

Too Macha

By Jackie Cuevas

When I was a boy—wait,
scratch that.

When I was a girl.

I must've been a girl.

The pictures seem to say so.

When I was a girl,
Mr. García next door said I shouldn't be so rough.

I wrestled boys like an alligator
taking down prey,
swirling them in the water
until they stopped yelping.

One Saturday morning,
my neighbor Rogelio
came over.
He jumped the chain link fence
that linked our backyards.

He challenged me to a strong contest.
Who could take the other one down first.

Rogelio's dad
came running for him.

We were just wrestling
like the big neighborhood boys had done
in the street
the day before.

But I was winning
with my girl arms
and long trenzas slapping in the wind.

Rogelio's dad
said:
stop that this instant, young lady!
I froze mid-grip,

my arm firmly around Rogelio's neck,
and said to Mr. García:
Stop what?

Rogelio wasn't allowed to play with me for a week.
After that we were only allowed to play board games inside his house.

Rogelio's parents would wander by the living room.
Rogelio's mom would offer us limonada.
Rogelio's dad didn't say anything and gave me the stink eye.

Rogelio and I
cracked each other up quietly with silly jokes.
We played Life and Sorry and Operation and Monopoly.
Not the actual gringo games, but the knock-off flea market versions.
They were called
Living, Jump, Oops, and Landlord.

Sometimes I tried not to,
but I always won.