

HOW THE SÁBADO GIGANTE DANCERS CHANGED

Ilza Cisneros

Happy means pretty means happy means pretty.

Pretty means skinny means pretty means skinny.

Flaca means guapa means flaca means guapa.

Guapa means sexy means guapa means sexy.

Sexy means wanted means sexy means wanted.

Wanted means loved means wanted means loved.

Loved means happy means loved means happy.

Happy means

loved means

wanted means

sexy means

skinny means

flaca means

guapa means

pretty means

happy.

Ay, sí.

We have found satisfaction,

focused on the thrills.

HOW THE SÁBADO GIGANTE DANCERS CHANGED

We have measured out our days
in Mexican diet pills.

Combat excess fat!
Exorcise those demons.
Our *lonjas* are proof of welfare meals.
All that food stamp fat.
All that free lunch y government cheese.

We grew tall,
we grew tall.
They said, “When you grow up,
men will break down the walls.”
We grew fat,
we grew fat.
Such armor would take care of that.

And we’ve heard the songs,
we’ve heard ‘em all.
Tall for a mexicana, no one’s *chaparrita*.
Too light-skinned to be anyone’s *morenita*.

Weight goes up.
Weight goes down.
Waist gets smaller,
ass stays round.

Yet we know what certain types of bodies
say on certain sides of town.
Whoops y whistles, hot breath y low groans:

oh, baby, you're so fine
ay, mamasota, I wish you were mine
Ay, mi'ja, you have such a pretty face,
but you need to lose some weight.

Size goes up.
Size goes down.
Waist gets smaller,
ass stays round.

We've known the problems, known the ills.
We have taken weight off without the pills.

Starvation-nicotine-coffee diet?
Tried it.
Finger-down-the-throat method?
Couldn't.
Exercise obsession?
Check.
Counting calories?
Yes.

Gained and lost and gained and lost.

HOW THE SÁBADO GIGANTE DANCERS CHANGED

Big-boned, muffin top, pleasantly plump.
Rubenesque, curvaceous, voluptuous.
Hefty, chunky, *gordita*.

Big-legged woman,
keep your dresses down.
Fat-bottomed girls
make the rocking world go 'round.

Cushion for pushin', junk in the trunk,
bootylicious badonkadonk.

In our time we saw how
J. Lo rode in on Selena's coattails,
and made what she has in the back
more valuable than how she sang
or how well she could dance.

Still, thin is in,
even if fat's where it's at.

You're thin, but you could be thinner.
You're slim, but you should be slimmer.

Tight jeans make a scene.
Pantyline every time.

Gorda, lonja, nalgoná, chichona.

Piernona, pansona, grandota, cachetona.

Caballona, cuerpaso, girafa, escalera.

Delgadita, esquisita, chiquitita, mamasita.

Flaca, flacucha, huesos, escoba.

Wait.

We watched the *Sábado Gigante* dancers change shape.

When we were young:

short legs, tiny waists,

wide hips, thick thighs,

bubblicious butts, handful breasts.

Brown haired morenas with a token “blonde.”

Nowadays:

loooong legs, narrow hips

sharp ribs, supermodel sticks

flat asses, giant silicon

not too many *morenas*,

but plenty of “blondes.”

What if we turn off *la tele*?

Choose

Movement.

Move it.

Stand tall.

HOW THE SÁBADO GIGANTE DANCERS CHANGED

Listen hard:

Falling apart?

Bring yourself together.

Losing balance?

Focus in.

Losing breath?

Move more.

Running out of time?

Run further.

Feeling fat?

Dance.

Feeling sad?

Dance.

Feeling mad?

Dance.

Feeling bad?

Dance.

Baila tus bailes, hermanas.

Dance.

Happy means

loved means

smart means

confident means

beautiful means

satisfied means

happy.