

Forgiveness

by Miguel Lasala

Inside a restroom stall, Herbert Casey Jr. took a soggy roll of cash from his boot and placed a quarter of the wet bills into his wallet. He divided the rest into the three empty pockets of his blue jeans. Before paying for his meal at the cash register, he scanned the parking lot through the over-sized south facing windows of the diner.

In twenty minutes, a city bus dropped Herbert at the train station. He bought a one-way ticket to Atlanta then sat on a bench facing the parking lot. He chewed on a toothpick and waited undisturbed until two boys about thirteen-years-old rode up to him on their bicycles. They remained sitting on their bicycles with each a foot on the ground while they stole glances at him.

"It looks like rain," Herbert said while looking up at the sky.

The kids agreed. Then the one in green said, "Do you have a dollar you can spare?"

Herbert put his eyes on the kids for the first time.

"Yeah, give us some dollars," the other one said.

Herbert offered a few quarters to them.

"We can't use change," the one in green said.

"Well, too bad," Herbert said.

"We know you have money," the one in red said, "and we know where you got it."

"Is that right?"

"That's right, and we promise not to tell if you give us a hundred dollars."

Herbert stood up.

"We saw you on Eagle's Way early this morning," the one in green said.

"Yeah, we saw you breaking into a yellow truck on Eagle's Way," the one in red said.

"Well, that's funny. I wasn't on Eagle's Way this morning," Herbert Said.

When the boys saw that Herbert wasn't going to budge, they both started riding away and the one in red yelled back saying, "we're going to tell on you, you just wait and see. We'll be back."

Herbert watched the two boys ride south then walked inside to the ticket counter, checked to see when the train would arrive, and saw that it was on schedule. He reached for the quarters in his pocket and made a call on the pay phone.

"Where you been all morning, Hon?"

"Been busy."

"On a Sunday?"

"Don't think I'll be back anytime soon."

"When can I expect you?"

"I'm not sure to tell you the truth."

"Well. I'll keep something warm for you then."

In half an hour, the rain started to come down and everyone waiting for the train stared out of the windows of the train station as the rain smashed into the puddles that formed in the parking lot. One heavy set man began laughing loudly as the thunder started to boom and rattle the windows, and just when the electricity went out he yelled, "It sure as hell looks like the end of the world is coming. We all better get down our knees and pray for forgiveness before it's too late."

To that, the whole waiting area burst with a roar of laughter.

