

NOTES

Mass shootings have become a staple in the American news cycle; however, few tragedies have shocked our country more than the Pulse nightclub shooting that occurred on June 12, 2016. In his first-person confession-al, Manuel Montéz gives us a fictional account of that tragic day as seen through the eyes of a father; and while few would argue that there is an undeniable bond between a father and his son, what happens when that son doesn't trust the father enough to confide in him the deep dark secret of his true identity? This selection should be performed by a mature male and be entered in either Dramatic Interpretation or Prose Interpretation; however, if used in Prose Interpretation, the drama mask icons are simply visible to show the performer where to turn the pages in the manuscript.

All men dream of one day having a son. I was no exception. And I was lucky. A year after I got married to the love of my life, we had a son—Daniel. I remember when my son, Daniel, was just a boy. He was such a handsome little boy, mainly because he takes after his papa. All the girls loved my Daniel. What can I say? I can't help but make a handsome son. Trust me. The word "handsome" doesn't apply to his mama's side of the family. I'm joking. Don't tell her I said that. But I did make a beautiful boy. Okay, his mama helped, too, but Daniel really takes after his old man. We raised Daniel to be a good Catholic. Everything our Daniel does makes us so proud. And, like any good father, I push him to be his best. Daniel is a good student. He makes the Honor Roll in college, and in high school, he was such a good athlete. He is the best at everything, well. except basketball. I'm not so tall, but his mama is barely over five feet. So what are you going to do? I'm not joking. We're short, but don't tell her I said that. My son got all his athletic skill from me. I can't help it; I am what I am: Good-looking, athletic and funny. What can I say? My boy always makes his family proud. I hope he knows that, and I hope he knows how much I love him. I don't know if I've ever told him. Daniel always says "I love you, Papa," and I always say back to him the same thing. I say, "I know you do," and he always smiles. I don't know why I never say "I love you, too, Son" or "I am so proud to be your papa, and I will always love you." I don't know. Maybe that's why Daniel never felt that he could tell me he was gay.



As Daniel was growing up, I always told him I wanted him to grow up to be a good man. I told him my dream was for him to find a good girl, like his mama, and give me lots of grandbabies. He would always smile and say, "Okay, Papa."

If I knew Daniel was gay, or if he had told me he was gay, I would have said "Son, I want you to grow up to be a good man, find a good guy to share your life with, and *still* find a way to give me lots of grandbabies." What can I say?

I just want some grandbabies! But...I had no idea he was gay. I have to admit, though, that it did cross my mind a few times. Daniel was always so crazy about those singers—you know, Madonna and Lady Gogo—but hey, I just thought he likes strong-minded women—strong-minded women that wear lots of makeup, like his mama. Don't tell her I said that.



I didn't know. But I *should* have known. Sure, I noticed Daniel never had a girlfriend, but I just kept thinking he's a ladies' man, like his papa. Maybe there were so many beautiful ladies that liked him, he just couldn't choose. Trust me. All ladies are beautiful, so how can he just pick one? I was thinking that he's just like me, his old man, and he thinks all women are so beautiful; Little, big, skinny, tall, or short and round, like his mama. Don't tell her I said that.

I kept thinking to myself that there is no way my son is gay. I just kept thinking... he likes too many girls. He likes too many girls, and he can't settle on just one. But I was wrong. I was wrong, because I didn't listen to what my heart was telling me. You should always—always listen to your heart. The heart—it never lies. I guess I secretly always knew that Daniel—my Daniel—was not the macho guy I hoped he would be. He was—sensitive. Maybe Daniel was too sensitive, at times. I don't know. But I know I always loved him. I always loved my Daniel. I just...couldn't tell him.



There was no doubt about whether my son was gay or not that morning his mama and I answered the door to see a police officer standing on our front porch. I'll never forget that day. It was the morning of June 12, 2016. The policeman asked us if we had a son named Daniel. My wife—she just—started crying hysterically the second the officer said Daniel's name. I guess she knew immediately. But I didn't know. I asked the officer if there had been some sort of accident. I guess I assumed there had been a car accident. Was Daniel okay? Where did they take him? Was he at a hospital? So many questions were flooding my mind that I barely heard what the officer said. He told us that there had been a mass shooting at a local night club—The Pulse.

Once the officer said the name of the night club, I had the answer to the question that had tormented me all those years. Now I knew. My son was gay. The officer told us a man opened fire at the club and started shooting as many people as he could. He told us the club was packed...and there were dozens killed and dozens wounded. Then he told us we were lucky...that Daniel was one of the ones wounded. The officer then escorted us to the hospital.