

RICARDO PAU-LLOSA

NESSUN DORMA

“Nessun dorma” (None shall sleep) is an aria sung by Prince Calaf in the final act of Giacomo Puccini’s opera *Turandot* (1926).

The man in his fifties sits at the picnic table
asleep, his back to the wall of the building where music
is taught. I’ve seen him before. He is here to pick
up his son, a talented high-schooler capable

of college rigours. He is dozing, or simply shutting
his eyes against the summer that is fall
in Miami. I imagine him taking the toll
of his life, the pride in his son against the lot

of those universal anchors of pain and retreat.
But we cannot know, for he is no prince
in aria before dawn, on stage frantic
to expunge soul with purpose. The mysteries we read

are puppets we make of ourselves. The cave is dark,
so we turn it into projection’s fertile ark.