

"Are you ready to grip the wheel of the bumper car and take charge? Just know ... there will be sacrifices," Papi warned me.

Please, Papi,
I want to try...

"YOU HAVE TO BE
THIS TALL TO RIDE."

CRASH!

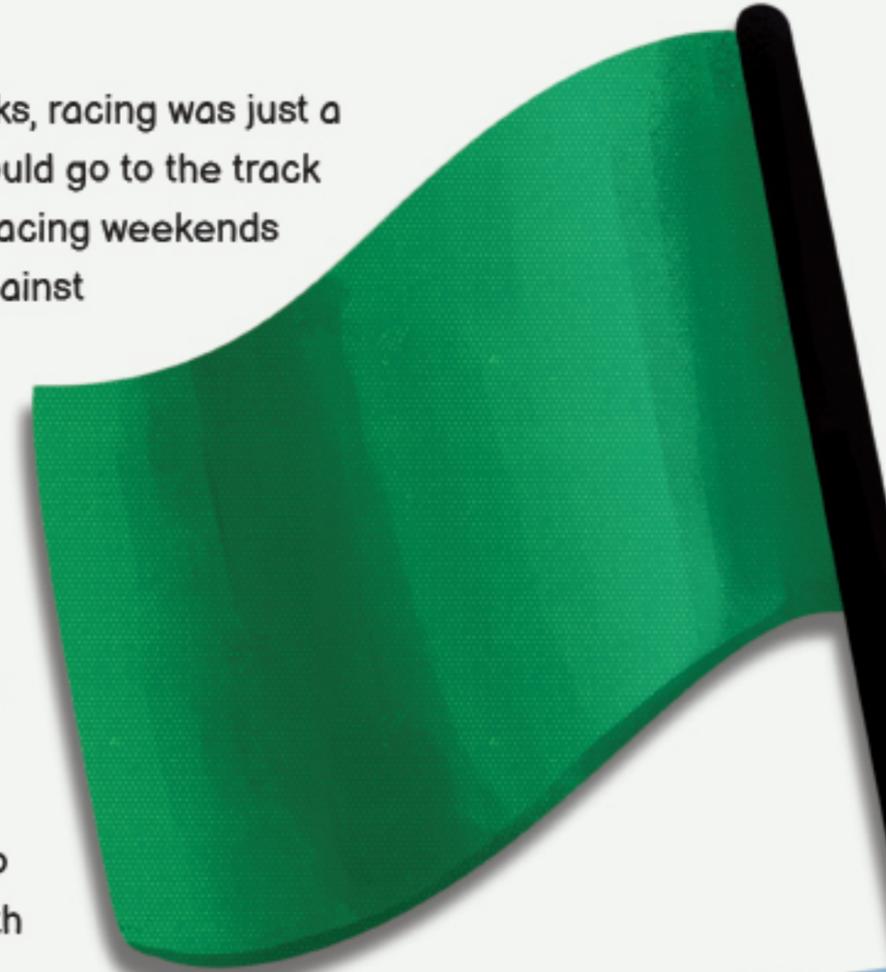
Bumper Cars

As a little girl growing up in Alcoy, Spain, I never felt like the other girls. Papi noticed that I was always bravely looking to take the steering wheel of our car. Somehow, my hands—and my heart—were drawn to the wheel. It made the most sense for Papi to see it. After all, he was a professional race car driver. His passion would become my passion, too.



Before I started at the karting tracks, racing was just a hobby. There was no pressure. I would go to the track to have fun. I quickly learned that racing weekends were different. The boys I drove against now were very serious about racing. They spent a lot of time practicing and taking care of their karts.

My first race was intense. I stared at the green flag at the start, waiting for it to drop. I began to sweat as the seconds ticked by. It felt like everything I had done in my life up to that point had led me to this race with my new kart.



My parents were glowing as I hopped out of the kart.
"You did so well," Mami said with a supportive smile.

"You showed everyone that you belong on
that track," Papi said. "But just because
you belong there, it does not mean they
will want you racing alongside them."
He knew I would have to earn their respect.

Papi was right. It was not easy being a girl in a sport **dominated** by boys.
I saw two boys near me on the winner's **podium** crying during the awards
ceremony because they did not have a **podium finish**. They were not only
sad that they lost, but were also mad because they lost to a girl.

