The Car Ride Home

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The Car Ride Home

By

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*The Car Ride Home* explores the coming of age of a young boy into a queer man, searching and sifting through the trauma of home life, and realizing his mother’s addiction affects more than just herself, but an entire family. This realization coincides with views of masculinity, as he carefully watches the men around him. He internalizes these depictions of masculinity when exploring his own confusion and investigation of his own sexual identity and queerness. The poetry collection is broken up into two connected parts. Part one explores the illusion of childhood and nostalgia while introducing subtle glimpses and secrets of the family as well as the self, with an emphasis on family trauma. Part two dives more into this idea of questioning sexuality, as something combatting both Latino identity and even religion. Sexuality begins as something to be kept secret, but slowly and surely reveals itself in experiences. This second part culminates on both the deeper exploration of sexuality and beginning to accept it and what healing can look like when trying to redefine a home previously filled with trauma. This collection encapsulates both who I was, and who I am becoming; where I was, and where I am going.
Searching for Warmth

Family Christmas Party, 2008
My caterpillar body barely forms words
in the back seat of our four door Forester.
It’s the blue one, three out of the four
Tires blend too closely to the concrete
Rust and grime slathered on the sides

My lips vibrate so quickly
And yet, are too scared to ask for warmth
Like the family dinner we just left,
Plates filled with what
my Grandma calls love

The dark grey leather back seats
Too eager to trap the wintry
Stone cold, pressing my soft skin against it,
Preparing me.

My twin brother sits too,
Silent, his eyes fixed on
the other side of the car window,
His fingertips taking in the cold
Like he’s been prepared for it, too

My dad’s at the driver’s seat
With hands that don’t trust themselves
Shaking and scared, buried beneath curses
A mouth constantly releasing a deep sigh
One that’s pushed from the crevices within the chest

My mom, once self-proclaimed
Strong Boricua
Now droops her eyes in shame

Words slur when she speaks
Her mouth too slow to pick up
the pieces left behind in the upstairs bathroom
Resting next to a bottle and
A doctor’s signature

Why are we leaving I whisper
Loud enough for my lips to stop shaking
Low enough to not wake my mother
My father’s deep burdening sigh  
Fills the car like a thick smoke  
Keeping words from coming from our throat  
His eyes glance over to the once love  
Of his life, 20 years now slipping through his fingers  

His eyes tell me everything I need to know  
And the white foam bubbling  
At the blue, pink lips of my mother  
Tells me the car ride is going to be cold.
Section 1
Snow in January

The first time my Abuelo got on a plane
Was to run away from
An island that didn’t know
How to care for him

Eight years old and barely ready to dance
His island tongue now stolen
From him the second he walked onto
The aircraft that looked more like

A bomb ready to explode mid air
Then it did \textit{un avion}
\textit{Listo para volar}
\textit{En el cielo}

...
The first time my Grandpa got on a plane
   He didn’t realize that the sky
   Could drag its clouds down to
   The earth, make trees shrivel up.

The only time he saw grass lose its color
   Was in those small 1950’s tv sets,
   Painted pictures with a limited palette and
   An in between black and white frame.

   Nueve Yor’ was too chilly
   When he first came here,
   The ground a tinge of blue and white
   That made his skin brick cold

   And his shorts too dry
to insulate because he never
knew what snow was, and
The clouds on the ground

Looked safe enough until he stepped in it
   And realized that
   Nueve Yor’
Isn’t the kind of island he’s used to.
Caramel Skin and Stained Hands

Brown skin like caramel
Passed over the stove, electric gas
Confusing sugar and water to make me:
Skin blessed by hands that forgot how to pray.

My parents weren’t Godly people,
Sundays were for family dinners around the table,
Arroz con gandules,
Perfectly fried chicken cutlets,
Salty tostones made from green platanos

Quick to leave my mother’s hands stained and
filthy from its unforgiving peels
Hands needing to be washed,
Water to soak and scrub and make new
The kitchen sinks now a tub of
Holy water to christen her dark hands

She scrubbed and scrubbed and
Couldn’t get it out, Sus manos sucias,
Clean water and a prayer weren’t enough
And for a long time, it wouldn't be, but
The kitchen became the only room with its lights on.
Dreams That Travel with Me

It’s a quarter past nine and the sun is finally up to play
The sound of bacon grease sizzling in a silver pan,
(One that’s too old to still be working)
Reminds me I’m in paradise once again,
My dreams have traveled with me into the morning

My eyes, barely awake, like
They are peeping into reality
Eyelids almost shut, but not quite
I can finally see what’s before me

She’s cooking again, and always.
Carefully, she breaks the eggs open
Against the cracked countertop of our cramped kitchen

Those cracks, a symbol of a wife,
Of a mother who rises every morning,
And becomes who she is for her family
To give what she has
And to take nothing in return
I could hear platano Maduro sizzling in an oil greased pan, jumping to hop, and gently land on a white porcelain plate, ready to be served. The sweet, yet salty aroma fills the kitchen as my Abuela stands by the stove, stern in her stance, almost unwavering, making sure each Maduro is caramelized to perfection. The smell of sazon, sofrito, and cilantro cultivate and blossom in a small, and barely silver pan of black beans: a secret family recipe where my Abuela can conjure feelings of happiness by simply waving a spoon. “Tu vas a comer?” she would ask, waiting for my hopeful “of course”, because, at grandma’s house, you never say no to the magic in her food. Within a few hours, my Dominican soul, as my Grandma would say, will be satisfied with Caribbean roots, ready to tackle a hard day of work.
A New York Summer Barbeque, 2005

A family gathering in the too bright with
Grass everywhere, backyard of Grandma’s house,
And smoke stuck to the torn cloth
Of Papi’s black Nike polo, the one
He always wore when he was getting
Ready to play grill master.
He stood by the tar like smoke till dinner time,
Waited for tire marks to cover the Ribeye
And for Argentinian sausages to sizzle, hissing for
Chimichurri to be poured over them
Between fresh Italian bread, cotton like
That filled us up in the meantime.

A quarter past 5 and the sun stays with us
And waits to go back to bed because the cousins
Are still playing on trikes in the driveway, screaming
Red Light, Green Light, 1,2,3, and our feet hit
The cracked pavement a little harder with
Every second that passes, going through a decade
In a twenty-minute backyard game.

More smoke moves itself through the air
Sounds of Salsa and Bachata
Fill up the spaces between our bodies
The boom box in the back of Tio’s car
Always too loud but always loud enough, and
Aventura lifting and begging our feet to tap to
The sounds between us, where our thumbs
Begin to flick at the first sight of music,
Showing our feet the the way to the backyard.

Back then, the steel wire fence looked more
Whiter and cleaner, able to catch light, and hold it
Until it glared in my eyes

Azucar!, Azucar! Slips away from Mami’s lips
Somewhere in the background
And finds home in her hips when she dances
Her feet remixing salsa and merengue with ease.
Crew Cut’s on the Corner

The first time I walked in, I was ten.
We used to go to the small viejos
on the corner of the street
By Hollis Ave, men who reminded me
of the pillow like grandpa I never met,
Men who spoke so low and soft that
the Barbers’ chairs felt like living room couches,
and every time they glided a
Pair of scissors along my upper neck,
Or by my hairline cutting the tail
Off the back, all I could think of
Were the power rangers I wanted to be like.

Now we go to the men a few blocks over
Five minutes away bitches
And red cars are what’s for lunch
Cold coronas with drops of water covering
The glass, drops that shake
And bounce to Biggie and Jay Z.

My skinny like a twig all-bone body
Couldn’t find enough space to take
To see himself in the mirror in front of him.
The buzz of the clippers ran closer
And closer to my ears. Razors
That dragged along my exposed skull,
My hairline that always ended up slightly crooked
Even with a mirror in front of me
And still my mouth never spoke

Not a word escaped my lips, wanting to hear
Just how loud the clippers could fill
The room and drown out my deep breathing.
Deep rooted laughter seeps out some of the men waiting,
One that comes from low within the gut and buzzes around too,
Trying to find space to fill and drown out everything else

A laugh that shows itself to the door and
Walks in without asking, a laugh that
Hits you on the shoulder and puts hair
On your chest. A laugh that never smiles.
A laugh that does smile when
Its eyes swell up, holding back a
Flood with a paper-thin eye lid.
A laugh behind the eyes and within the gut,
Both low and high, deep and shallow
Filling too much space
Silencing the room.
Songs my Mother Sang at the Foot of my Bed When I was 8

I remember your posture the most
Sitting at the corner of my small bed
That I will soon outgrow in the years to come
My feet will hang over the sides
Trying to find room for a worn-out mattress
I have grown taller, and slimmer than too

But you used to sit at the ends of my bed,
My toes wiggling around
Looking, searching for melodies
That sound like Disney movies
Hot chocolate when it was too cold outside,

Whispered songs surrounding me
When your words flowed and ebbed
In and out of my ears, gently carrying me
To a good night’s rest, just like Papi
Used to do, when my eyes closed shut for too long
On the living room couch at midnight

Songs that wrapped its nurturing arms around me
And held me as I fell asleep
Along the Shore

On beach 80st street
The sun stays a little longer
On the now brick boardwalk, after
Painting the sky on fire
heating the damp soles
Of my feet, where sea salt water
Becomes air that sizzles
Before it leaves

Between my fingers
The sand feels rough
And dirty, but tells me
Stories of how it used to be
Before the violent waves came
Before being rocks that tumbled
And grinded and destroyed
Itself along waters that grew gray and
Undeserving
Moro de Habicheula

Mom’s lips turned blue again
As she stands in the kitchen,
Eyes cracked open, a bowl of rice in hand
But it’s too early for dinner time.

Her eyes drooped down to the floor,
anxiously waiting, scanning the room
And I’m watching her closely as she rubs
Her arms a little too hard this time
Scratching them leaving marks,
Lines that crawl up to her chest
Air leaves her lungs faster and faster
Waiting for the high to set in

Feet planted in the kitchen
Like a tree rotting from the inside out
With ants getting ready to eat, tiny
Black things that leave flesh pale, lips blue,
Skin too light to be alive this early
In the morning.
My skin’s crawling too,
My eyes stuck on the tree’s flesh

That rots and my legs now tingling
Too, leaving white thin lines as my
Bitten nails collect the almost dying flesh
On my arms, barely a decade alive.

The smell of black beans and rice
At 6 a.m. leaves our apartment smelling
Like decaying flesh under a scorching sun, where ants
Continue to bite away at pale skin

With white marks along our arms
Close to seeing the red come out soon.
Near the Shoreline

Boys, maybe men, walk on
The beach too. Their feet
Press deep into the sand beneath
Them, cracked soles touching granules
Big enough to cause a riot.

Mothers and fathers in the background
Whispering to each other like
The sand knows their secrets,
And maybe, the boy’s secrets too,
But don’t know that
The ocean calls our names

It takes what it needs and always comes
Back for more. Running up to boys,
Maybe men already, covering and drowning
Their feet, feet pressed in sand
With grains slipping in and out between toes,

until the waves come back
And take what it needs again, because it
Always comes back. And now the white
Water washes up on shore with crushed bodies
Filled with green slime, the smell of
seaweed stuck to our clothes,

And our clothes stuck to our wet,
Matted skin, saltwater sealing up
Any and every crack and crevice
And now the boys, and the men, too,
Stay close to the shores, with
Whispers in the background.
Memories That Stay

You’ve taken what I own
A memory of childhood
Like the only time a father and
Son share space is when there
Hands touch the same wiffleball bat
On a Sunday morning and wait to hear
The whistle of the ball, before it’s been lost.

How about Skidded knees that won’t stop bleeding?
Where the smell of rubbing alcohol fills Mami’s nose
Too much that she forgets to see me.
Where the bathroom at the end of the hall
Becomes a sanctuary to cleanse skin
That bubbles white at the surface.

Where the splintery wooden bat
Gives me scars on the inside palms of
My hand, and a quick whiff of alcohol
Brings me back to the too white bathroom
At the end of the hall, dried blood stains
Always leaving its mark for me.
The Barber Shop on Jamaica Ave.

Papi sits silently in the chair, his ripped 
Jeans now invisible, teared up the sides 
And along his shell kneecaps that seem 
To always keep dust with them, 
And take dust with them when 
they come to sit on the barber’s chair

Black cape around him 
Covering his body, 
A body that is too big to be fooled 
His arms that showed his just young 
Enough 45-year-old skin, on the cusp of 
Losing its youthful cashmere color 
And turn to smoke that fills 
The apartment back home.

The midnight cape drapes itself 
Around his chest and legs, 
An H for Hustler on it. 
It’s a ritual, one that I only watch 
And will know well.

First the barber, one of the 
Dominican guys, the ones we trust, 
Slips his hands by my father’s neck, 
Gently ties a folded piece of white tissue 
To cover Papi’s neck and grip his throat 
A little tighter. This is before Papi has a cheap 
Cotton black cape laying on him, 
Like it’s hiding his hands from wanting to twitch

Then the barber’s hands glide softly 
By the neckline of his hair 
Ready to groom him, the shooting blades 
Neeed to remember to be gentle on his skin, 
Buzzing and tickling right behind his ear

His tiny hair, small like brown wool, 
always slides off his head, 
A little less fall every time we come back here

A quick look in the mirror, shaved sides 
Almost invisible, and a small nod of the head,
Turned down chin in my direction,
And it’s my turn now, sit in the chair and
Not speak for a while.
A Prayer to God and Homosexuality

I know you, you’re the Devil,
and with tongue in throat
And knife in hand
I prayed you away

I prayed the lord would take from me
What I cannot take from myself
Because, now, I need to be clean
The stench stays

It lays and snores beneath my skin
And I can’t seem to scrub you away
So, I take a knife, cut and peel,
Like Mom used to do when she was

All in the kitchen, getting ready to cook,
To peel the harsh skin of Yuca
Bathe it in a tub of violent boiling water
In a silver black pot and call that cooking,

The knife glides
But it doesn’t cut and it never
Peels, and somehow, I haven’t even bled yet
So, I prayed you away

Asked God to let me see what this thing
Looks like inside of me
And throw you in the water like
We ready to eat

But he hasn’t answer yet.
Boys I’ve Heard About

We don’t sleep at night
Because the streets constantly
Call our names,
looking for satisfaction,

Like a train that doesn’t stop
For no one but itself
And calls the shots
To play and to play and to play

Alleyways called a garden
Where invisible flowers sprout
Underneath concrete
And some spit on the ground

Men who follow
Just to follow
And grab handfuls of us
Like we’re some kind of dirt or soil

Stuck between fingernails
Chewed and spit out
Just to end up in the same
gardens and call them alleyways

And our heads fall,
Skin like the projects
Red and dust now too close
To the eye, but don’t worry

‘Cause I’ll probably die
Before you even get to me
Somewhere between the garden
And the alleyway we call the street.
Talking to the Mirror

Stand up straight because they might notice
that my eyes constantly wander

Towards men that look too much like you.
I’m too young for reality

But I’m fine letting my mind
create stories for me.

Feel your arms cradle me
Like a ship rocking back and forth in

A violent sea.
Let the flags raise

And pull when the wind comes
Because, the wind always come

In the middle of rough waters
Gray and electric, making a swing set out

Of this ship that has no choice but to
stay and try to weather the storm.

I’ll keep imagining for now, until
my lips can create what my mind sees.
Section 2
Hiding Hands, Holding Breathes

It’s not like we’ve ever done this before, right?
It’s confusing
It’s supposed to be confusing for people like us
How our love is written in invisible ink
at the base of our feet
Connected to the earth

Along the curves of our spines
Like our hearts are made to hide
On a road that twists and winds
Even in doubt, we know what
Love is supposed to look like

Holding sweaty hands, the sun beaming on our backs
Like a spotlight, a stage to judge us on
Small pecks with closed lips
Summertime eyes that glisten like
A thousand specks of diamonds
Buried in a hurricane

We know what love is
supposed to looks like
How, when in doubt, we know
We love each other
Because we simply love ourselves first
Discovering Religion

God cannot dictate the way
Our minds align with each other

How our breath perfectly synchronizes
At the wake of dawn

In those moments,
our souls become forever intertwined:

helpless, yet full of strength
Our eyes meet

And our bodies wrap around each other
Like knotted rope tangled and matted

Constantly discovering new grooves and creases
To enter and climb into

Tucked legs to grasp and new skin
To touch with fingers that

Hold nightmares at the center of their tips
Chills that run blood cold

With cheekbones turned against the window
Wanting to make dreams out of cold hands and shut eyes.
Creation Story III

I want to see magic grow from your palms
Like seeds sprouting at our feet,
Ready to dive into the ground connecting
Us back to each other
Back to our fruitful souls,
That have forgotten what it means to grow,

Souls that are ready to feed and nurture, and create
Ready to blossom into a forest full of
Lively things
Full of flying trees
That give, and seldom take
Promised Land

I’ll make a promise land out of you
Stretch marks for roads covering
terrain hidden to the rest of the world,
Thick thighs for pillows to rest my head
When I’m tired

A Canaan for us, with
Prickly skin that leads up to
A land rushing with milk and honey,
Liquid white gold
Where droplets fall softly
down your mouth and
Onto skin that’s ready to be taken
In the palms of your hands

On a Sunday night, and
The moon’s light blessing
Our own kind of communion,
A baptism of sorts that starts
With your hand over my head
Scared to keep going.
Shower Thoughts

Your ears by the door,
slightly pressed against the damp wood,
足够的 to hear me sing
90's R&B songs in the shower
of my college apartment.

In a few months,
you'll think it's obnoxious, believe me,
but right now, you're ready to sink your teeth in.
Right now, you're ready to tear the love songs
from my lips and the barely dry towel from my waist.

Your ear, still by the door,
anxiously wonders if this piece of wood
is like a crystal ball, the future stuck between
off key notes I can never quite hit. --
you always said you can sense energy,
maybe you can see the future, too. --

You're hoping to hear something,
anything, a sign of what's to come.
Keep waiting, and you'll hear something, alright.
Might even taste something, too.

You'll hear how we laugh in empty rooms full of people,
laying on floors too small to open up the heavens below,
forcing us to create our own,
built on concrete tiles and broken bed frames.

You'll taste the pulsating heartbeat of
a soon-to-be garden, something like Eden,
sweat resting at the tip of your tongue
Fresh golden apples plucked from dead orchards,
hidden in ripped jeans that always make
their way to the floor sooner or later.

Yea I'll make a garden out of you,
You're thinking, cleanse myself in it before it gets too cold.
**Genesis 19:24**

His skin, it felt like I’ve been there before  
Too familiar when he touched me

Whispers now taking over the dark crevices under our blanket  
You know, Lot was shaking too, when he tried to hide their skin

Flesh made from God, in *His* image and likeness  
Marked and stained with desires of a man

And he wouldn’t kiss me, but he covered my body with his body  
As if it was any better

As if I didn’t know his hands were now  
Guiding me to everything he hoped for

His turning, shifting, the cracking of his neck  
Concealing what he doesn’t want me to see

How, in this moment, our skin barely touches the bed  
But solely touches each other

And he’s happy now,  
But forgets the dead body lying next to him

A pilar of salt,  
Left in the destruction of his search for purity.
Where There’s Smoke

It’s a sensual high

One filled with leaves and grass and everything in between
Smoke from your lips spell words I’ll never say aloud

White on pink silhouettes
Forgetting that they need to breathe

Or even shutter when my name is
Wrapped so tightly around them

Just place it between your lips
he says, a bit more, he says

it tastes like too-late night walks in the middle
of the summer, salt and burnt weed hugging our clothes

And with every word I’m sinking more and more,
The wet sand cushioned by

Lauryn Hill playing in the background
*It could all be so simple, but you’d rather make it hard*

*Loving you is* more like
Hardwood floors and grains of rice on knees

Knees that crack and bleed too easily
Tell Me We’re Dead

Show me something dead baby
Give me a new world to create

Take me back to
Raindrops dancing at our feet

Like sobbing tears
Racing to the finish line

Cracked pavements and high mothers
Never stopping for us, no

Just broken headlights in the way
Of another boy, stuck with his thumb in his mouth

Take one, magic vesseled
In a tiny blue pill

You know, she used to find magic
In them, too, cracked it open before it ran out

It’ll bring the blue red out your arms
Feel alive for once

Tell me we’re dead and I’ll love you even more
Tell me were dead and I’ll take another.
A Church Within My Room

Gently put your fingers together
Let them rest on the mirror of themselves

Light a candle and wait for
The ocean to flood the room
Drowning you until you are made new again

Reborn from the
From the cuts that kiss your inner thigh
Like recovering mothers kissing their child for the first time
Seeing them with eyes that don’t bleed on the kitchen floor anymore,

From the smoke that choking you
Wrapping its inner palms around your too high pitch-voiced neck
Skin too sensitive where the slightest touch leaves a bruise.
New Scripture and Childhood Dreams

There should be a retelling of the creation story
Where God let man be

Where man let man be
With man hand in hand

Where delicate skin can play in the backyard
Under sunrays and drops of water

That get too close to our feet
And try to cover our thighs along the way

Water that slides down
Coating, playing with this newfound hair

On our legs that run
Legs that are meant to chase

Never plagued by dirt stains
And glass on trails that lead to nowhere

Where holding hands never have
To inhale in secret, and can finally, let air go.
We Spoke Our Names…

Whispered them with
Care like we’re holding
Doves in the cracks of our hands

Fingers that feel the silky smooth
And let them fly into our ears

For the first time in a year.
Hot air blown into me

Like you’re speaking a seance
And summoning the dead to wake

And to rise, because at this time
Of night, everything’s gonna rise

The movement of my neck
Away from your breath

Screams back at you to keep going
And your fingers glide down my spine

Like you ready to keep going,
Give me a shiver or two

I keep asking cause you,
Cause you awaken my spine and crush grapes

With my bones that’s blend and break
Under your soft lips until you make wine.

Stillness between us, that we can
Touch when the palms of our hands come together

Finding homes in sweaty bodies and
A toolbox on the floor.
Oceans Behind Our Eyes

Only when we are together do
Tears rush to my eyes
like God just knocked at the door
Pulled his jeans up,
The belt a bright caramel leather,
Where light reflects off of
And into your eyes

He sat between us on my
College sized bed, where two bodies
Crammed tightly under the covers,
Dimmed the lights a little,
Locking our shivering legs
Into each other.

And that’s when I started
To cry to you
Allowing tear drops to
Lay theme selves into your hands
And snuggle between your fingers,
as you kiss them to bed

Your soft fingertips, caressing skin on cheek
that becomes wet with cries and bright smiles,
something like rays of sun in an L.A summer.
and God was there in that moment, too
Watching as our missing years of childhood flesh
try and hold hands, with God’s
blue like crystal eyes gazing in our direction.

A bed where soft lips can press into each other
And hang out for a while,
Because they’re finally safe together
With only God guarding the door.

A revolution in a room
Where two men can look
into each to each other’s eyes,
and find homes in bodies
Restricted to college apartments
Almost ready to go home.
With Diamonds Underneath Us

It starts with the windows first.
The sun beams onto them
Turning clear glass into waves that guide
The arms and legs of my brother and sisters,
Skin gently falling onto the surface to float
With diamonds underneath us.

The dust that sweeps and covers the floor
Pick up and become stars on the ground
Rocks that grind and sprinkle
Creating sand to heat our feet
After the sun has shared too much of itself.

The red brown bricks of our New York building
then lay themselves
Pressing into each other
Forming rocks to run on
Boulders that stretch out into
Our ocean and cut our feet
When the day begins to settle.
Grandma’s Salsa

She dances like she is making love
To the concrete floor that kisses her feet.
Even it recognizes the grace of the taps
And the island rhythm that beams from her hips
And slowly trickles down her legs.

Only a few minutes ago, arthritis,
Throbbing aches and pains plagued her
But now, what she has planted in the earth
Is finally given back to her,
Even if only for a moment.

As if time turns back the instance
She blesses the ground
And starts to dance, a language of the feet
Six steps and you’re finally free,
Santeria and bright smiles in quick turns
That happily breathe.

Yes, she is dancing now
Always slowly, and with eyes that betray her
The second her hand is taken
To the middle of the driveway to dance
Hollis, 188th street and 91st no longer exists, no
A home of hard work now a stomping ground.

Ocean breeze in the middle of Queens
Conjured by a movement
Mangos sprouting where salsa begins to laugh
And the ripe scent of guava floats in the air
The smell of the millions of forgotten dreams
Of the tropics, of our ancestors
An island where the city once was.

We are back home she whispers; we are back.
A New York Heaven

1. 
Green mountains all the way over there
By the city with bright lights,
On a small island before you get to Queens
Sharp blades of grass with tips that tickle the
Bottoms of our feet when they press against
Them, carelessly pushed into the ground
To get to where we need to go, like we’re
Running out of breath,
Grass whistling like
There playing a game of hide and seek.

2. 
And our laughter, the roars that come
Out the mouths of me and my brother
Always carry us to bed again
With arms wide open,
Ready to close the black metal fence
To see Papi’s backwards cap, with frizzy hair
Still there because he hasn’t lost his hair yet,
And a homerun with a whistle from the ball.

3. 
Our body’s kissed with water from shore
That washes over us and welcomes us home again.
Mother’s singing, perfume knocking on the door
To come and to sing, sing quietly into
The nighttime when the worlds I create
Push goosebumps from underneath my
Still fragile skin along my spine.

4. 
Songs that I won’t remember when I’m 23
But won’t forget how easy it is to see Mom
Sitting at the edge of my bed,
And feel the always holding arms
From the words that crept out of her mouth,
With Disney blue lights on the TV against the wall.

5.
Car rides home along the belt parkway never end
And blue cars in the background with
Tires talking to the ground
Put me to sleep when they hit my ears
Head pressed against the glass frame of our car
And Mom’s singing again while
Papi’s hands hold the wheel with a cigarette
Carefully place between his fingers, his thumbs
Controlling what happens to this stick
That he hasn’t lit yet, no smoke in our eyes to blind us.

6.
Central Park walks in the middle of the day
When the sun, once again, comes out to play
And holding hands can finally breathe
Loud enough where shivers along our arms
Become deep sighs that allow air to enter
Between our fingers that glide along each other
Waiting to sit on a hardwood bench
And get lost for a while.
Mouths that can share a kiss in
The middle of the park, let
Wandering eyes follow our direction
Drawing footsteps closer to our cologne.

7.
Finally, hold sacred our hands in a Church
Where God can wash our feet and clean our palms,
Bless bodies torn and ragged from carrying the
Eyes of downward smiles and an outdated bible.
Create a new room in the house of God
Where foundation is his grace extends to us
And light shines on our chests like an alter
At communion, where we get to drink the Blood
And taste the Body of Christ and digest slowly this time.

8.
Where car rides home means early 2000’s RnB,
40 minutes of Ashanti, the Fugees, classics that fill a car
And the windows won’t fog up this time, no,
Because car rides home,
Always make it back home.