Lost In Translation

Jubi Arriola-Headley

The names are always Biblical – Tienda *Santa Maria* or *San Miguel* or *La Fe,* which does not translate into "store of the uglies," I have too late learned. A single letter will split a mouth into a moth, a horse into a hose, a *now* into a *no.* (If ever there was a gendered confession this must be it.) Whatever you call it – a tienda, a bodega, a corner store – just know I'm shopping there because the plátanos are never less than a day past ripe, which is when they're the sweetest, right? And no one commits the venial sin of trimming the fat off the chicharrones. Mis abuelos wash them down with Modelo Negra while squatting out front on their milk-crate stools, playing dominoes. Buen provecho, I say, in passing. All nod. One smiles. I feel proud. I don't stumble.

JUBI ARRIOLA-HEADLEY (he/him) is a Black queer poet, storyteller, first-generation United Statesian, and the author of two collections of poems: ORIGINAL KINK (Sibling Rivalry Press, 2020), recipient of the 2021 Housatonic Award, and BOUND (Persea Books, 2024). He's currently at work on a collection of essays, an excerpt of which received the 2023 First Pages Prize for Creative Nonfiction. Jubi lives with his husband in South Florida, on ancestral Tequesta, Miccosukee, and Seminole lands.