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Loretta Gets Toreador Pants

Connie Wieneke

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Like Oni had known me all my life,
the first time he gave me yellow toreadors,
pants tight as spring buds, trimmed
with black ric-rac but flaring to open.
In Oni’s eyes and the Amoco mirror,
I liked the way his gift of painted skin
rounded my family’s tame thighs.
I was still green, at the center
stretching to prove my mother’s words right.
“Slut,” she’d said, and I was
“looking for Trouble with a capital T.”

When Oni spoke his name rolled between
lips and teeth, a sharp cinnamon breath mowing
my ready lawn. When he said my name
Loretta spilled out
a song I’d been wanting to hear,
a country I’d been wanting to see
explored. A dream picking me up,
he twirled me, a baton
over chainlink fences and playground swingsets.
He carried me into a bar,
whose silent faces yelled, “Hey, Wetback,
where’s your green card?” And Oni came back
at them, his pockets empty, hands and smile widening, *por favor. No preguntas*, if you please. Only the joke was on them. Hey, Amigos, he was not asking. I settled myself, the wings of his shoulders, thinking we could protect each other: a gold saint's medal to bless his skin, a thick brown song to cover my femaleness. *Que sueno* what innocence.