

Alba Delia Hernandez

MY SISTER

• • •

My sister has her feet against mine. Her toes are fat and long. Her legs are stronger than mine because she is six years older than me. We are playing footsie on the loveseat while my mother soaks her feet in hot water and watches her favorite TV novela, "Raquel." Raquel is a sexy woman who during the day is a saint and at night climbs out her window and then goes topless dancing in a bar. We are usually not up so late on a Wednesday, but tomorrow there is no school.

My sister pushes her feet against me so hard that my knees almost bang against my head.

"Okay, now stop," she tells me, "I don't want to play anymore."

I don't listen to her and push my feet against her.

"Lela, I told you to stop!"

I am having fun not listening to her and I push her so hard that she almost falls off the couch.

She stands up from the couch and leans over my face. Her eyes are so big. Her glasses are so thick. Thick like the magnifying glass my science teacher has. My sister is very ugly. There is yellow stuff around her teeth because she does not like to brush them.

“Listen, Lela, I told you to stop, if you don’t I’ll tell Mami about you and Freddie.”

She makes my stomach hurt and jaw tight. I am tired of her making me fix the bed and sweep and mop and then telling Mami that she did it. I am tired of her, “If you don’t do this, I’ll tell Mami . . .”

“Go ahead, I don’t care,” I tell her trying to sound like I mean it. In less than a second my sister turns around and tells my mother that she saw Freddie and me with our pants down. “Her panties were down too, Mami.”

My mother does not say a word to me. I hear the squeak of the vinyl covering on the sofa as my mom gets up. I look at my legs and regret wearing a skirt today. I never wear skirts, why did I wear a skirt today. I hear the jingling of metal and know that she is looking inside the closet.

I feel the belt against my back first. I leap up and try to hold the belt from hitting my face. But my mother is not after my face. She is after my legs. No, she is after what’s between my legs. The inside of my thighs hurt. *Sucia, fresca. Esta fresceria en esta casa no se acepta.* I am on my back and I use my feet to keep her from hitting my face. I know she is not after my face, but that is where I am scared she will hit me most. Mami never hits any of us in the face. If she hits us in the face we will lose our shame, that is what she always tells us.

“Mami, please, stop, stop hitting her.” I hear my sister’s voice crying to my mother and I hope that she gets hit too. Usually she laughs when Mami hits me. Usually I laugh when Mami hits her. But now she is holding Mami’s hand and crying. Mami pushes her off. She won’t stop until she’s beaten the sickness out of me.