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Loretta Gets Toreador Pants

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Loretta Gets Toreador Pants

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.