

# **El Zorrero and Son**

by  
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**E D U C A T I O N**

**1** PACO SOTO KNEW his dad was smart. In fact, Benito Soto was sort of a Sherlock Holmes about computers. Sherlock Holmes could track down any criminal from the smallest clue. In the same way, Mr. Soto could track down any “bug”—or problem in a computer program. Well, almost any.

No, Paco’s dad didn’t have any problems when it came to computer bugs. But real bugs—well, that was a different matter. Mr. Soto didn’t want anything to do with them. Or nearly anything else that swam, slithered, crawled, or walked on all fours.

The truth was, Mr. Soto wasn’t very *macho*. Oh, he wore nice suits and ties. But with his skinny body and soft voice, he seemed the kind of guy who was born to sit behind a desk. That’s why Paco nearly choked when his dad called him up one Tuesday and told him the news.

Paco had been watching TV when his mom called him to the phone. She didn’t frown when she handed it to him. That was good. It meant his parents hadn’t

fought over anything.

But they seemed to fight less and less anyway these days. Paco didn't kid himself about that. His folks weren't likely to get back together again. It probably just meant that any anger about the divorce was fading.

"Paco! How are you doing?" his father said.

"Hi, Dad. I'm doing okay, I guess."

"Say, I've got some great news for you," his dad said. "Guess who agreed to help with the field trip this weekend?"

"*You* did?" Paco asked, shocked.

"Sure I did. I thought it'd be kind of nice to spend time with you doing something different. So I'll be going with you this weekend."

Paco paused. "Dad, how'd you get involved in all this?"

"Mr. Ramos—that's his name, isn't it?"

"Yeah. He's our gym and rec. teacher."

"Rec.? Oh, recreational," Mr. Soto said. "Well, he sent a letter to parents. He asked for parents to chaperone kids

on weekend field trips. I returned the letter saying I might be interested. And he called last night . . . ”

“He talked you into it, huh?”

“Well, I wanted to do it,” his dad said.

“Did Mr. Ramos let you know where we’re going?”

Mr. Soto’s voice was at once filled with suspicion. “He said he’d be sending me a note today telling me everything I need to know. Why?”

Paco paused. “Well . . . we’re going to the mountains.”

“The mountains?” his dad said slowly.

“Yeah. You’re going to be a Tent Dad.”

“Tent Dad,” his father said. He thought that over for a long while. Paco could imagine him rubbing the red place on his nose where his glasses rested.

“Just what do . . . Tent Dads . . . do?” he finally asked.

“Mostly just watch so no one gets lost,” Paco explained. “And help set up the tents. Do some cooking. Pass out stuff. Make sure the kids don’t get hurt.”

“Hurt? Hurt how?” his father

demanded.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Paco weakly replied. “Starting a forest fire or something. Getting a bear mad at them.”

“Bear!” Mr. Soto exploded. “Mr. Ramos didn’t say anything about bears! Let alone camping out!”

Paco sighed. “To tell you the truth, Dad, I think he was having trouble finding parents to go on this trip.”

“I can see why! I think I’ll just give him a call. Tell him what I think about this trip of his. And if he won’t listen to sense, there’s always the principal.”

“Wait a minute, Dad.”

Paco thought fast. This would be the first year he’d decided to go on the camp out. He’d really been planning to have fun.

But how much fun could you have with your mom or dad right there? Right out there where your entire class could see them. Especially if your dad happened to be nervous about every animal on the face of the planet. Maybe it’d be just as well if the trip were canceled.