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## **Kikirikí**

### **Quiquiriquí**

By Diane de Anda

Illustrated by Daniel Lechon

Pinata Books, May 2004

ISBN: 1558853820

Hardcover: 32pp; \$14.95

Ages 4-8

From Pinata Books, Arte Publico Press's imprint for children based at the University of Houston, comes *Kikiriki/Quiquiriquí*, Diane de Anda's bilingual (English/Spanish) picture book for children ages 4-8. A wonderful choice for Spanish-speaking kids learning English, or for English-speaking kids learning Spanish, or for anyone with a fondness for happy endings, *Kikiriki* is the tale of a very special rooster and his two protectors, Marta and Celia. Abuela (Grandmother) intends for *Kikiriki*, purchased for fifty cents, to become the family's Sunday dinner, but the girls, watching "the sun throw specks of light across his beautiful shiny feathers," have other plans.

Daniel Lechon's lively illustrations are contemporary and detailed (right down to the running shoes in the closet and the curlers on Abuela's head), and warmly depict a devoted extended family. But children will particularly love his wonderfully exuberant *Kikiriki*, who, with his bright red comb, his "curly black fan" of a tail, and his sassy wink, looks as if the medium of paper can barely contain him, as if, should one of the bread crumbs the girls toss him happen to bounce out of the book, he would hop right off the edge of the page after it.

The subtext of this engaging tale is the affectionate teamwork of a close family. (It takes a village to save a rooster.) The girls immediately recognize *Kikiriki*'s true worth and try to keep him out of harm's way by feeding him "a half eaten corn on the cob, some tortilla chips, part of a hot dog bun" and hiding him in their closet. When that doesn't work out (*Kikiriki* greets the morning the way roosters will, with a boisterous crowing that wakes the whole household), Celia and Marta intercede for him. Looking into the tearful eyes of the girls, "Abuela and their parents [feel] the children's sadness. Suddenly Kiki [does] not look like Sunday dinner anymore." The adults' practical considerations are set aside, and Papa (available and involved and kind) transports the rooster to a new life in the country.

In de Anda's book, the cardboard box deliverance of one remarkable rooster reminds us that the love we give our kids, like seed sewn by the wind, sometimes comes up in unexpected places, and that when it does, we need to be glad for it and do everything we can to encourage its growth. Children need all the happy endings they can get, and de Anda knows that the most memorable of such outcomes are the ones children themselves (or the characters in their books) help create. Though there is barbed wire in the

background of the final picture of Kikiriki's new life on the farm, it looks like it's there to keep troubles out, the endless blue sky and the cornstalks, Kikiriki and his new girlfriend (and happiness) safe within: "Papa had only walked a few feet when he heard a shrill 'Ki-ki-ri-ki!' He spun around just in time to see Kiki give him a quick wink, then turn and take happy, dancing steps down the long rows of corn."

— Ann Stapleton