***Fernando Lyrics:***

Can you hear the drums Fernando?  
I remember long ago another starry night like this  
In the firelight Fernando  
You were humming to yourself and softly strumming your guitar  
I could hear the distant drums  
And sounds of bugle calls were coming from afar

They were closer now Fernando  
Every hour every minute seemed to last eternally  
I was so afraid Fernando  
We were young and full of life and none of us prepared to die  
And I'm not ashamed to say  
The roar of guns and cannons almost made me cry

There was something in the air that night  
The stars were bright, Fernando  
They were shining there for you and me  
For liberty, Fernando  
Though I never thought that we could lose  
There's no regret  
If I had to do the same again  
I would, my friend, Fernando  
If I had to do the same again  
I would, my friend, Fernando

Now we're old and grey Fernando  
And since many years I haven't seen a rifle in your hand  
Can you hear the drums Fernando?  
Do you still recall the frightful night we crossed the Rio Grande?  
I can see it in your eyes  
How proud you were to fight for freedom in this land

There was something in the air that night  
The stars were bright, Fernando  
They were shining there for you and me  
For liberty, Fernando  
Though I never thought that we could lose  
There's no regret  
If I had to do the same again  
I would, my friend, Fernando

Yes, if I had to do the same again  
I would, my friend, Fernando...

* *ABBA, 1975*

**Guillermo**

“When we’re all alone, living in a pause among the conflict, doesn’t it seem like the stars are shining for you and me?”

My question hangs in the air as Fernando stops playing his guitar and glances at the galaxy dancing around us.

“They’re shining there for liberty. We just happen to be here too.”

His answer fills me with hope. Fernando starts plucking at the guitar strings. They oblige, a lilting melody floating on the air around us. It’s a nice change to the roar of the guns and canons. My eyes follow the constellations twinkling in the sky. Fernando’s wise words, *they’re shining there for liberty,* echo in my head. I am part of the liberty, fighting for freedom in this land. Gulping down the rest of the whiskey, I glance at mi amigos [[1]](#footnote-1) face lit up with the glow from the embers.

“Big day tomorrow, Fernando. Do you really think we can do it?”

“I have no idea. I don’t want to die, but I don’t want our country to be trapped like this. No one knows what’s waiting on the other side of the Rio Grande, Guillermo. But we have to do it. We can’t let everyone down.”

“But, what if – “

My sentence is cut off by the sound of bugle calls and distant drums. Scrambling to attention, we search the horizon for a sign of humanity. We stand, stock still watching and listening as the sound grows. Every moment, every minute seems to last for an eternity but they don’t come near our small fire. Fernando sits back down, his eyes still shifting from left to right. He slumps back, trying to be brave, but I know he’s scared. Personally, I’m terrified. But, just like he, I can’t speak of the fear. Maybe one day, when we’re older, I’ll be able to speak honestly. But not tonight. I’m brought back to the present by the click of Fernando’s gun.

“We need to be prepared. I’ll stay on the night shift. Get some sleep, Guillermo.”

“If you think that I’m just going to sleep, while you stay up, you’re absolutely wrong. You’re my mejor amigo[[2]](#footnote-2). We will share the shift. Every two hours wake me. Ok?”

Fernando nods, a smile dancing on his mouth.

“Ok mi amigo[[3]](#footnote-3).”

I grumble myself awake. An intense itching rises from my legs; the mosquitos have had their fill.

“Fernando, I’m getting eaten alive here!”

“Then let’s move. We have to reach position 95-VG by midday. The others will be there and we can prepare for the advance.”

Our rifles dangle in our hands as we march towards the flowing, dangerous body. We have no idea what is waiting for us or how closely we could dance with death in the next night.

“Right men. We wait on the east side of the river.”

I tune out as el general del ejército[[4]](#footnote-4) explains the details for later tonight. I can’t concentrate. My mind is dreaming of Sofía waiting at home for me. She wouldn’t have heard from me for several months.

I remember the feeling of her pressing the photo of her into my hand the night before my departure. The evening glow filtering in from the kitchen window, lighting up her face, her dainty laugh bouncing around our house as she comments on my inability to fold the laundry. Such a simple act could always make her laugh. She came to me, her hands guiding mine as she taught me. *Mi amor, it’s a good thing you can keep the garden alive, you’re a terrible laundry lady.* I spun her round and we danced around the room laughing as the birds warbled in the last few hours of bliss. I mindlessly trace her words on the back of the photo in the sand. *Mi amor, mi vida, mantente a salvo*[[5]](#footnote-5).

Fernando rests a hand on my shoulder. He reads the words as my tears fall into the hole I’d made with the end of my rifle. He doesn’t offer any words of condolence, instead he just rubs my back. I swipe my tears away. Shaking my head, I fixate on el general[[6]](#footnote-6).

As the night rises and the evening becomes cooler, Fernando and I lie with our backs on the sand, talking between us as the rest of the men sit around the campfire, drinking themselves to sleep.

“Guillermo look, a shooting star of liberty! Los dioses[[7]](#footnote-7) have blessed us with luck and fortune for the journey ahead! They’re rewarding us for fighting for liberty.”

Talking late into the night, fear keeping us awake, we’re accompanied by the shooting stars, dancing above us.

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We crouch down low.

The cloud protects the moon.

The shrub protects us.

El general waves us forward, the command to cross before the defences know we’re here. Alejandro takes a step, then he starts to sprint. We follow suit. We run. The cold water hits us. A shiver tingles down my spine. I can’t see anything but the murky water. Then I realise. It isn’t the cold water that makes me shiver, it was the petrifying sound of Alejandro’s cries echoing in my ears. I can’t hear anything else. Horror-struck, I can’t move. My feet are firmly planted in the water, forcing me to watch as one by one, my camaradas[[8]](#footnote-8) get shot. Dead, lifeless bodies float past me. I’m so young and full of life, I don’t want to die!

Then my heart skips a beat. I’m pulled back to reality. The gunshots keep ringing in my ears. I’m terrified.

“Guillermo!”

I spin round to see Fernando lying in the water. I wade towards him. He’s lying on his back, and he sways with the water’s tide. *No. He can’t be shot. No!* Alejandro’s body washes up next to me. Then Juan’s. Then Eduardo’s. The tide brings them back. Back to their homeland. My eyes shine with tears. Fernando pulls me down to him. The darkness of death encapsulates me.

“Mi amigo[[9]](#footnote-9), lie low. They think they’ve got all of us.”

Fear washes over me as I pray to the gods that when I open my eyes, Fernando’s heart will still be beating.

After what seems like an eternity, Fernando slowly emerges from the murky depths. His thigh oozed red, the gleam of blood in the moonlight mocking my tears. Using our water logged rifles, we push ourselves up.

Trudging back to our original camp, Fernando, grimacing with pain, starts to hum. As we walk into the darkness, the stars dance to Fernando’s tune, reminding us to fight for freedom in this land.

1. My friend [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Best friend [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. My friend [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Army general [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. My love, my life, stay safe. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The general [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The Gods [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Comrades [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. My friend [↑](#footnote-ref-9)