

Opuntia

By Leticia Chairez

On "Prickly Pear and Fisticuffs" by Ada Limón

I'm sorry to the man who thought I was too loud.
And to the men who ask me why I'm so quiet.

My mom taught me about "la tuna",
a bright-red fruit, poised atop the cactus.
The inside, full of seeds and flesh,
protected by its barbed layer.

You can remove these barbs,
but a blemish will be left on its skin.

She told me about the rattlesnake
gripped by the eagle on top of the cactus.
How she squirms under his grasp.

I carry the rattle of the rattlesnake.
Sometimes, I hear the fierce drumming
course throughout my body.

I carry the prickly pear,
the coral husk glows in my hands.

To the men who will try to pry the pear,
and try to extract the needles from the shell.

I hope you know, you will be pricked by its arrows.