

Trophy

by Michael D. Brown

I've been working at this school for ten years now, but I don't imagine I'll still be here when they open the time capsule we buried up by the playing field behind the student center. I should be long retired by 2029.

I do, however, remember the day we were celebrating the school's twenty-fifth anniversary, when all the teenagers were trying to come up with items that they could spare in the present, but might want to see again in twenty-five years. They offered no-longer favored CDs, last year's cell phones, third-place trophies, team jerseys, played-out videogame cartridges, and the candy-colored miniature stuffed animals that all the girls had clipped on their notebooks that year.

That was the semester I taught the Terrible Trio English for a third time. I had those gum-chewing, wisecracking girls, and the four boys who'd passed through so many levels with them write essays to their children so they could tell them something from their youths.

Although I'd told them I didn't want to read their notes so as not to influence their content, Karla whispered to me that she would like me to read hers and correct any spelling or grammar errors because she didn't want to disappoint her child who would be twenty-four when the capsule was opened, whereupon she patted her belly and winked at me.

I glanced at Roberto, Carlos, Antonio, and Joaquin who were huddled over an iPod, and giggling like little boys, but Karla shook her head in the negative. She raised her eyebrows then, as if to ask how I could possibly consider her intimate involvement with any of those "kids."

She took the next semester off, and Teresa and Monica, who had been her cronies all through grade school, switched to a campus in another state.

Karla then returned and finished high school a semester behind the boys. Nobody ever remarked on her reasons for missing the whole semester just before graduation, and she never offered any opinions or commentary about the missing girls who had previously always accompanied her. She did, however, profess a great passion for English, saying she now realized how important it would be to her when she went into the working world, and, ironically, she regretted having handed over her basketball trophy to be buried two semesters earlier.

She came back to the school to visit some of her favorite teachers last month, and when she greeted me with an effusive kiss, she was carrying an infant whom I thought should be walking by now. When I made reference to that, she told me she'd miscarried Carlito. This was her second child, Alexis.

