

## BRUJERÍA, THE QUEER KARAOKE REMIX

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Yo era una joven mocosa when I first entered the world of queer club spaces at fourteen, but I swore I was the bomb. With my Payless high heels and puta-red lipstick, I had no problem entering the Warehouse, the Mafia controlled gay bar in my hometown of Hartford, Connecticut. It was 1974, at a time when the legal drinking age was eighteen, and no one cared what perverts did in our dirty little corner of a dying city.

The Warehouse was a huge, mirrored space that smelled of poppers, sweat, and the stench of last night's beer bust, a club where all kinds of drugs and culo were bought and traded in bathrooms and nearby alleys. Full of black folks and other Puerto Ricans (we were all called Spanish then), it was the place where prostitutes took their johns, where preachers danced with their boys from the choir, where anyone could go to be escandaloso and invisible all at once.

Brujería—all those times that I had been called a spic slut by drunk Irish boyfriends and their mothers finally made sense. Here spics and sluts and negro faggotry ruled the dance floor, our special black magic creeping into every shimmy shake, every thrust of our hips, sending a big “fuck you, pendejo” to those too sad and pathetic to see our special light.

Soon, I started taking mi hermana. We were the outrageous Rodríguez sisters whose femme-on-femme sexy dance moves always invited the curious attention of our many brown bucha admirers. They understood the power of brujería—wondered if that bistec you just served had been seasoned with that special

sauce, adobo a la cochina, para embrujar unsuspecting papis into coming back for more.

We had the santos, the orishas, the brujos all on our side. And the Warehouse was our place of worship, a magical sensory overload, a huge enveloping color-filled closet, queer before queer was queer. And we went to church every night, down on our knees, head thrown back, mouths wide open—ready to receive communion papi. We sacrificed tequila sunrises, Newports, and chicken bones on the daily to make sure our prayers were heard.

Our magic lasted all night long; it followed us from the dance floor to grind bien sucio up against the wall. It was the smell that stuck to sticky fingers, the lipstick stains that Shout could never shout out, the blister that formed on your pinkie toe and burned like hell, ready to pop if you kept on dancing.

But we did, dance and fuck, and pray and party—working the only magic we had, using brujería to make un mundo nuevo—just for us.