



# **MS. MORALES REDEUX**

## **November 12, 2006**

Meanwhile, that cold wind has kicked up again, causing all sorts of ruckus among the dahlias who appear fated for certain winter destruction. Ms. Morales was crossing Santa Clara Avenue near the mini-cinema they put into the Old Mortuary with an armload of student papers, rewritten carefully by those students of Emily Dickenson who had lost their works previously at the corner of Webster and Pacific near the Taco Bell in a sudden contretemps only two blocks from Longfellow School.

Ms. Morales, a naturalized citizen from Manila and an instructor of English for some twenty-four years, possesses a fierce dedication to the language only

someone who has learned it from pandybat nuns and Shakespeare can possess. In truth, it is a commonplace that the best speakers of English are those to whom it has come secondhand from far better schools than will ever occur within our lifetimes in the US.

To our miserly system, Ms. Morales adds her mite of dedication, and a bit of genuine erudition, year in and year out, often paying for supplies out of her own pockebook of moths and old coins when the District lapses in its responsibilities.

She had a brother, but he died during the final days of the last Stupid War, as she calls it, but she keeps his photograph on the mantel. With others who have passed on. Otherwise, she has no family here.

Never married, except to the Bard and attending poets, she wears sturdy black shoes with heels that could stamp out a fire and a plain dress over simple hosiery from Ross. Mrs. Morales attends the services at Our Lady of Incessant Complaint with, well, religious seriousness and a hat devoid of ostentation, listening with careful devotion to the sermons from Father Guimon and meeting friend Fay Corpuz at the Filipino Community Center in Oaktown for tea and gossip and Bible Studies. Once there was the possibility of an affair between Ms. Morales and a certain Jose Villaflores and the Community Center and during that time rumors flocked throughout the Center like pigeons, but this Villaflor moved to Modesto and nothing came of it and the rumors died all like pigeons who had eaten poisoned nuggets.

Mindful, this time, of potential loss at every streetcorner, Ms. Morales is crossing Santa Clara to the bus stop, intending to employ the extravagance of taking the bus to the school -- for the second time, having safely transported the essays to home from school one time already -- for usually she walks the nine blocks or so from her rooms to Longfellow. And she has those precious essays clasped tightly to her chest in a grip that would defeat Satan himself should he dare assail this bastion. For she knows how hard they have worked each time, only to have their work go sailing away into the winds.

Poor Ruben Silgado labored long for his handwritten copy -- his family cannot afford a computer. And Sarah Ni'Eniskerry, who has the classic complexion of a red-headed lass who cried and cried in Ms. Morales' office the first time because her father, an ironworker on the Bay Bridge project, was so strict. And the second time she said nothing, but the bruises on her face told much about that life. All of their stories she knew well, for she made sure to know them and their parents, although she kept her own professional distance and never attendened any of those holiday invitations, as such a thing would not be proper. It would indicate favoritism, you see.

And there, in the intersection of St. Charles Street and Santa Clara, a dirty white car with a pro-Bush bumpersticker almost ran her down, bumped her thigh in fact, but she kept her hold on those precious papers even while the driver screamed like a baboon at her for being there after his entry into the intersection, accompanied by language not appropriate for this space and not for most of

civilized society as well with references to heritage and family origins that were not very nice, no not very nice at all.

But still she kept hold of those papers.

Mr. Peepers, mindful now of electrical wires, scampered in his squirrel-manner up the telephone pole. But, still, she kept hold of those papers.

Bear, coming up on his Harley Davidson, noticing a pedestrian in the intersection, brought his coughing Harley to a halt, when it abruptly backfired.

But still she kept hold of those papers.

Unfortunately, someone had rammed the side of the St. Charles Apartments far down the block with their Cadillac. The driver, an elderly man, mistook his accelerator for the brake while backing up in that tiny illegal parkinglot owned by Ace Hardware and so knocked down the fence and punched a hole into the wall of the apartment garage, maintained -- in a manner of speaking -- by the once respectable firm of Hanford-Fraud of Babylon who had let the building fall into significant disrepair on the Island. We are, after all, not high priority, it must be admitted. HF had hired a couple fellows who had been recently released from Villa Fairmont Mental Hospital to keep up the building, and so things there were not so great. A number of Norwegian woodrats fled the broken wall in dismay, taking their belongings with them.

The rats would have fled under any number of buildings on St. Charles except a family of raccoons had managed to secure all the available accomodations there. This was not exactly the best quarter of the city.

In any case, the Caddy punched a hole in a wall infested by rats and several of these went down St. Charles. And it was the family of rats from St. Charles crossing through the intersection which startled Ms. Morales into throwing up her arms and jumping onto the hood of the dirty white car owned by the screaming baboon. Which caused his language to become even more intemperate as the rats ran by.

At this moment the pernicious wind took hold of those papers and scattered them -- for the third time -- high above the treetops and Ms. Morales wailed in despair.

Now we have Ms. Morales, a kindly schoolteacher, standing on the hood of an automobile. We have a screaming imbecile in a car beneath. We have traffic stopped in both directions on Santa Clara. We have rats streaming down St. Charles. We have student papers flying into the air. We have Mr. Peepers gazing at all of this from the relative safety of the telephone pole.

All was not well that day on the Island on this particular corner and things failed to get better.

Bear leaned over, put down his kickstand and trundled in his own particular way across the intersection to the dirty white car where the inhabitant was calling Ms. Morales something comparative to a female dog.

Bear, wearing his tattered leather vest and greasy t-shirt offered his arm to help the weeping Ms. Morales down from the hood of the car. He then stepped to the driver's side of the car and what happened next could not have been anticipated by anyone. Bear reached through the window and grabbing the man

by the collar hauled his head and torso through the window. Bear then reared back his right arm and solidly brought his fist down into the face of the driver, breaking his nose, as noted by subsequent police reports.

"Be respectful to ladies" said Bear, and he walked away.

The driver of the dirty white car bled upon his steering wheel. His companion howled in the seat next to him. Bear calmly watched Ms. Morales reach the curb where another driver -- an obvious friendly -- approached her, before driving off on his motorbike.

The other driver was Mr. Benito Ramirez, a distinguished man with white sideburns and a concern about her welfare.

She was concerned, even at this point, about the essays, even after being nearly run over by a maniac, screamed at and nearly devoured by a legion of rats.

Mr. Ramirez offered to drive her to a nearby coffeeshop where the two of them discussed the proceedings and what to do.

The driver of the dirty white car was arrested in the meantime for obstructing traffic. A serious offence on the Island.

Mr. Ramirez presented the problems as follows: The students had diligently written on the subject three times, and they have been well taught, therefore they all deserve the highest grade for effort, for diligence and for attention.

In this, Ms. Morales was well pleased. She could not bear a fourth series of essays on the same subject and there remained the Symbolists for this Quarter.

"Ah, predecessors to Rimbaud and Baudelaire." Said Mr. Ramirez.

Not quite, but the conversation went long beyond the subject. Accuracy is not important under such circumstances, only a brief familiarity. We know this disturbs some of you, but that is just the way it is. And perhaps it were best we left this couple and returned to them some nine months hence. It does seem nine months is average for things to ...digest.

As for the essays, they floated high above the trees on the wind and were dispersed to all directions. Some wound up in the estuary where the robotic arm extending from an Iranian submarine seized some of these before gliding out undetected through the Golden Gate. The Iranian Secret Authority remains puzzled by Emily Dickenson, and many translators have been set to work on the project within the Hall of Exemplary and August Revolution. Many translators in Iran have found this particular work to be of engrossing interest and several government analyses are expected. It seems this particular project will take some time.

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