PAT MORA

“Elena”

My Spanish isn`t good enough.
I remember how I’d smile
listening my little ones,
understanding every word they’d say,
their jokes, their songs, their plots.

*Vamos a pedirle dulces a mamá. Vamos.*

But that was in Mexico.
Now my children go to American high schools.
They speak English. At night they sit around

the kitchen table, laugh with one another.
I stand at the stove and feel dumb, alone.
I bought a book to learn English.
My husband frowned, drank more beer.
My oldest said, “*Mamá*, he doesn´t want you

to be smarter than he is.” I´m forty,
embarrassed at mispronouncing words,
embarrassed at the laughter of my children,

the grocer, the mailman. Sometimes I take
my English book and lock myself in the bathroom,
say the thick words softly,

for if I stop trying, I will be deaf
when my children need my help.