

Cholo

by Fred Osuna

There was that time he decided to avoid the whole situation by getting off the bus early. He was now twenty miles from school at 7:30 in the morning, and he hitched rides far enough along the route so that he could walk the rest of the way. When he slipped into the classroom forty minutes late, he felt like a badass, not at all the sophomore who was bullied daily by the bandana'd cholo from Chula Vista, nor the awkward virgin who had to hide the obvious erection in his crotch with a Pee Chee.

The next day, he was emboldened, and addressed the cholo as he climbed onto the bus. "Que pasa, Juanito?" No one called that guy such things. He was feared. But by the time the cholo had grasped the new order, the driver was pulling into the school parking lot.

It went like this for another month, a standoff, with no confrontations beyond an exchange of glares. Then the sophomore got his license, inherited a used Chevy, and started driving himself to school.

Today, the Nova broke down on the freeway, smoke rising from under the hood. As he waited for the mechanic to arrive, the bus passed him. One terrified white face peered from the window, a frightened, trapped boy in a cardigan. Behind him was the glowering shade of the cholo, still raging, mouth nearly frothing, grabbing at the kid's lunch bag, ripping his school papers.

He didn't miss it at all.

