

For Nana — Día de los Muertos

I grew up in her kitchen,
where the air smelled like fried chicken and conviction.
She believed in justice
like some people believe in prayer.
Her voice carried for the underdog,
and somehow it carried me, too.
She never babied us.
Instead, she handed us the world with both palms open —
here, she seemed to say, you can handle it.
Courage wasn't something she named,
it was just how she moved through a room,
how she laughed when things got hard,
how she always had refills ready —
ice cream, or Diet Coke, or love.
In the end, I got to give back a little.
I cooked for her.
I held her head in my hands and trimmed her hair,
slowly, carefully —
the kind of care that doesn't ask for anything back.
Those moments were ours alone,
a quiet rhythm of scissors and breath,
a soft exchange of memory.
Now, on this day when the veil is thin,
I set my ofrenda,
I share her stories,
and I hope she knows I remember.
That I learned what she taught me:
how to do right,
how to laugh,
how to love without keeping count.