

Regret

by Roberto C. Garcia

The pueblo, 2009

Rosa woke up startled from her nap. It had been days since any wind danced with the palm trees in front of her house and the sudden cool stirred her. She'd been dreaming about the beauty pageant again. That made five straight days of the dream. Why am I dreaming about that fiasco? She asked. Grunting and groaning she shifted in her rocking chair. Rosa tried but could not slide to her left buttock, the right one was numb.

"Old age is a bitch!" she cried aloud. "But when I was young I was a beauty." She swayed her head back and forth.

Another cool breeze whirled the dust and when she cleared her eyes to look at the road Rosa saw him. Still dressed in an immaculate white linen suit and leaning on a pearl white cane almost useless in his hand. Looking as though he would fall over at any moment he turned his head toward her. He smiled and Rosa noticed four gold teeth, his top and bottom lateral incisors. "Pupilo Durcál!" She yelled. "You stupid pendejo!" He limped along without another glance. Rosa suddenly realized her dreams all week were really omens.

The pueblo, 1945

At fifteen years of age Rosa Montez was the blossoming lotus of the pueblo. She was endowed with curves of race track proportions and a set of ripening bijangas that were cramped in her grandmother's borrowed bra. She was without a doubt the desire of all the boys in school and the dirty dream of every so called 'uncle' and 'cousin' in her family. The girls her age hated her and as is the case with haters they tried desperately to be her best friend. Most of the women who adored Rosa and sent her off on errands stopped when they noticed their husband's insistence on accompanying Rosa to the aforementioned 'errand'. Yet Rosa was humble and did not

care for all the attention she was getting. Her dream was to go to New York and be with her mother again. Her head was filled with stories of Broadway, block parties and street lights. She spent most of her time waiting for that letter from the government. The one that would read, "Your U.S. Visa has been approved."

Youth, however, is full of curiosity. In the pueblo there lived two girls; Ana Camarérrea and Nydia Barceló who bragged that they knew the secret of womanhood. At first, the other girls dismissed them as whores intimating it must have something to do with lasciviousness. The two co-conspirators assured peers of their intact virginity. And the girls of the pueblo became understandably curious. For a long time the two girls were sworn to secrecy. But after a few weeks someone hinted that Pupilo Durcál, playboy classico, was implicit in the secret. Rosa heard about the secret and at first dismissed it as gossip. But when Pupilo Durcál was implicated she thought about it night and day. Rosa knew she shouldn't waste time on such things but Pupilo, (sigh). It made her warm inside to think of him. No matter how many 'Our Fathers' and 'Hail Mary's' she prayed curiosity scorched her soul. She took her fire to Ana and Nydia. Youth, is also master of cruelty. And fate despite its philosophy is an unpredictable animal.

Pupilo Durcál discretely hunted Rosa with genuine intentions of winning her love. Despite his reputation, wealth and status he was smitten with her. Unfortunately for Pupilo Durcál he was the best catch in the pueblo. Dressed in white linen suits and sporting the gold of the Incas on his teeth all the girls adored him. Every girl he turned down (or gave the hot beef to, then ditched) had to be put on suicide watch. Were it not for his family's influence and power in the pueblo the secret service would have been needed to protect him from the parents of 'said' girls.

Ana and Nydia, exasperated by Rosa's inquiries were practically plotting her murder.

"Tell me the secret of womanhood please!" She would beg.

"Go and find it," they would say, "Ask Pupilo Durcál." But Rosa was terrified to be alone with a man. Her reputation might be ruined.

One day Pupilo Durcál saw Ana and Nydia talking to Rosa. Unbeknownst to him they were violently dismissing her:

"Estupida get lost, go throw yourself in the river." Rosa ran off in tears. Pupilo Durcál approached the two girls and immediately asked to know everything about Rosa.

When they scoffed he warned them:

"What if I tell everyone your little secret? Your games will be at an end." They told Pupilo Durcál that Rosa was curious about the secret of womanhood.

"It was just for fun," they said. But seeing him love struck stoked their cruelty. "She wants to meet you," they said. "Meet Rosa at the old shed by the mouth of the river where the tobacco roller makes cigars."

After, they found Rosa Montez and promised to confess the secret, but only in the old shed, by the mouth of the river, where the tobacco roller makes cigars.

When Rosa entered the shed there was Pupilo Durcál with his pants down around his ankles and a hard on like an Acrocomia Palm tree. Rosa squealed and the door, made of patchwork wooden boards, slammed shut. The midday sun penetrated the holes in the palm leaf roof and she could see all of him clearly. Just above a whisper, his gold teeth twinkling in the sun, he said, "this is my part of the secret, now show me yours."

To this day Rosa will tell you she doesn't know why she did it. Perhaps it was seeing the most desirous bachelor in the pueblo with his tentigo bobbing in midair. She couldn't resist him. She was in her mind and soul cognizant of the secret, lust. So she untied her skirt and dropped both skirt and bloomers to the ground.

"Dios mio," Pupilo Durcál cried. "That is quite the fuzzy peach you have there."

Now comes the cruel part. Ana Camarérrea and Nydia Barceló had informed most of the pueblo, via several well placed agents of

propaganda, of impropriety at the old tobacco rollers shed. So that, at the very moment Pupilo Durcál finished uttering the words, Rosa Montez's grandmother snatched open the door. Terror, horror, and deep emotional trauma are words too easily thrown around. Maybe if all these terms were combined we might approach the reaction of Rosa Montez, standing there, fuzzy peach exposed and half the pueblo gaping at it from behind her furious little grandmother.

New York City, 1948

Rosa hit New York like an international star. All the boys in the barrio were dumb struck. Party promoters invited her to the hottest night clubs and admission was always free. Musicians tried in vain to seduce her but no dice. Rosa was never seen alone with a man, ever. Even though she left that baggage in the pueblo Rosa had learned her lesson well.

One evening a friend of her mother came for a visit. A beauty pageant organizer named Ms. Myrna. She wanted the prize of Upper Manhattan, Rosa Montez, to be in the show. After many assurances and grandiose representations Rosa's mother agreed.

"You will be the envy of all those sorry little bitches," Ms. Myrna declared. Rosa felt the heat of cognizance again but it wasn't lust.

"This time," she said, "it will be something great. It will be all about me."

The hair styling and make-up took almost three hours. Rosa was a natural beauty but her beauty was no match for her mother's pride. The result was a sublime Rosa confident she would be the winner. Single file, the contestants went on stage and performed rehearsed Q & A's with the master of ceremonies. It must be noted that although Rosa can't remember who said it or why she definitely heard it. 'Doesn't the MC look like Pupilo Durcál?' The room began spinning. Her mother pushed her to the stage. The master of ceremonies held out his hand but Rosa only saw Pupilo Durcál, fathead extant and the pueblo mixed into the crowd laughing. She fled the pageant, knocking over tables and waiters as the stunned crowd ogled.

The pueblo 2009

She woke up in a cold sweat.

"Again with the dream," she cried. Those stupid whores Ana and Nydia, she thought. Pupilo Durcál must have deflowered them both on the spot when he showed them his secret.

"What does he do to me?" She moaned. "He takes away my dignity and my callousness." Rosa dozed off mumbling.

This time she dreamt of flying through the clouds. Higher and higher she went. Far off in the sky she could see the outline of a gate and a multitude of people. But she began to slow down and although she was flying her leg felt heavy. She looked down at it and saw Pupilo Durcál hanging from her foot. Ana Camarérrea was hanging from his foot and Nydia Barceló from hers. Hanging from Nydia's foot was the whole pueblo in a long chain. No matter how hard she tried Rosa couldn't let them go. And she descended slowly, cursing them all the way down.

