

Only Temporary

by Francisco Nieto Salazar

It was the middle of May when I found out my teacher was screwing my mother. Suddenly it was all explained: the lengthy conferences, the mutual speed dial, the way they both seemed to know of my intimacies at school and at home, and of course, my shimmering grades. The worst part was how I found out, when that comeculos Renato passed around a note in class. It included a filthy diagram. The last one to read it was me.

They met once before, my mother said. Before my dad went to work in the tar sands up north. Sure it paid a lot, but he was away for months. He kept inviting us to move up there, but tar fields were not my mother's idea of home. And Canada was too far from Tijuana, her own ugly blooming hometown. We were fine where we were, she said, and the separation was only temporary, while he saved enough to buy us a house on the other side of the highway. The schools are better there, she liked to say.

Mr. Casarubias was my sixth grade teacher. He liked to read old myths, and showed movies every month as a reward and to keep us kids in line. When he first showed up at my door I nearly crapped my pants. I assumed it was to talk about the pens I'd stolen, and was half way to constructing a shameful defense in which I blamed my friend Oscar for the theft, when I realized he had been invited to dinner. My mother and him tickled each other with words. He was friendly with me and told me he was happy working at Jefferson Gardens. The schools are better here, he said. He came over often after that, always with some excuse or some gift. Mom would always let us go to the river alone on those days. Once he even took me to Water World and paid for a photo with Sitka the Orca. He didn't have kids of his own.

He might have made a good father, if I didn't have one already,

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living where winter is most stubborn, amongst men as crude as the sludge they squeezed from the sand. I'll come back next year, dad said every time. When he finally did come home, mom's heart was already trampled. Mr. Casarubias stopped coming months earlier.

He fell in love with a pretty young teacher who liked to read myths. A real puta-- my mother's words--not right for him at all. I was in eight grade by then, and too busy dreaming of my own little putas to care.

