

NENA

BY NICHOLAS RODRIGUEZ

Y tu quien es?

Cuban coffee every morning.
Too young to understand
why you made it every day.
They say coffee helps the memory,
Right?

Parents sipping from a bitter obsidian lake.
The daily intake ceased.
Since no one makes it quite like you.
Or maybe fear blockades the port of espresso.

Memory faded 5 years ago.
Somehow, fading again.
This time
I'm at fault.
A new person in every old video.
That I find trouble remembering.

I remember you were a nurse in Cuba.
Wearing blue scrubs stained with coffee grease.
Of course, you couldn't work without it.

The last years accrued the highest toll.
Yet you paid the greatest price.
Forgotten existence is heart breaking.
What is worse,
an empty heart
or an empty mind?

Just 4 Spanish words.
Cut deeper than any novella you watched.
Never knew what you were talking about.
And every time you smiled.
It brightened up the room
giving semblance
that maybe you finally remembered.
But not once did you.

I disassociated with your memory.
A defense mechanism.
Turning a once Iced Cafecito into
a diluted drink left on the counter waiting to be thrown out.
And I'm left sitting in the backyard
under guava trees you picked.
But for some reason were never eaten.

Because while your brain filled with plaque.
You looked stronger than a bull.
It made me forget.
That your time was finite.

You couldn't recognize me
and that question became standard.
I wasn't your grandson anymore.
The memory of him is a pastime.
I was a stranger
Now you seem like one as well.

Every holiday, dad cooks pierna.
Not quite the way you made it.
We all can't be as good in the kitchen as you.
I should make some Cuban coffee for my parents.
Paying homage to you of course.

Plus, it's good for the memory.