

THE GORDO* CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

An animated half-hour

TV Storyline by:

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*Based on characters by:

Gus Arriola

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List of Animated Characters

- Gordo A portly (Gordo means Fat)
Mexican tour guide in the
small village of San Juan
del Monte
- Tehuana Mama Gordo's housekeeper who
dresses in traditional
Mexican garb
- Trailing Arbutus Tehuana Mama's small boy
- *Florina A pretty Mexican girl.
Gordo is interested in her;
she is interested in
"intellectual" pursuits
- Dog Gordo's Mexican chihuahua
- Rooster Gordo's rooster
- Poosy Gato A mischievous cat
- Cucuracha A 'hip' cockroach
- Porfirio and Panchito Two bumbling earthworms
- Owl A huge yellow owl -- wise,
of course
- Bug Rogers An artistic spider, complete
with beret and goatee
- Canary A bird in his cage

Plus:

Various tour bus passengers and guests at the Christmas celebration

*Florina is the only character created especially for this story. All the others are the established cartoon characters that are featured in the United Feature Syndicate's GORDO Comic Strip. This strip appears in daily and Sunday papers across the United States and in some foreign countries. It has a readership totalling over 30,000,000 people.

It is Christmas Eve. The opening scene shows a Mexican village in animation. The village is festively dressed for the Christmas season. We see various illuminated churches and hear choirs singing Christmas carols in Spanish. Christmas music with a Mexican flavor is being played by a street band.

Gordo's rickety tour bus, "El Cometa Halley", bounces along cobbled streets. Gordo, a portly Mexican with small mustaches and a Guide hat, is at the wheel. The show's credits puff out of the bus with the exhaust smoke. The remaining credits show up on a street vendor's pushcart, painted on stucco walls, and in pools of water as the bus splashes along the street.

We cut to Gordo's stucco and tile house. His housekeeper, Tehuana Mama, an ample woman in ruffled native dress, is bustling around the tiled kitchen, putting the final touches on a table piled high with luscious refreshments. Dog, Rooster, Pig, and Poosy Gato, who also live there, are trying to stay out of her way. Although the woman cannot hear them, the animals are discussing Christmas and the fact that the humans have forgotten to put up the creche. They are disturbed that the people apparently have gotten so caught up in their mad rush of work and holiday preparations, that they have forgotten that Christmas is the celebration of the birth of the Saviour of the World.

They wonder when Gordo will get home. Dog says that he thinks Gordo will surely remember about the Nativity scene.

Tehuana Mama is explaining about "Las Posadas" to the little boy, Trailing Arbutus. Each night of the Christmas season, a group

of people pretending to be Mary and Joseph go to a different house and ask for lodging, but the "innkeeper" turns them away. On this night, Christmas Eve, the people will come to Gordo's house, and Gordo will throw the doors open to them for an evening of joyful festivities to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

That is the reason for all the preparations. Trailing Arbutus is only half-listening as he stalks a wary Poosy Gato. Gato finally leaps onto the window sill to escape the boy's attentions and to watch for Gordo's arrival.

Back at the tour bus, Gordo is finishing up his tour. He has a bus load of chattering American and Mexican tourists, taciturn Arabs, and Japanese with cameras. Suddenly Gordo sees a pretty girl in his rearview mirror. It is Florina, a girl he likes. Gordo hauls the creaking bus into a quick U-turn and follows along beside Florina.

"Hola, my lovely one," he tries, and is greeted with, "Oh, it's you, Lopez."

"I missed you Saturday when we were supposed to meet," says Gordo.

"We weren't supposed to meet, Lopez. I wasn't there. I don't enjoy soccer. I went to the musical concert," responds Florina.

Gordo stops the bus and leaps out with a bound and a flourish. He quickly asks if she is coming to the Posadas celebration at his house tonight and extends her a special invitation. The tourists follow him out of the bus and are a curious audience to their conversation.

Florina responds that she will not be coming. Christmas no longer seems to have any real meaning for her, she sighs, sadly. Instead she

will be spending the evening reading the book she is carrying. Gordo asks about the book. Florina explains that she is reading a story by the existentialist writer Kafka, who writes the story of a man who becomes a cockroach. Gordo asks what happens in the end of the story and Florina shrugges expressively.

"He is discovered by the maid who doesn't like cockroaches," says Florina.

Gordo quips, "Oh, a smashing ending." The tourists laugh, but Florina is annoyed and starts to leave. Gordo hurriedly asks to borrow the book. Florina is pleased and lends it to him. Gordo suddenly becomes aware of the milling tourists. He herds them all onto the bus and starts it up. He waves at Florina and calls, "Come over to Las Posadas tonight?", but she shakes her head no.

At home, Poosy Gato is asleep on the window sill and unaware that he is still being stalked by Trailing Arbutus. Before any of the others can warn him, the Arbutus has struck, and Poosy, grabbed by the tail, electrifies. To everyone's horror, Gato makes a frantic streak through the kitchen. Tehuana Mama's party goodies are the victims. Poosy Gato is banished into the parlor, and for good measure, Tehuana Mama sends the other animals out with him. The parlor is dark, and the animals' sad faces are visible in the diminishing wedge of yellow light as the door is firmly closed on them.

In exile in the parlor, a furious Poosy Gato ignores all the rules and curls himself up in Gordo's favorite armchair. The Rooster hops up in the window and announces that Gordo is finally home.

In the kitchen Gordo snags a treat from the table. After Tehuana

Mama reprimands him, she asks about his day. He says it was busy and he is tired. He thinks he will read awhile. Also he is concerned about his neighbor, Florina. She is not celebrating Christmas. Tehuana Mama suggests that maybe all she needs is to be reminded of the true meaning of Christmas. With that she turns back to the table and goes on about her preparations.

From the parlor Dog looks through the key hole, turns to the others and reports that Gordo is coming this way. Surely, now, the manger scene will be set up. Dog turns back to the key hole. This time all he can see is a huge belt, and both he and the others scatter back from the door just in time.

In comes Gordo. He takes little notice of the animals and heads straight for his favorite armchair. Gato, knowing that he is forbidden to sit in that chair, barely has time to jump behind the pillow as Gordo settles himself into the seat. All the animals look worried. Poosy Gato is surely caught this time. Gordo opening Florina's book and beginning to read suddenly looks up from the page puzzled, reaches behind his back and draws out a somewhat flattened Poosy Gato. In the silence, and holding their breaths, all the animals await the explosion. Gordo simply smiles at the cat, pats him and sets him down. The animals wonder what is going on.

What is going on is that Gordo is trying to read Florina's book. As he reads, he tries to arrange his face into a suitably intellectual expression, which soon changes to puzzlement, and then to boredom. Gordo closes the book and leans back in his chair. Soon

Gordo is fast asleep.

Gordo hears a voice talking to him. When he opens his eyes, he is astonished to see a man-sized cockroach standing before him. This cucuracha wears hip clothes, shades and carries a hand mike. The cucuracha calls him, "Brother," and Gordo moans, "Oh, no!" But when he holds out his arm, indeed, it is a bug's arm, and when he unhappily reaches over his head, he pulls down an antenna.

"I'm a bug," laments Gordo.

Cucuracha insists, "Not just a bug, friend. You're a cucuracha, the highest order in all bugdom, man."

That's a matter for debate," answers another voice from somewhere up high.

Gordo looks high up on the window pane and sees an extraordinary spider, with a goatee and beret, sitting in an elaborately woven web. Cucuracha introduces Bug Rogers, their resident spider-artist, and invites Gordo to meet the others. As Gordo follows the cockroach down from the armchair, he catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He sees a cucuracha with small mustaches, a portly girth, and a "Guide" hat balanced between two antennae. Gordo groans.

Gordo meets Dog, Poosy Gato, Rooster, and Pig. Everyone looks sad. It is obvious, they say, that the humans in this family have gotten so involved with their other projects that they are ignoring the true meaning of Christmas. Just look, they never even put up the Nativity scene.

"Well," says Dog, "I guess it is up to us."

Rooster pecks open the cupboard, and Poosy Gato tumbles out a

profusion of Camels, Sheep, Donkeys, Wise Men and Shepherds.

Forming an assembly line, all the animals carry Nativity figures to the table where the stable is set up. Cucuracha brings out his piano and plays. Everyone sings a joyful song during their procession.

All the animals push, carry or roll the figures to the table where Rooster hops up with each figure in his beak. Poosy Gato, after a caustic remark about the trouble he will be in if he is discovered on the table, starts putting each figure in its place. The song they sing ends with a great, happy finale as Mary and Joseph are placed in the stable.

As the song ends, Gordo finds himself on the window sill. He looks up and gasps. The sky above him is filled suddenly with two gigantic yellow eyes and a powerful, sharp beak.

"Who-o-o-o is the new guy?" asks Owl, as he opens the window and comes in. Gordo rests limply against the window pane, trying to catch his breath. As he looks out the window he sees Florina, looking a little lonely, leaving her house across the street.

Gordo looks thoughtful. Cucuracha joins him and asks, "What's wrong man?"

It's Florina, Gordo admits. He is concerned that she feels nothing about the Christmas spirit. The cockroach advises him to take action. So Gordo wrestles with a huge piece of paper and a gigantic pen and starts to write her a note, but he can't think of what to say. All the animals get into a discussion of the "human" condition and the problems of this world. Humorously they discuss everyday problems and theological solutions. Dog admits that

sometimes it's a dog's life all right. Poosy Gato who is still disgruntled by all the trouble he has had today, says it is hard sometimes to turn the other whisker. After all the animals suggest what to put in the note to Florina, Owl suggests reminding her simply of what Christmas is all about.

So Gordo scratches out a brief message. All the animals read it, nod and smile.

Then Cucuracha helps Gordo fold the note -- and fold it and fold it and fold it, over and over -- until it fits like a sword into Gordo's belt. Thus armed, Gordo sets forth into the world to deliver his message.

To get to Florina's house, Gordo must cross a busy street. The other animals see his plight, and they come to his aid. They sing about their journey, and together deliver the message to Florina's door. Gordo rides home in triumph on Dog's back.

Back home, Owl points out a problem. There is no Baby Jesus in the manger of the creche. Then they remember that the figure of the Baby Jesus was put away after last Christmas in a special drawer high up -- up, up up at the very top of a tall cabinet. How will they ever get it down?

Gordo takes charge. They release Canary from his cage. Canary, Owl and Bug Rogers, who agrees to leave his spinning for this, (he is working on something very important) work together to lower the Baby Jesus from the top drawer. The animals place the Christ Child in the manger. Owl says that He is the greatest gift that the world has ever known.

Gordo, however, is in trouble. The parlor door has opened, and a shaft of light falls on him. He sees the huge form of Tehuana Mama advancing on him, he is discovered, he is doomed, he closes his eyes and with the words of the story about the maid crushing the cockroach in his ears, he waits for the folded newspaper to fall...

He wakes up as Gordo, the man. Tehuana Mama is shaking him.

The Posadas procession is coming down the street. Hurry and get ready, she insists and rushes back to her preparations in the kitchen. Still groggy, Gordo opens the front door and waits for the procession. He hears the beautiful Posadas song -- asking for lodging for Mary and Joseph -- from down the street.

Florina is walking down the same street. She passes the Posadas procession and goes into her house. She shuts the door but can still hear her neighbors singing the Christmas song. Looking somewhat sad and lonely, she crosses to her full bookshelf to find something to read. Then her eyes fall on a rectangle of paper just inside the door. She picks it up, unfolds the note and reads, "John 3:16."

Puzzled and curious, Florina locates a Bible in her bookshelf. She opens to John and reads, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Florina looks at the words thoughtfully for a moment, and hearing her neighbors joyfully singing outside, closes the Book and goes quickly out the door.

At Gordo's front door, the Posadas procession asks for lodging for Mary and Joseph. Gordo, as the innkeeper, sings for them all to

come in. As the smiling people crowd in, Gordo is surprised and delighted to see Florina with the others. She smiles at him and comes over to talk.

Gordo gives her back her book with the cockroach story in it and says that, frankly, he didn't think too much of its message. Florina nods slowly. Christmas reminds us, she says, that the message of Christ's birth is what matters.

The guests are pouring into the kitchen, and Florina follows them out. Suddenly Gordo thinks he hears Florina call, "And thank you for the lovely note, Lopez."

The note? Gordo, alone in the parlor with the animals, scratches his head and looks around. The note! Could all that really have happened? But it was a dream, that's all. The Nativity scene has been set up. No, not the animals, they couldn't have. It's impossible. It must have been Tehuana Mama, right? It must have been. She set up the creche and sent Florina a note while he was napping. Yes, that's the answer, right?

Just at that moment a bright star breaks out from behind the clouds and sends a glimmering shaft of light through the window. For an instant in the bright light Gordo sees what Bug Rogers has been weaving into his web. Sparkling in the brilliant starlight are the words, "For unto Us a Son is Given."

Gordo looks around slowly at his animals. His eyes rest on the Nativity scene. In the starlight the manger with the figure of the Baby glows in the darkness. Gordo looks at the figure of the Christ Child and bows his head. In the semi-darkness behind him, the animals

look on quietly. We hear church bells tolling from off in the distance.

Then his guests start calling him from the kitchen. Gordo goes to the window and looks again into the web, but this time he cannot make out any words. He backs away quickly when he gets too close to the spider. Gordo starts for the kitchen. He stops by Dog, and slowly and clearly speaks to him. Dog sits quietly with a dog-smile on his face and looks up at Gordo.

Gordo looks around at the animals and concludes, "Tehuana Mama set up the creche while I was asleep, right?" But he concludes, "You know what? I'm not going to ask."

He leaves the parlor. All the animals share a long meaningful look with each other and smile.

The closing credits are woven into Bug Rogers' web. Behind the web we see scenes of the Posadas festivities. Next we see the people going into their churches. The church bells ring joyously, announcing the Saviour's birth. The final shot holds on the Nativity scene as the final notes fade away.

--THE END--