**A Taste of Home by Monica Mendoza**

Every time my family and I visit tias, tios, y compadres, the first question we’re asked

“Quieres una coca?”

Send their children to the liquor store on the corner of the block, with two crinkled dollars and coins

rattling in their pockets

We laugh about who was passed out drunk at the last family fiesta and update each other about nuestra

familia in Guerrero, while sipping on carbonated poison

It just isn’t polite to not have soda when visiotrs are over

Reject it and you’ll be labeled as a malcriado

Accept everything that is offered to you

Coca, papitas fritas con chile, limon, y sal, los dulces Mexicanos que triamos de Mexico la ves pasada

We use sweets as a way of showing we care

Diabates and obesity is the last thing in our minds

Pansa llena, Corazon contento

Our heartbeats beat at the rhythm of cumbia, as mom cooks her sopes and enchiladas

It just doesn’t feel like a meal without that coke bottle

Without the gas bubbles drowning our noses and mouths

That gargling feeling that takes over our throats

Coke in glass bottles from Mexico

That gives us that taste and sensation of home

We think this possibly can’t hurt us without realizing we can’t even read the ingredients on the label

Forget that home is the number one obese country in the world and we’re here in the U.S. living up to

the same legacy

Walk into Mi Pueblo and stock up on this week’s special of four two liter coke bottles for a dollar

Throw in the cheap Tampico juices and sabritas for the kids to eat after school for the next two weeks

Mom and dad are too busy working 10 hours or more to limit the intake of junk food

No desperdieces la comida, eso me costo

Too busy trying to make a living than live healthily

Any kind of nourishment that keeps us moving

Even if we’re moving a bit slower than the rest of the world or struggling to complete everyday tasks

We are still moving, and that is all that matters

We’re desperately looking for home in our plates and cups

Dinner has become an expedition

Where we lick our plates clean and swallow cups of nostalgia

Nostalgia that isn’t even from our country

Our tongues have been colonized with the belief that this cup of coke is home

Forget that those before us only drank water

We are literally killing ourselves trying to find parts of us in a two liter plastic coke bottle

Dinner in Mexico was always cooked and served under the moonlight

But now we’re more than a thousand miles away, finally having that one hour we’ve been looking

forward to all day, family dinner

All the women call their children away from the TV

Coca Cola polar bear commercials playing in the background for the fourth time that hour

The clinks and clatter of plates and forks drown out all the commercials

The sound of laughter at childhood stories de Mexico fill up our bellies

We find home in each one of our stories

There’s no need to pull out that coke bottle anymore

There’s no need to almost kill ourselves, looking for memories of home.