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As a kid, the car was the best thing. Any vehicle was the best cause it meant out of the house and go somewhere new. My parents were always very protective of us (still are) so that meant not hanging out with any friends after school, or going to the bodega by yourself no matter how badly the house needs toilet paper. just the way how I was raised, it's honestly a good thing I like my siblings cause god knows what would have happened to me if I didn't like the people. One person I made a connection with was my father. He is an average sized man, BALD, eyes that when he grins the crow's feet and laugh lines have nowhere to hide yet somehow he doesn't look anything older 40. A scruffy beard filled with grays and bald patches. And a Niño de jesùs necklace around his neck since the fourth grade. This is a man that most would have wanted to have as their own father, a man that when spoken about there's nothing but good things to say. I for one have as well fallen for this man's charm, but in an unconditional love type of way not in a Sigmund Freud type of way. He is to me the way all men should be, or that's what I thought he was.

There's never a silent moment in a car with my father. Whether it is him telling old stories of when he was younger in America, the Dominican Republic, of his siblings the car was just our talk time. He started this cycle when I was about five years old. Back then I would try to stay up as long as i could with my dad in car rides because he always ended up having to be in

silence because the rest of my siblings had fallen asleep. He would get so happy to see me awake when he would turn around to check on us on red lights to make sure we weren't breaking our necks sleeping. His first story was while we were on a grocery run for the bodega he had around Yankee stadium. It was a huge rusty smoke colored toyota van, with that scratchy television static colored rug you would see at a doctors office. The song that was playing was *Beso a Beso* by Tono Rosario "Chula, you know that you used to sing this song when you were two. At the top of your lungs, you'd be like *BECHU a BECHUO ME AMORER DE TI*. I think you knew more Spanish then you do now" which back then I would just laugh and then play a round of ispy with my younger sister. My dad, he kept recalling the times when we used to sing the songs or try to pronounce the words but it was honestly the sign of how unaware of our culture I was till the age of 13. And I don't mean the historical facts, I mean the basic survival skills which are the language. I was singing Zacharias and Anthony Santos songs since I was three but half of the time I didn't know what the fuck I was talking about. Not only was my father someone who I had a very close relationship with but also the figure of my culture for me as a child since my mother spent most of her time at work. His stories when i was around this age would always be of when he was my age. In how he used to sell bread with this local bouy every sunday, or how he would ride horses in san francisco to get to the river and back in time to do some farm work. He created this picture of a land in which i felt free, a land where i would dream about sleeping in the land where "dreams come true". As I ate up these car filling stories I put my fathers voice on a pedestal like no other, it's podium made of steel backed by a lifetimes worth of support and a coat of marbel that dominates the eye.

I think it was around the age of fifteen that I started to realize this attraction to both male and females (and like can you blame me have you seen Zendaya and Kim Taehyung like hello!) We were passing by cemetery driving down the highway late on a winter night in my dad's Toyota black mini van. So while I layed my head on its cream gray while La Mega was on talking about how this celebrity had come out as gay. One of the announcers said their opinion on how he was against that way of living and I said "that's not right!". It got incredibly quiet in the car, my dad lowered the thumping volume of the radio and exhaled. And when a Spanish man puts down La Mega during the bachata remix hour it's serious. "Daniela...there was once this old man who lived in the same building as me. Every night that I came back home drunk and ended up sleeping on the stairwell he would wake me up with a can of Sprite with a cup of coffee in the other. He was my neighbor so I knew him well. Until one night I saw a man going out of his house and they kissed. When I tell you I was livid, that I had let a faggot into my home, into my life I went straight to my house and avoided him the best I could. Pero las cosas que queremos evitar más son las que aparecen primero. I was hungover again and again and each time he would still come no matter how much I spat and screamed at him. Until one day I asked him 'why do you still treat me like this, I don't like you kind.' and all he did was laugh and said 'Mijo, si odiara a todos los que no me aceptaron, mi propio padre no tendría una casa para vivir en Puerto Rico ... eres un buen niño Danny y todavía creo que lo eres.' and he just walked away smiling. Honestly he's the reason why I'm okay with them, he showed me a different side and I respected him and enjoyed his company until he died. That's why I don't mind that you have friends that are gay I'll respect them and treat them like any other with open arms." Now when I tell you I was beaming in that backseat, I was so happy that my father felt this way. That this man's image just kept shining

more and more i grew up. That was until he said “ But if any of you turned out like that i wouldn't know what to do, ill fucking... i wouldn't know” we were officially parked in front of my house but it felt like we just crashed. It honestly felt like he knew ,like he screamed that sentenced in a way that the sound could hit me in any direction. And i didnt say anything we just sat there, unil my little sister said ‘can we leave now i need to go pee” it was the first time that i felt my dad might actually end up not loving me , and i just sat there watching. Because that's what I was taught to do you sit there and listen. But as time passed i realized that it doesn't have to be that way. And i think my mother taught me that through her hard work