

LIGHTS UP

Pablo Miguel Martinez

It was a time of beautiful Puerto Rican men who called you *papi* and said, *You're the one, the only one*. And you believed, because that's how it was back then. You followed the dazzling signs, a blaring beat. The dreams that flared, flared on the asphalt grid, back then, in those days of beautiful Puerto Rican men.

It was a time of seasons, not like the ones today. Back then, autumn meant something—lights up, everything new: the dance, the score, the words. And winter, well, winter was your flight to unfurled Caribbean nights. Spring was more and more, then summer, pouting, a sigh of salt air.

Back then they'd call you *corazón*, and you believed, the word switching on every goddamn light in every goddamn chamber. They'd even call you *vida*—*vida*, the skyscraper's needle, piercing the magnificence, all the way to endlessness, back then.