

The Torn Heart

One Tuesday morning, when the alarm clock rang, Pedro did not get out of bed. Twenty minutes later, his older brother Carlos pounded loudly on his door. “You’re such a lazy lump,” (RIP) he said. “Get up. You’ll be late for school again.”

“But I’m sick,” Pedro said.

“Why do you always act like a baby?” (RIP) Carlos said. “Get out of bed! The bus will be here any moment.”

Pedro quickly put on his clothes—reaching for the first thing he could find—and went to the kitchen to grab something to eat. “Grab an apple and go,” his mother said. “If you weren’t so lazy (RIP) you could have had a decent breakfast. Sometimes I think your father is right; you’re never going to amount to anything.” (RIP)

Carlos stormed out the door, leaving it to slam in Pedro’s face. (RIP)

“You wait for Pedro,” their mother said.

“That loser,” (RIP) Carlos said. “I don’t want to even be seen with him. Do you see what he’s wearing?” (RIP)

The boys made it to the bus just in time, with Pedro following behind his older brother. But as the doors of the bus closed and it started rolling, Pedro remembered he had left his homework in his bedroom.

Pedro asked the bus driver if he would wait while he went back to get his homework. “What are you, kid, crazy? (RIP) This isn’t a taxi. Anyway, that’s what you get for being late.” (RIP)

When Pedro got to school, he told his English teacher that he had left his homework at home. She said, “That’s the fourth time this month, Pedro. Have you really been doing your work? I’m beginning to think you’re lying. (RIP) You know, I had your sister and she was such a better kid than you are.” (RIP)

Pedro liked to play sports but he hated gym class, where he was the smallest of all the boys. And to make it worse, in his rush in the morning he had forgotten his gym clothes and had to wear something from the lost and found box. That day, they were supposed to play basketball, which was Pedro’s very worst sport of all. The teacher asked the kids to divide themselves into two teams, the Lions and the Tigers. Within a few minutes, there were ten boys on each team, with only Pedro left. (RIP)

The captain of the Lions team said: “We don’t want him—he’s no good.” (RIP)

“He’s no Tiger. He’s more like a scaredy cat,” (RIP) said the captain of the Tigers. And the other boys laughed and meowed. (RIP) “Look, he doesn’t even have real gym clothes,” another boy said. (RIP) “Yeah (sarcastically), you’re looking mighty fine, Pedro. NOT.” And everyone laughed again. (RIP)

Finally, the teacher assigned Pedro to a team, the Lions. But he sat on the bench for the whole time because the captain never put him in the game. (RIP)

- Ask: How do you think Pedro is feeling right now? Why is he feeling that way? What might be the effect on him of being treated this way day after day?
- Reread the story and ask students to volunteer some “put-ups” for Pedro in place of the put-downs. Ask: How do you think Pedro would feel *now*, after hearing all of these put-ups? Can you think of other ways the people in Pedro’s life might have treated him differently?
- What are some reasons people might use such put-downs? What do they gain from it? Are there other ways they might gain that very same thing without hurting someone else?