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As we approach a red light, my boyfriend Bo slows the car and before it ceases movement, seven kids materialize from behind vehicles and the sides of the street to converge on our rented Kia. They emerge from food carts lining the road. They run to us from half a block away. Each has a sponge in one hand and a handheld wiper in the other. None of the wipers have handles, but the kids use them deftly, scrubbing soap suds in circles across the windshields and windows and wiping them down in a matter of seconds. I hit the front windshield with my fist, shouting, “No, no, no.” Bo flips the windshield wipers on to dissuade them, but they persist. All of the window washers are young, around twelve or thirteen, all are lean, and move fast.

Bo looks at me, opens his car door, and gets out, shouting at them in strings of Spanish, saying that we don’t need our windshields cleaned twenty times in two blocks, telling them to leave and asking if there’s a prob-

lem. “*Quieres un problema?*” he yells in Spanish, *do you want a problem*, and brings his arms in a little closer to his body. At 6’2” and 280 pounds, he creates an imposing figure in any country.

The kids giggle and scamper away to their next target and Bo smiles when he sits back in the car, saying, “I just wanted to see what they’d do.” Many of the cars on the streets of Santo Domingo are dirty, many are old, and few have stickers on the front windshield confessing that the car is a rental, the occupants likely foreign to the Dominican Republic.

I navigate from a two-page foldout map of the country that Thrifty Car Rental provides. I fold it and put it in the side pocket next to me when Bo says that the kids are just trying to make some honest money, and he can’t fault them for it.

“It’s not the concept that bothers me, it’s the principle,” he continues. “I don’t want the windshields washed, I don’t need them washed every block when there’s traffic or a red light, and they don’t give you any say in the matter.”

“I’m sure they don’t have many job opportunities,” I say, watching as a middle-aged man curls around cars, displaying a plastic hologram poster in one hand and carrying a stack of them between his torso and other arm.

Peddlers shuffle between the stopped cars in the three-lane one-way street, offering bags of fried plantains, batteries, and watches. One man has a handful of windshield wipers. He stops at the front of the Kia, reaches over and lifts up our windshield wiper, then points to those he carries. I shake my head at the windshield wipers, at the flowers, at the bananas.

A few blocks later, at another red light, a young girl avoids eye contact, but begins to wash the windshield.

“No, no, no,” Bo and I shout simultaneously, the *no's* filling the car. She looks into our eyes through the windshield. She has brown eyes, long brown hair, a slender face and full eyelashes. Even though she scowls at us and turns away, I can't help but think that she's beautiful. The light turns green, and Bo rolls down his window and motions her over. Honks from cars fill the air as Bo hands her 10 pesos, equivalent to about one U.S. quarter. She smiles and walks away.

“I hope that she doesn't resort to a strip club or a whore house in a few years because she didn't make enough money doing this,” Bo says.

She is the only girl that I have seen in these streets dominated by male vendors and boy window washers. But what about the boys, I want to ask.