

Un mate y un amor by Lalo Mir

“Mate is not a beverage. Well, yes. It’s a liquid and it enters through the mouth.

But it is not a beverage. In this country no-one takes mate because they are thirsty.

It’s more of a habit, like scratching.

Mate is exactly the opposite to that of the television, it makes you chat if you are with somebody, and it makes you think when you are alone.

When some arrives at your house, the first phrase is ‘hello’ and the second: ‘some mates?’

This happens in all the houses. In those of the rich and those of the poor. It passes between chattering and gossipy women and it passes between men, serious or immature.

It passes between the elderly in geriatric homes and between the adolescents while they study.

It’s the only thing that they share, the parents and the children, without arguing nor throwing things in each other’s face.

Peronists and radicals fill mate without asking.

In summer and in winter.

It’s the only thing in which we think of each other, the victims and the executioners, the good and the bad.

When you have a child you start to give them mate when they ask for it. You give it to them a little lukewarm, with much sugar and they fell big. You feel an enormous pride when this little part of your blood starts to sip mate. Your heart will rise out of your body.

Later, over the years, they will choose to take it bitter, sweet, very hot, cold, with orange peel, with herbs, with a squeeze of lemon.

When you meet somebody for the first time, you take some mates. The people ask, when they aren’t familiar: “Sweet or sour?” The other responds:

‘As you take it.’

The keyboards in Argentina have the letters filled with yerba. Yerba is the only thing that is always in all the houses. Always. With inflation, with hunger, with military, with democracy, with any of our plagues and eternal curses. And if one day there is no yerba, a neighbour has and gives to you.

Yerba is not denied to anyone.

This is the only country in the world in which the decision to stop being a child and to start to be a man occurs on a particular day.

Before long pants, circumcision, university or living far from your parents.

Here we start to be grown up on the day that we have the necessity of taking, for the first time, some mates, alone.

It’s not a coincidence. Not because.

The day that a guy puts the kettle on the stove and makes his first mate without anyone in the house, in this moment, he has discovered his soul.

The simple mate is nothing more and nothing less than a demonstration of values...

It is the solidarity of tolerating those washed out mates because the conversation is good. The company is lovely.

It is the respect for the times to talk and to listen, you talk while the other takes it [the mate] and is the sincerity to say:

“Enough! Change the yerba!”

It’s the comradery in the shape of a moment.

It’s the sensitivity to the boiling water.

It’s the care to ask, stupidly, “is it hot enough?”

It’s the modesty of who prepares the best mate.

It’s the generosity to give until the end.

It’s the kindness of the invitation.

It’s the justice of one each.

It’s the obligation to say ‘thank you’, at least once a day.

It’s the ethical attitude, frank and loyal, of meeting without major pretensions other than sharing.”