

# Jubilados

by David Stea

## Characters:

Jack Johns

Harriet Johns (wife of Jack)

Bill Aristo (friend of the Johns)

Setting: Interior of a restaurant, with three chairs around a table, on which sit two bottles of beer

Bill

I'm so happy to be here in San Miguel, finally. So many years in Mexico City, and then, a short spell in Texas, and finally...retired! Isn't that the objective of every American, to reach retirement? Nothing you have to do, anymore! And I really love it here: I've even learned the Mexican word for retirement: "jubilado". Sounds so much better, being jubilated.

Jack

Well, we've been here for a few relaxing years, and found them to be sometimes a little too relaxing.

Bill

What do you mean? You can now do whatever you want. You're in San Miguel de Allende, the very best city in the world, according to that magazine, what's its name? You can walk the streets, visit old colonial houses and ancient churches...whatever you want.

We've been here for almost a month, made an offer on a house... a bit overpriced, but we probably have enough money to last a few years, until our social security kicks in.

Jack

We play a lot of golf, which you can do here. Some people see the big reservoir, assume it's a lake, and look forward to fishing.

Bill; So they do don't they?

Jack; Problem is, it's very polluted. You can catch some small fish, but not eat them.

Bill No matter. We have other things we want to do. Eventually we'll get to practice our golf swings. But until now, we've been too occupied with the details of moving. Want to have dinner together later this week? Look to be some interesting restaurants in the center of town.

Jack

There are, but you gotta watch out for the Aztec two-step...Moctezuma's revenge [laughs] Also, as you may already have found out, there's also a serious parking problem. So let's car pool.

Bill

Let's not and say we did. In Los Angeles we hate carpooling. After all, the idea of having a car is going where you want when you want.

Jack

Texans hate carpooling, too. When we got here, there were lots of Hummers, mainly from Texas...fewer now. Texans love their cars. In Texas some have several: town car, beach car, road car for distance travel, etc.

Bill ; What do Texans do when they retire?

Jack

They keep the road car so they can drive back and forth to Texas, which they do every couple of months. It's nice here but it isn't Texas.

Bill; Don't people ever get old?

Jack; Then they pay someone to drive for them.

Bill

I don't like that at all. In Los Angeles there's no-one we can trust, especially to drive our cars. Cars are so important to us, there. Like in Texas, I guess.

Jack

Same here with household help. Number one, they don't understand English. Number two they don't arrive on time. Ten, fifteen minutes late, always. I KNOW they're coming on the bus and then walking, but still...

Bill

I know, too. Also, in the tourist guides it says we don't have to understand Spanish because everyone – absolutely everyone—speaks at least a little English.

Jack

I don't know about that, but we had to fire our maid because she wouldn't learn to put salad on a separate plate. We told her several times but it didn't work.

Bill; Told her in Spanish?

Jack

No, in plain and simple English of course, which we told her slowly and loudly. She should have been able to understand that. She cried when she was fired; her daughter told us that she'd quit her other job to work for us, but we had to be firm in our decision.

Bill; How long have you been here?

Jack;

Just about five years. At first we enrolled in a Spanish class, an hour a day. But we didn't really learn much. We were mostly with our friends who didn't speak Spanish anyway, so it didn't take. We even wrote to the publishers of the tourist guide but never got an answer.

Touring around can be fun, but we've had some bad experiences. Someone recommended that we take the Copper Canyon train, so we did, and...

And HEEEEERE'S Harriet, the love of my life!

[Harriet enters and sits down]

Jack; What'd ya like to drink, sweetie?

Harriet; I hate margaritas.

Jack

That's because you never had a REAL margarita. It's why a straight tequila costs so much more than a margarita. It's made with better stuff. Like the stuff that passes for tequila in the states, it's rotgut. Real tequila has to say 100% agave azul, right on the label.

Harriet

Who knows. Who cares. I'll have a bloodymary, however you say it in Spanish. Why do we have to say it in Spanish, anyway. This is a restaurant, isn't it?

So, a bloodymary, then.

Jack; Done. Garkon! Or whatd'ya say here.

Bill; Joven.

Jack

Thanks. I think that I knew that but couldn't remember. Anyway I was about to tell them about our Copper Canyon train trip. You can do it better than I can, maybe.

Harriet

It was awful. First off, it was too long: ten tedious hours. Mostly, nothing but scenery. Who cares about that the Chihuahua ...

Bill; I love the Copper Canyon scenery...

Harriet

Suit yourself. To me, the object of travel is to get to the other end. it? OK? And when we got to the end there was nothing there.

Bill; But you weren't too far from the Pacific, if you wanted to stay a bit.

Harriet

I didn't. Some trip. On the way, we stopped for over a half hour to watch dirty Indians making some kinds of violins. Waste of time. After that it was bridges and tunnels, bridges and tunnels. And every car had a soldier, standing in the aisle like this.

[Harriet gets up and stands facing the others, rigid, as if at attention, her arms at her sides]

Bill; That's to protect the passengers just in case...

Harriet

In case of what? I don't care. It was scary. . Nobody on the train staff spoke English. Nobody. And it's supposed to be a tourist train? I tell you, never take that train ride. I sent a letter about it to that newspaper *Atencion*.

Jack. Sit down Harriet! Stop making a scene, a spectacle of yourself. Other people are looking.

Harriet; [angrily pacing around, then sitting]

I don't think I'll ever ride ANY train again! [voice raises even more, pounds on table]

Jack; Too bad. I wanted to take the tequila express out of Guadalajara.

Harriet

Go'head, count me out. Just gimme a car and show me the way to go home, like in the song: back to good ol' USA!

Bill

Why'd you come here in the first place? Of I mean, there are lots of places to retire, where even more people speak English than here. Nice places I'm told. As nice as San Miguel is, other places are cheaper than here. Mostly further from the USA, though.

Harriet

All Jack's decision. He wanted to retire and there was no place we could afford to retire in the USA except maybe inland Mississippi. A friend told him about this nice place: no very hot summers or very cold winters. Lots of Americans. And there WERE a lot of Americans.

Bill; Didn't that make this place even MORE attractive? EVER?

Harriet

Today I had breakfast with "the girls", as they call themselves. Mostly we talked about where to have lunch.

Jack; Did you enjoy that?

Harriet; Not very much.

Bill; So why do you go?

Harriet

I dunno, really. They started talking about going "home". Most now live here but none of them called San Miguel "home"; "home" was someplace back in the States. I couldn't ever call this place "home", either. [sniffles, takes out a handkerchief, begins crying]. But I want to go home! Mexico...just... doesn't... make... any... damn... sense!

Jack

Can't we just look on this as an endless vacation? We can be at the beach in just six hours, on the new highway.

Harriet; Jack, get the check.

It isn't a vacation. It's just retirement, a horrible word, stretching out forever into the distant future. Boring, boring, boring. Why can't we go live with our kids, as some of our friends are doing?

Jack {waving his arm in the air, to get the waiter's attention}

Those arrangements haven't always worked out so well. We can't afford to live where our working kids do. And our kids certainly don't have space for us.

Harriet

Stop being so damn reasonable. If you'd been willing to work a few more years, we would have had enough money to retire where the kids live.

Jack

When I started my last job I really liked it. But it got worse and worse until I really disliked what I was being asked to do. Remember? We talked about this; it wasn't as if we made any snap decisions.

Harriet

Well, you'd worked abroad and I hadn't. I didn't know what it was going to be like. Too strange for me. Figured I'd get used to it..or it would get used to me. Neither happened.

Jack; Well, this talk is discouraging Bill. After all, he's a newcomer.

Harriet

I'm not enjoying this. Think I'll go to the library...if you'll excuse me. More interesting people there.

Jack

OK with me. Enjoy yourself. There's a good lecture later this morning, about all the wonderful aspects of life in San Miguel. [he laughs]. Think you'll like it.

Bill; might go, too.

Jack; [smiling at Harriet] Where are the girls meeting for lunch?

**CURTAIN**