

A Sonata For My Mother

by Dulce Maria Menendez

Because her mother died when she was five.
Because a child should not lose her mother at the age of five.
Because the nuns dressed her as baby Jesus.
Because she wasn't educated past the age of 13.
Because she had to stop going to school to work for her aunt's who
beat her and made her wear shoes which were a size too small.
Because she had to give up ballet.
Because she was a lion with green cat eyes and her tresses swept
past her round
face in the breezes of Havana.
Because she met my father at a bus stop.
Because someone forgot to tell her he was psychofrenic.
Because she was happy for three months before she found out.
Because she left Cuba for US(A).
Because she held my hand as we walked the streets in Miami.
Because she stopped driving after almost killing us in an automobile
accident shortly after arriving in Miami.
Because she almost broke her back hunched over a sewing machine.
Because she waited for my father to come home.
Because she waited for my father to come home again.
Because she waited for my father never to return.
Because she left my father.
Because she left my father again.
Because she returned to my father.
Because she loved my father more than me and my sister.
Because she called me hija.
Because she lost her mind.
Because she regained it after my father's death.
Because she wrote poems.
Because she listened to Rubinstein play Chopin over and over again.
Because she never said a bad word.
Because my sister was her treasure.

Because I was a daddy's girl.
Because she was a work of art.
Because her name was Salome and she carried the beheading of all
eternity upon her elegant shoulders as she turned her head to see
you as if for the first time.

And why does my mother listen to Chopin?
And why does the sonata bring her comfort?
And why is the sky blue? I asked her once.
Any why did she play Chopin to offer me an answer?
And why does my father leave us again and again? I asked her.
And why am I incarcerated in my own home so far away during this
pandemic without my mother?
Listen.
Listen.
Listen.
The sonata plays.
The phone rings.
It is someone from long ago who remembers my mother.
And why does my mother die on the day of the innocents?
Does Chopin have the answer?
I don't know other than at death as in the sonata
we play alone.

For Maria Salome Menendez Planes born October 22, 1932 and died
April 1, 2020.

