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.