

PAULIE

Must be nearby. She's still in school.

TITO

Her old man is living in his car now.

PAULIE

You know, now that you say that, I saw a crazy guy in the park looked like him. He was sitting on a box eating garbage.

TITO

Stay away from him, Paulie. They think maybe he's got rabies in his balls, but they don't know cause they couldn't catch the squirrel.

PAULIE

That squirrel's like a fugitive, man.

Tito laughs.

TITO

Yeah, you got that right. (Sobers) Goes to show. A man's life can just blow up yo.

PAULIE

If you get bit.

TITO

Yeah.

START

PAULIE

That little Esperanza, she's cute.

TITO

Don't talk about her.

PAULIE

Why not? You in love with her?

TITO

No way. Look. I've got a troubled mind yo? I've been doing something really weird, and I don't know where to put it.

PAULIE

What?

TITO

I've been praying to her.

PAULIE

To who? Little Esperanza?

TITO

If you tell anybody, I will pull the plug on you, Paulie. That's a promise.

PAULIE

I won't tell nobody. Everybody hates me anyway.

TITO

Why?

PAULIE

Ask them.

TITO

Oatmeal's ready.

PAULIE

Ain't your mother cooking no more?

TITO

Not really. She sleeps a lot. A lot. It's the pills.

PAULIE

My mind is kind of blown you've been praying to a girl.

TITO

Yeah.

PAULIE

I mean, she's a ten year old girl.

TITO

So what? I'm ten. You're ten.

PAULIE

Yeah, but she's like a kid. I mean, do you get on your knees?

TITO

Sometimes.

PAULIE

Does she know you do this?

TITO

No. I mean I've only been doing the praying for a week. But now she's in some kind of custody or something.

PAULIE

You got sugar?

Absently, Tito dumps half the contents of a sugar bowl on Paulie's oatmeal.

TITO

Here you go.

PAULIE

Thanks.

They eat for a moment in silence.

TITO

Being ten is weird. It's like no man's land.

PAULIE

You got that right. It feels like black ice or something.

**END**