

THE GOOD KIND

by Jon Boilard

When I got back from Mexico she was pissed. She sat in a cold jail for six days because the drugs were in the house that was in her name. They put our kids in foster care. She got fired from her teaching job. Her old man drove down from San Pablo to bail her out. He called me a fucking pendejo. I stayed with Chapo until things cooled off.

She phoned me on my cell and said she wanted a divorce. And she was taking the kids. Over my dead body, but I didn't say it out loud. She called me a fucking drug dealer. She called me worse things than that. I let her give me an earful because I felt bad.

The truth is, I would never let her leave me. Not on those terms.

I told her to sit tight and not make any hasty decisions. Chapo let me borrow his Thunderbird and I floored it down 80. The kids were back home and they were excited to see me except for Junior because he was old enough to understand what was going on.

The others hugged my legs and Maria threw a frying pan at me. She'd been making my favorite papooses, and chicken and jamon and cheese spilled all over me along with hot oil. Chapo was always surprised at the shit I let her get away with.

I didn't want to hit her. Then she cleaned up and used the first aid kit where my arm was cooked. Junior got it from the bathroom. He was a studious and obedient boy.

Later I told Junior to watch the niños for a while so I could talk to his mother in private. He smart assed me because he thought he was a little man already. It made me proud of him but I still had to show him that he wasn't quite ready for that yet. Then he cried but it was the good kind of cry that doesn't really come out. And there was fear in his eyes but it was the good kind of fear that every son should feel toward his father.

There was rain on Mission Street. We fogged the windows of the Thunderbird with our words. I parked on Twenty Fourth near the BART station and McDonald's. There was a street musician banging bongo drums and a vendor taking a break from selling coconut palettas. He scowled with fat owl eyes and smoked half a cigarette.

She described how they strip searched her, humiliated her. As she spoke it was clear that they had been able to break her down, to get her to say too much, using the kids as leverage. I needed to know exactly what. Then I explained the consequences. She tapped on my chest with her closed fists until I'd had enough. Enough, I said.

She called me a fucking puto. She said she couldn't live this way anymore. I put my hand over her mouth. Hard at first, to shut her up so I could think, come up with a plan, and then soft and I worked my index finger around her perfect lips and the inside of her cheek that was already moist and warm, ready for me. She bit my thumb in a playful way and then she exhaled and put her wrists behind my neck and pulled me toward her.

Ah yes, I whispered, this is how it will always go.

Then she pushed me away like she was having second thoughts. Then she tugged at the beltline of my jeans and climbed on my lap and stuffed me inside her and we bumped up against each other for a few long minutes. Then her back arched against the steering wheel with the suicide knob. My face was on the flesh of her chest and the small gold cross she always wore. She smelled like the caramelized sugar you drizzle over flan.

Afterward we just sat there sticking to each other and breathing.

She said the worse part was that it was going on her permanent record. And she said that her old man and her tios and her four brothers wanted to run me out of town but I laughed and told her they didn't have the cojones for it. Not one complete set among them. She shot me a bitter sideways glance. She didn't like to hear it but she knew it was true. There are two kinds of men and I was one and they were the other. I told her she'd better talk some sense into them before they did something crazy and regrettable.

I had to get the car back to Chapo. She stared at the plastic dashboard. There was music. That rancheras shit that Chapo liked. He could be such a fucking wetback sometimes. But when the chips were down he was my carnal. Like for something like this. He'd take care of all the details so I would not get my hands dirty. I stroked her hair and called her my little salvatrucha. She smiled half a smile. I think she knew.

She asked me to come inside and say goodbye to the kids but I wanted to beat the traffic. That's what I told her. There was a moment of silence between us that hung heavy like a dusty old manta. Then she got out and held her jacket over her head and tried to dodge the drops that were falling faster now. Her wet skirt was clinging to her ass and she splashed in a puddle. Now when I close my eyes tight I can remember her just like that.

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