

## “How Grammar School Is Changing”

In the early years all of the teachers were Nouns. They were very strict Nouns. They wore black robes that reached to the floor and had a fondness for caning the palms of your hands. In the beginning there was very little light; then a window was placed in the east wall of the school. The first Verb to enter the classroom through our new and only window was a Be. It was yellow and black and buzzed by my ear. One day Be walked vertically up the world map from Santiago to Santa Marta and stopped to smell the salt water. Thinking twice, it flew up to Florida and was eyeing Orange Country when my mean third grade Noun squashed Be with her big white reader. She said, “We only need one river in this town,” which didn't make any sense. It wasn't long, however, before more stuff started coming in through the windows (there were soon four) and through the new fire doors and down the chimney: Adjectives with big, bright, yellow and orange, polka-dot bow ties; Adverbs who yodeled longingly for their homeland; a Pronoun who wore cornrows with green ribbons (I confess I had my first crush on She); a family of Silver Brackets; Question Marks and Periods snowed down the chimney; and, finally, the Invisible Etceteras-pranksters that they are-started moaning sweet nothings in my Noun's ear, which made her grin a little, thank God. By the time I was in the fifth grade, after a vicious fight with the village elders, the principal had hired Dr. Miguel de Sustantivo to make the school bilingual: *y tú sabes lo que pasó después: vinieron las familias Adjetivo y Pronombre y Verbo y más y más. . . .* But yesterday a new little someone came from far, far away who sits sad all alone at lunch. Does anyone know a few words in Vietnamese? I would like to say Good Morning.