of *Madrid*, trying too hard to blend in.

"You seem a little lost," he said, his tone more curious than accusing. "And perhaps... looking for direction."

I did not reply, but it felt like he had read my mind.

He glanced toward the black marble circle, then back at me.

"I am looking for one more student. The seventh. The others have already joined."

"Joined what?" I asked.

"The Circle. An old tradition. A course, if you like. My family has kept it for generations. We meet once a week — always at midnight, always here. Seven students, never more. We do not advertise. We do not recruit. But now and then... someone appears who feels ready."

I hesitated. "What kind of course?"

He smiled — small, restrained. "Divination. Alchemy. Perception. Influence. Things you will never find in schools — but that can shape lives. The tuition is time. Seven years. One evening per week. No money, no contracts, just commitment."

Something in the way he said it — smooth, rehearsed, too familiar — made it feel more like an inheritance than an invitation.

“And after seven years?” I asked.

His gaze returned to the marble. “Then the cycle closes. The Circle decides. A new one begins. I do not accept new students once the course has started. There is one spot left. If you want it, you have until tomorrow since there is another candidate. I will give the place to whoever shows up first.”

I did not know what to say. I just nodded slowly and turned to leave.

But as I reached the stairs, his voice followed me through the silence.

“I hope you make the right decision,” he said. “And if you join... you may call me *Professor*.”

I returned the next morning, just before noon, convinced I was too late.

As soon as I reached the place, the Professor stood beside another man near the edge of the marble circle. He wore a grey coat, black leather gloves, and had the kind of gaze that measured everything before speaking. I almost turned around.

But then the man in grey spoke.

“I have thought about it,” he said, his voice firm. “And I will pass, but thanks for your offer.”

The Professor did not argue. He simply inclined his head, like closing a book.

The man in grey turned and left without another word. We did not even exchange glances.

I stood still for a long moment, unsure if I had just witnessed an ending... or the beginning of something else.

Then the Professor turned to me and asked,

“So, what is your decision?”

I hesitated only for a moment. Then I said, “I accept your offer.”

The Professor gestured toward the seventh chair.

"A wise choice. We meet tonight at midnight. You know the rules: seven years. One evening per week. No exceptions. We never speak of it outside. And when it ends..."

He let the words hang in the air, and smile.

"You will never be the same."

I nodded.

The first year passed quietly.

The lessons were strange — filled with things I had never seen or even imagined before. It is hard to describe everything we did. There were mirrors that did not reflect quite right, exercises in tracing stars by memory, and rituals that felt more like riddles than magic. But the most important rule was: Never teach someone else what you had learned.

By the second year, something shifted.

María — a widow from Zamora in her late fifties — started selling *green remedies* from a quiet stall on the outskirts of town. People came from neighboring villages. Her reputation spread fast: arthritis, night terrors, chronic sadness — María had something for everything. However, she grew quieter. Her hands trembled when no one watched.

Álvaro, the youngest of us, started reading fortunes in a café near the river. At first it was a joke — he used coins instead of cards. But people began to return. Some swore he had warned them of miscarriages, breakups, betrayals, and even a winning Christmas lottery number. However, once he predicted a fire that killed a family two streets over. After that one, he stopped laughing. He barely slept. His eyes always seemed half open, as if still dreaming.

And then there was the son of the Marquis of Villena.

He was the best among us — by far. He could read entire pages of a book he had only glimpsed. He brewed shimmering potions that seemed to whisper when uncorked. Once, during a lesson, he drew a symbol that made another student fall unconscious for an hour.

The Professor did not even scold him. Just smiled faintly and erased the mark.

The Professor never compared us openly. But it was obvious that he was his favorite.

I was certain he would become something far more powerful and famous than any of us.

I was a late bloomer. My herbs wilted. My circles smudged. My visions showed nothing but fog. But the Professor never mocked me. He just observed — patient, focused, as if he already knew something I did not.

Without his quiet encouragement, I might have tried to leave the Circle altogether.

Then, one day, everything changed.

One rainy afternoon in a tavern, I read a traveler's hand. I do not know how I knew — but I told him about a scar he had gotten in El Aaiún in the Spanish Sahara.

And then, almost without thinking, I warned him about a decision he would regret by the end of the month... unless he called his lawyer that very night.

He went pale.

Left the table without saying a word.

The next day, he came back with a bottle of wine and a question:

"Do you do house calls?"

I told him I did not since I still lived in a single room, but if he was comfortable, I could pay him a visit.

I told myself it was harmless.

But after that day, the visions came uninvited. I saw old women's deaths as they asked for love advice. I felt betrayals before clients finished their sentences. Sometimes, even without touching anyone, I caught fragments in glass reflections or the corners of mirrors. It was frightening.

It did not feel like a power. It felt like an infection that had finally taken root.

The seventh year arrived faster than I ever imagined, and the final night arrived without warning.

We gathered in the chamber one last time — the seven of us, seated in our usual places. The professor stood at the center, just as he always had. But there was something different in his eyes that evening. Not colder... just final.

He waited until we had all arrived, until the last echo of footsteps had vanished.

"This is our last session," he said.

No lesson. No ritual. Just the truth, at last.

"You have all done well," he said. "Better than anyone I have trained. You've honored the Circle."

A strange warmth spread through us — like pride, or maybe relief.

Then the professor raised a hand.

"But there is one last step."

He snapped his fingers. A plain table appeared at the center of the marble — with a roulette wheel carved into its surface. Seven slots. Seven names. Ours.

"This is not a trick," he said. "This is the price. The Circle was never free. One of you must remain."

We stared at him in disbelief.

"I do not understand," Álvaro whispered.

"It is tradition," he said simply. "A soul for a cycle."

The doors sealed behind us with a metallic thud.

María stood up and tried to force them open. Nothing moved. The Circle had made its decision: the game must be played.

We looked at each other. None of us wanted to believe it. None of us wanted to lose. It felt like an evil joke.

But we sat. We spun.

Every turn felt longer than the last. Every time the wheel stopped, someone held their breath — and someone else wept in silence. With each spin, the room grew colder.

The Professor watched in silence. He never intervened. He never smiled.

One by one, the names disappeared from the wheel. Until only two remained. The son of the Marquis of Villena and me.

We stood across from each other, the wheel between us.

I gave it one last spin.

This time, it felt heavier — slower — as if even the wheel hesitated to decide.

When it finally stopped, the room fell utterly silent.

I had won.

The doors behind us creaked open.

For a moment, no one moved.

Then the Professor spoke.

“You may go.”

We ran — as if the walls might collapse behind us.

I was the last to leave.

The son of the Marquis called out — desperate, pleading — but no one stopped.

I turned back for a moment, but a wall of fire had already risen between us. The Professor had sealed the way.

I knew I had to go.

As soon as I crossed the entrance, the doors closed behind me — silent, final.

Years passed.

I confessed everything to a priest and swore never to play games with the Devil again.

He said I was lucky — that most do not walk away with their soul intact.

I settled in Murcia and became a hairdresser, trying to restart my life.

For years, my life was quiet. Then, one late afternoon, as I swept the floor and prepared to close the shop, a man entered. I recognized him, it was the son of the Marquis of Villena. He asked for a haircut.

We spoke for a long time as old friends. He told me that, at the very last moment, he had managed to cast a spell and escape. But the Professor — who was, in truth, the Devil — had taken his shadow instead.

He said he felt it the instant it happened, as if something essential had been torn away. His wealth evaporated soon after, just as quickly as it had come.

“But I kept my soul,” he said softly. “That must count for something.”

When he left, the shop felt colder than before.

Sometimes, late at night, I still think of the Circle beneath Salamanca — spotless, waiting.

And I wonder who sits in the seventh chair now.

And whether the tavern owner had escaped as well... because I remember that he, too, cast no shadow.

CONTRASTS & SIMILARITIES

Aspect	The Black Knight	The Cave of Salamanca
Primary location/s	All across El Salvador	Cave beneath the now-lost Church of Saint Cyprian, Salamanca, Castile and León, Spain
Historical Context	Early 20th century; rise of coffee oligarchy	Late medieval / early modern Spain; academic city
Narrative Frame	Oral testimony passed between villagers	First-person confession and memoir
Central Figure	The Black Knight, an elegant demonic rider	The Professor, a learned devil in disguise
Form of the Devil	Horseman dressed in black, sulfur and fire	Scholar-teacher, refined and restrained
Social Environment	Rural poverty and inequality	Urban intellectual

	ambition	
Primary Temptation	Wealth, power, status, prosperity	Knowledge, influence, perception, mastery
Targeted Individuals	Envious or desperate commoners	Curious, ambitious students
Method of Pact	Explicit bargain for the soul	Implicit contract disguised as education
Ritual Entry	Invocation during full/blood moon with incense	Voluntary descent into the Circle
Duration of the Deal	Seven years	Seven years
Cost of the Pact	Soul of the individual and their lineage	One soul per cycle
Transmission of Evil	Curse extends seven generations	Cycle renews through sacrifice
Supernatural Signs	Smell of sulfur and burning wood	Perfectly clean marble circle, sealed chamber

Role of Knowledge	Knowledge is irrelevant; desire drives the pact	Knowledge is central and corrupting
Role of Authority	Oligarchs protected by wealth and fear	Devil protected by tradition and secrecy
Community Awareness	Known legend, feared but repeated	Known rumor, spoken in whispers
Means of Punishment	Violent abduction of the soul	Forced participation in lethal ritual
Possibility of Escape	None for the original pact-maker	Rare, partial, and deeply costly
Aftermath for Survivors	Fear, silence, continued corruption	Trauma, confession, quiet exile
Moral Axis	Greed and inequality	Ambition and forbidden knowledge
Symbolic Role	Devil as engine of oligarchy	Devil as architect of elite power
Connection to Place	Estates, ranches, rural roads	Underground chamber

		beneath the city
Function in the Book	Salvadoran origin of power myths	Spanish reflection on intellectual temptation

FATAL LURES

TEMPTATIONS THAT DRAW THE LIVING
TOWARD IRREVERSIBLE ENDS.





*"It is easy to
see what
makes us
different. That
is why we must*



*open our eyes
wider to realize
how much we
share.”*

M. π

PART OF THE TIMELESS STORIES PROJECT

Spanish Mirrors is part of the larger Timeless Stories Project — a cultural initiative dedicated to preserving and sharing folklore.

TIMELESS STORIES OF EL SALVADOR: THE BEGINNING

A foundational volume collecting 31 traditional Salvadoran folktales, myths, and local legends translated into English for the first time.

TIMELESS STORIES OF EL SALVADOR: EPIPHANY

The second volume in a growing folklore project, expanding the collection with new journeys and tales drawn from Salvadoran cultural memory, touching on exploration, outsiders, and the meeting of distant worlds.

Readers and cultural enthusiasts interested in folklore, tradition, and the stories that shape our shared imagination may enjoy exploring these companion works.