

Día de los Muertos

Extract from a story by Shane Strachan

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My Auntie Mariana put her wedding ring on the altar. I was surprised she still had it because her and Uncle Johnny divorced a year ago. I caught Saul picking it up and looking at it. I wanted to ask him if he was confused like me, and if he thought it meant that his madre was saying she still wished to be married to his padre, or if it meant that she was giving the ring back to him for eternity. But I didn't ask because he looked like he was going to greet and I hate when people speak to me when they know I'm sad because it makes me feel like a bebé. All that Saul told me is that Uncle Johnny tried to phone Mariana the day he went to the beach and she just hung up as soon as he said hello – Mariana is a real *cabrona* sometimes.

Between the bowl of salt and the bowl of water, my padre placed a fancy bottle of tequila for his brother. It is his little joke I think to put it next to the salt, so I made it funnier for Uncle Johnny by hiding a lime between the bottle and the wall of the kitchen where we have built the altar. Madre will be mad if she finds it – she says that real Mexicans do not drink tequila with salt and lime, only *bobo* Scottish men like Padre and Johnny. If she finds it, I will say Uncle Johnny put it there. She will know it was me and she will skelp my *culo*, but I don't mind – I'm a big girl. I am almost Madre's size and one day she will be scared I'll skelp her back. She would be more mad at Nico if she knew he's been drinking the tequila and refilling the bottle with water. If he blamed that on Uncle Johnny though, she'd probably believe him.

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