



★ **Lotería: Poems**

Esteban Rodríguez

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Between. Not here, not there. Not this, or that. Somewhere but not someplace. Not easy to put your, wrap your, place your—but confidence, and masterful touch with language, is what makes Esteban Rodríguez a credible, incredible even, witness to the between bisecting the Mexican and American experience.

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*There was an uncle for everything:
dirty jokes, conspiracies, drunken
monologues at barbecues and birthday parties.
And there was Tio Roy, who, no matter
the gathering, dressed in bright polos,
seashell necklaces, bleached jeans
and boots made to walk Italian plazas.
Yes, this was the uncle who doused
his body in cologne, kept his shades on
at night, and who didn't care when his back
was turned and everyone—uncles, aunts,
cousins old enough to have earned an opinion—
gave a look that said how he dressed
was too much, that he wore his "happiness"
on his sleeve, not out of any sense to spread
his well-being, but out of his attempt to thrust
all of who he was in their faces, to make
his business theirs, to remind them,
despite their most silent objections,
that what makes anyone uncomfortable
never lives for long at a distance.*

MATT SUTHERLAND (November / December 2023)

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