

Anais

Written By

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EXT. HIGHLAND PARK-EARLY MORNING

ANAIS (17) is panting heavily as she rips through wooded trails and grassy hills. She exercises her athletic spirit as she hurdles logs and dips between branches. She climbs up one last hill and rests at its peak. Her fatigue forces her to rest her hands on the back of her head. She spits and continues her route.

EXT. BUSHWICK STOOP

Anais climbs up the steps and pulls out her key from a necklace under her shirt. She enters to grab a bottle of water and returns to sit on the steps of the stoop. She chugs it until the water begins to overflow from her mouth. She takes a moment to look both ways down the street while gasping for air. She lets her body recover and checks the time on her phone. She unplugs her earbuds and quickly re-enters the building closing the door behind her.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM

Anais slips on her nondescript clothes. She gathers her textbooks, a study guide, and a binder with a QHSS cover. She sprints out of her room at the alarming sound of her sister's voice. She re-enters to grab her forgotten earbuds.

INT. KITCHEN

MANNY (26) is dressed in slacks and a blouse, ready for her manager position at Food Bazaar. She hands Anais a brown bag of food. She stops her, kisses her forehead lightly and speaks softly to her.

MANNY

Ben aca. You got this girl. Ok! You here me? You're getting in.

Anais looks in her eyes and smiles.

MANNY

You got this... Right? Right!

Anais nods her head and Manny kisses both of her cheeks and sends her off.

INT. BATHROOM

Anais enters the bathroom unannounced, disturbing her sister, Valencia (19), whose mouth is foaming with toothpaste while balancing a toothbrush. Her wet body is wrapped in a towel. She kisses her on the cheek and pokes her in her side. Valencia cringes and winces, a giggle escapes from her mouth. Anais leaves immediately and Valencia shakes her head. From a distance Valencia hears Manny's scold.

MANNY (O.S.)

Oye! Diez minutos ok!

She waits for a reply.

MANNY (O.S.)

Apurate coño!

Valencia leans into the sink and spits out the toothpaste in her mouth.

VALENCIA

Bruja.

EXT. BROADWAY

Anais bobs and weaves through hoards of chaos. She bypasses arguing, dancing, and overwhelming foot traffic as she makes her way to the Myrtle J platform.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

Anais hangs from an overhead pole and gazes out of a car window into a brick and concrete vista. Peacefully watching her neighborhood disappear while plugged in to her earbuds.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM

Valencia returns early from her morning shift. She immediately rips her shoes off, drops in the couch, and turns on the television. She finally acknowledges the camera man and turns her head to speak.

VALENCIA

I swear to God nine dollars ain't enough. People coming up to the counter with fifty kids ordering Happy Meals, asking me if I can take out the

pickles knowing damn well there're fifty other parents and their fat ass kids behind them.

She takes a moment to compose herself.

VALENCIA

Aqui tambien. Manny...I can't even sneeze without Manny cussin' me out. I gotta shitty job too, you don't here me yelling at everyone around here, making the neighbors bang on the walls.

Valencia begins to check her phone. She arbitrarily scrolls down a thread of messages and then clicks her phone off. She leaves the couch and pours a glass of water. The camera man follows her and continues recording the conversation.

VALENCIA

You see it too, right? She's freakin crazy right? Mad 'cause nobody been in her room but her sisters. Y Anais. Anais. Anais. "Anais was born premature and is more alive than you!" "Anais takes the J to school and you can't even get to your job in time." Ya! I didn't ask for this shit. I still work, I still help with the bills. Poor Anais has been drilled since she could walk. She can't even talk to a boy and she's freakin' seventeen. All that financial aid, scholarship shit just to be in the sticks upstate. We got everything right here in BK... Ask her about the shit we got away with in middle school.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRUIT STAND

Anais picks out a batch of fruit from the fruit stand, carefully studying the condition of each fruit and collecting them in a bag.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK HILL-AFTERNOON

Anais sits peacefully, comfortable with her surroundings. She

begins laying out sheets of paper with multiple charts and listed data of her observations. She takes out her notebook and makes additional notes. She acknowledges the camera man and discusses her independent project.

ANAIS

Hi.

She looks down to continue her work. She looks up again.

ANAIS

This is almost all the data I have this year. It's kind of a mess but I understand it enough...Just data and numbers, tryin' to save the world you know.

She smiles to herself. She continues to take notes.

ANAIS

You know it took 30 years for the city to get a filtration plant. What the hell is that? We've been pulling from the Catskills and now they thought, "Oh maybe we should make the city plant up to code again." What if they put that amount of care to the nasty ponds and lakes in our parks. What if... What if they invest in the same water filtration we do for water fountains and households and use that water to sustain our own city produce. It's nice to have farmer's markets and gardens but all the "fresh" markets are out in like Manhattan and Park Slope and all the other markets, especially here get second hand produce and nobody knows how to properly maintain them. We have quite a few garden spaces and parks. Empty lots and vacant storefronts begging to be greenhouses. We could give locals the knowledge to make their own produce or markets an opportunity to independently grow their own produce, not just on weekends either.

She closes her notebook and stares across the park.

ANAIS

I have to come out here just to breathe. All they way at the edge of Brooklyn.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK RESERVOIR

She takes out an empty bottle and fills it with reservoir water. She lifts it to the air and studies its contents.

ANAIS

Imagine a Latina from Wilson Av. discovering a way for Brooklyn to become self sufficient. Wouldn't that be unexpected? Wouldn't Cornell love that story? Wouldn't that guarantee a way out of here?

She continues to look across the water. Her face shows deep reflection towards what she has said.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK-WOODS

She continues to survey the park. Studying each tree, leaf, and patch of soil. Collecting samples for her studies.

ANAIS

Sometimes I wish I was out in Maine or something. Sometimes I feel like I am actually from somewhere like that. Maybe a farm or a forest that Mami and Papi found me in... They say this is the greatest city on earth. You think so? Everyone on top of each other and no one has the money to get out. Now we have artists revitalizing the "art scene". I just see more club goers who are surprised they get mugged when they walk around at midnight. I wasn't supposed to be out here by myself like this, not for this long. (To herself)At least that's what Mami said.

INT. KITCHEN

Manny returns for her lunch break. She wakes Valencia and complains and continues into the kitchen where she eats watching Valencia waist her time on the couch from afar.

MANNY

Oye! You thinking about going back or someone fill in for you again. No that's right it's Friday!

VALENCIA

Exactamente!

She acknowledges the camera man and turns her head to speak to him.

MANNY

Cada dias. Cada noches. I can only do so much you know. I love her... so much... Pero, cabeza dura.

She pokes the side of her head.

MANNY

No se oye nada! She gets in trouble, I bail her out. She gets "*infected*", now I gotta pay for treatment, and where's the guy at? Guess whose benefits get used too. I don't know how Mami did this with the three of us. At some point she must have know there was nothing more she could do.

CUT TO:

She gets up and walks to the sink. She begins to wash her own dishes and she notices that Valencia has left her dishes untouched. She pauses and her body tenses up. She releases her tension with a heavy exhale.

MANNY

It's gotta be in the blood. Back when the whole separation thing happened between Mami and Papi, our mother and father... Let's say they separated with us. It was only a matter of time but what was really messed up was seeing people choose sides. Just like that, I'm beside Mami, Valencia close to... El burro. Y Anais, too young to know what the hell is going on. She's

had it out for me ever since. Now Mami's gone and we're all here, forever maybe. Anni's got places to go but Valencia and I, se acabo.

She suddenly checks the time and realizes that she is about to be late. She walks over towards Valencia.

MANNY

I need you to grab take out again, alright? You got cash?

VALENCIA

Nope.

MANNY

Nunca!

Manny pulls a few dollar bills from her wallet and places next to Valencia.

MANNY

This is all you get. Don't get that Chinese shit either, I don't want to come back from my shift and see that nasty shit on my table.

She heads for the door.

MANNY

I better see a receipt too!

She closes the door behind her.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Valencia acknowledges the camera man and turns to talk to him.

VALENCIA

Are you guys one of the shows that bleep out all the cuss words?

CAMERAMAN

Uh. Yeah. Yeah we do that, we are on cable.

VALENCIA

I swear to God that puta can't even chill with you guys here. She acts

like I can't hear her big mouth in this box. She's got no right talkin' shit about Papi. Our mom was no Madre Maria. How do you think they split up in the first place? All the mothers on the block knew why she didn't come back on Thursday nights, Manny acts like she didn't even notice. What the hell was he supposed to do? I wouldn't be able to look at her let alone live in the same house. And he knew damn well he wasn't getting custody. She doesn't even let him come over anymore. That's your problem. I wanna see him! You can leave and let him in! That's fine though. He still working at Boar's Head.

She takes out her phone and begins texting.

VALENCIA

I gotta get the fuck outta here. See this is what I'm talkin' about I bet you right now Anni's out there at Highland doin' whatever, tree hugging, drinking reservoir water or whatever. It's Friday. Everybody worked their ass off for today and she's gonna miss out on all the fun we worked for. I don't know what happened. I respect her trying to get an education and all that but like why does she hate it here so much? She was born here. She knows everybody here. It's that high and mighty specialized school bullshit. Like they better than the rest of us.

She refocuses on her phone and continues texting.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK

Anais stretches and rests under a tree while eating an apple. She reads books on environmental science innovation and highlights passages. She acknowledges the camera and returns to her conversation.

ANAIS

What is the point of wearing your college school shirt to school? You've been bragging the whole year about it. You've made your announcement to the class and teachers all ready. I'm sure they're tired of hearing it too. I swear that's all they want. Who the hell cares if you're going to Columbia, so are seven other kids, calm down. And the... the damn numbers! How far you are above 2000 doesn't determine your self worth. Intelligence isn't on your Scan-tron. Whatever, I'm just going to get my acceptance letter, do all my hollering at home and go about my business as planned.

INT. BEDROOM-LATE AFTERNOON

Anais returns from her study in the park. She kisses Valencia on the cheek again. Valencia pretends to ignore her and cracks a smile. Anais drops everything next to her bed and falls on to the mattress. She plugs in her earbuds and closes her eyes.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK-DREAM

Anais envisions herself running through the forest again and across open fields. She watches herself trace tree bark with her fingertips and smell flower buds.

INT. BATHROOM

Valencia is preparing to go out for a Friday evening. She carefully applies makeup and forms different positions and poses to check herself out. She takes a selfie and sends it to a friend.

INT. BEDROOM

Valencia shakes Anais to wake her up.

VALENCIA

Yo Anni! Anni! Levantate! Levantate!.

Anais turns her head and rubs her eyes. She unplugs her earbuds.

VALENCIA

Listen. You only got a few more Fridays with me right? Let's go out tonight ok! Just me and you none of my friends or anyone else. I swear. That guy we saw in Milly's says he is DJing somewhere. You know exactly who I'm talkin' about.

ANAIS

I don't know what the hell you're talking about. I gotta stay here and wait for my letter.

VALENCIA

Come on Anni! Just tonight!

ANAIS

Para! Para! Valencia you know what this means to me, I have to see the letter. Ok?

Valencia sits in silence and stares at Anais.

CUT TO:

Valencia has her jacket removed and she sits beside Anais and runs her fingers through her hair. Her head rests on her shoulders as Anais faces the window. Valencia gets bored and makes her way out.

ANAIS

Did you get take out?

VALENCIA

There's Chinese in the fridge.

Valencia closes the door behind her. Anais stares hopelessly at the closed door.

INT. BEDROOM

She begins to eat another fruit and stares at the ceiling as she listens to her earbuds. She eventually passes out until she is awoken by the entrance of Manny.

ANAIS

You got it! You got it!

MANNY

Clado! Calmate! Calmate! Did Valencia
get takeout?

ANAIS

It's in the fridge! Let me see, let me
see!

MANNY

Ya! Ya!

Manny digs through the mail in her bag and slowly pulls out the sealed letter. She kisses her on the forehead and waits as she is pries it open.

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK-EARLY MORNING (MONTAGE)

Trees branches bend to the wind. Blades of grass toss and turn in empty fields. A family of geese enter the reservoir. A squirrel jets up a tree.

EXT. BROADWAY-DAY (MONATAGE)

The J train races across the tracks. Kids taunt each other with broken toys. Hasidic Jews walk stoically along the sidewalk. Groups of teens go shopping in sneaker stores.

BEDROOM-NIGHT

Anais is resting alongside her sister in bed while looking out a window filled by a street light. She follows passing airplanes with her eyes and she begins to slowly shut them, letting sleep peacefully overcome her.

THE END