

Chico and Rita: A Graphic Novel Adaptation by Elías Ramos



IN CUBA, SOMETIME IN THE EARLY 2000s, AN OLD MAN NAMED CHICO HEARS A SONG ON THE RADIO. IT REMINDS HIM OF HIS PAST, AND HE STARTS TO REMINISCE...



IN THE CUBA OF 1947, CHICO AND HIS FRIEND RAMÓN ARE BARHOPPING. AT ONE BAR, CHICO ENCOUNTERS RITA, A BEAUTIFUL AND TALENTED SINGER. THOUGH HE DOESN'T GET HER TO JOIN HIM AND RAMÓN, HE'S INSTANTLY SMITTEN.

THE SAME NIGHT, CHICO AND RAMÓN GO TO THE TROPICANA CLUB. THE PERFORMING BAND'S PIANIST IS MISSING, THOUGH, AND CHICO IS ROPED INTO REPLACING HIM. CHICO IS AN EXTREMELY SKILLED PIANO PLAYER, AND WHEN HE SIGHT-READS IGOR STRAVINSKY'S "EBONY CONCERTO" AND PLAYS IT PERFECTLY, RITA (WHO'S ALSO AT THE CLUB) BECOMES ENAMORED WITH HIM AS WELL.



CHICO AND RITA LEAVE TOGETHER, AND CHICO INTRODUCES HER TO THE EMERGING MUSICAL GENRE OF BEBOP. SHE QUICKLY PICKS IT UP, DANCING AND SINGING TO HIS PLAYING. THEY THEN LEAVE AND GO TO CHICO'S HOUSE, WHERE THEY SPEND THE NIGHT TOGETHER.





BUT THE NEXT MORNING, CHICO'S EX-GIRLFRIEND JUANA, FINDS THEM TOGETHER. AFTER A FIGHT BETWEEN THE TWO WOMEN, RITA STORMS OUT IN ANGER AND REFUSES TO SPEAK TO CHICO.



WITH SOME URGING FROM RAMÓN, CHICO AND RITA GET BACK TOGETHER TO PERFORM A SONG FOR A RADIO CONTEST, AND AS THEY ROCKET TO FAME AFTER WINNING, THEY BEGIN A RELATIONSHIP.



RITA SOON GETS AN OFFER TO TRAVEL TO NEW YORK AND SING THERE, BUT SHE REFUSES TO LEAVE WITHOUT CHICO. CHICO, HOWEVER, THINKS SHE'S CONSIDERING LEAVING HIM FOR THE RECORD AGENT, RON, AND BLOWS HER OFF IN A DRUNKEN FIT.



DRUNK AND ANGRY, CHICO COMES HOME WITH JUANA, AND WHEN SHE SEES THIS, RITA DECIDES TO ACCEPT RON'S OFFER AND TRAVELS WITH HIM TO NEW YORK.



SOME TIME LATER, CHICO AND RAMÓN COME TO NYC AS WELL. CHICO PLANS TO GET A JOB PLAYING MUSIC AND FIND RITA, AND RAMÓN INTENDS TO HELP HIM, BY BEING HIS "MANAGER".



AT A HIGH-CLASS PARTY, CHICO FINDS RITA, WHO'S NOW AN ASPIRING MOVIE STAR. THE TWO MAKE UP WITH EACH OTHER, ALTHOUGH RITA IS STILL OBLIGATED TO RON.



RON SOON COMES LOOKING FOR RAMÓN, AND THEY MAKE A DEAL IN ORDER TO KEEP RON'S HOLD ON RITA: RON WILL HELP FINANCE RAMÓN'S MANAGEMENT OPERATION, AND RAMÓN WILL GET CHICO JOBS FAR AWAY FROM RITA.



FOR A WHILE, THE SCHEME APPEARS TO WORK, BUT BEFORE LONG, CHICO AND RITA RECONNECT ONCE MORE. THIS TIME, THOUGH, THEY GET ENGAGED, MUCH TO RON'S CHAGRIN.



AT RON'S BIDDING, RAMÓN PLANTS DRUGS ON CHICO AT A PERFORMANCE ON THE NIGHT BEFORE HE AND RITA ARE SET TO GET MARRIED. THE POLICE RAID THE VENUE, AND CHICO IS ARRESTED AND DEPORTED BACK TO CUBA, WHERE HIS PASSPORT IS CONFISCATED.



BECAUSE THE POLICE DON'T ALLOW CHICO TO CALL HER, RITA BELIEVES THAT HE HAS LEFT HER AGAIN. THAT NIGHT, AT HER SCHEDULED PERFORMANCE, SHE SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE RACISM SHE FACES, EFFECTIVELY RUINING HER CAREER.



DECADES LATER, AFTER HAVING GIVEN UP ON HIS MUSICAL CAREER, CHICO IS CONVINCED BY A YOUNG PERFORMER, ESTRELLA, TO PLAY FOR HER. THEY BECOME FAMOUS WORLDWIDE, AND WHEN THEY WIN A GRAMMY, CHICO IS ALLOWED BACK INTO THE US.



AFTER DISCOVERING THAT RAMÓN HAS DIED AND RON IS IN A NURSING HOME, CHICO FINDS RITA, WHO HAS WAITED FOR HIM FOR 47 YEARS. NOW, AS CLOSE TO EACH OTHER AS THEY HAD BEEN BEFORE, THEY WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS.