

When we arrived at Mommas' home village, we were immediately loaded on to a corroded 84 Ford Bronco and started out on this luxurious trip. Our chauffeur was an elderly man with an eye patch over his left eye. It was a reckless journey up a steep mountain with no safety rails and unfortunately I was sitting by the window. I felt like I was in a crime movie scene where I was being kidnapped and transported to their secret hideout. At this point in my life I wasn't even allowed to go to a sleepover, but participating in a threatening travel adventure was surprisingly not a problem. All for the sake of learning more about my Mexican heritage.

Once we got to the mountain village, I could understand why we risked our lives. It was a stunning town filled with historical architecture, spectacular parks and churches as well as brightly painted restaurants. Making this excursion to pray at the church, was the way the village kicked off their summer festival. Talented artists gathered around with their exceptional Mexican folk paintings and murals. We had a nice relaxing time at the top of the mountain but the most dangerous part of the trip was still yet to come. Traveling down the steep mountain at dusk was more traumatic than riding the Ghost Rider roller coaster at midnight.

Back at Mamma's childhood village, we visited the neighbors and had some Mexican Tortilla Soup and refreshing Mandarin Orange Soda. Then we relaxed at the park and played with the ducks and goats while my Momma and her friends sang some of their favorite Ranchera songs about love and patriotism. Without warning, the cloudless warm evening sky erupted with red, white and green flares and fireworks.

The gorgeous lights caused havoc and mayhem in the small village. Kids were screaming in the streets, old women were running for shelter and the only church in the village almost caught on fire. This was apparently the highlight of the festival and all I was thinking was that I'm not even allowed to light scented candles when I take my Sunday night bath! Once the family found a more ideal viewing point we enjoyed the entertainment while eating warm cinnamon churros.

Before I headed off to bed, Momma came into my bedroom and shared a story about when she was a young woman. "Growing up in Mexico was difficult but it taught me about adventure and facing your fears. That is why when I decided to apply for citizenship to the United States and move to San Francisco as a young lady; I was self-assured both mentally and emotionally to take on that challenge." Momma and I hugged and I thanked her for inviting me to her exciting Mexican village and learning more about her culture.

Early next morning I fell out of bed! A mariachi band was marching by my window with their trumpets and drums blaring in my window. Mariachi singers were shouting out traditional party songs. I eventually came to my senses and looked out the window and was shocked to find my Momma dancing in the streets.