

First Lesson (Mother Tongue Series)

by Amanda Deo

My mother spoke to me when I was a child about strangers. Not to talk to them. Not to touch them. To keep my naughty bits inside my tights. To keep holding her hand. To stay within her reach. I used to see kids at the mall with those extendable "kid leashes". Like the ones made for chihuahuas. Like the ones made to squash a good story, you know, like the one where the kid runs away in Sears and hides beneath a clothes rack and mum goes crazy and calls the police. A story like that.

Thirty years later dad takes out cellophane peppermints from his pocket and extends his palm to me. My lips purse and begin to blubber. I almost kick him in the junk. I scream. I run home.

