# The Abuelita Poem

## By [Paul Martínez Pompa](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/paul-martinez-pompa)

I. SKIN & CORN

Her brown skin glistens as the sun

pours through the kitchen window

like gold *leche.* After grinding

the *nixtamal*, a word so beautifully ethnic

it must not only be italicized but underlined

to let you, the reader, know you’ve encountered

something beautifully ethnic, she kneads

with the hands of centuries-old ancestor

spirits who magically yet realistically posses her

until the *masa* is smooth as a *lowrider’s*

chrome bumper. And I know she must do this

with care because it says so on a website

that explains how to make homemade corn *tortillas.*

So much labor for this peasant bread,

this edible art birthed from *Abuelitas’s*

brown skin, which is still glistening

in the sun.

II. APOLOGY

Before she died I called my abuelita

*grandma.* I cannot remember

if she made corn tortillas from scratch

but, O, how she’d flip the factory fresh

El Milagros (Quality Since 1950)

on the burner, bathe them in butter

& salt for her grandchildren.

How she’d knead the buttons

on the telephone, order me food

from Pizza Hut. I assure you,

gentle reader, this was done

with the spirit of Mesoamérica

ablaze in her fingertips.

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