

On the Day of the Dead

Poetry



by René Saldaña, Jr.

At the foot of his grave,
We spread out a blanket—
Rough but my Abuelo's favourite,
Still bright and colourful.

Abuela places
Their wedding photo
At the head,
Just under his name
Carved into granite.

'Amá lays down flowers and
His favourite coffee mug.
Next, Tio Ernesto sets
A plate and a napkin.
Followed by a string
Of us nietos and nietas,
Who bring the food and drinks:

Pan de muerto,
Mexican hot chocolate,
And for the grown ups
Café de olla.

We serve him first—
A piece of bread
And a steaming cup
Of coffee, a cinnamon stick
For stirring—

Then we whisper our messages,
Like we used to on his lap
Just last year,
And he'd whisper back
His sweet-everythings.
We sit and eat and think.

How we all miss him.

