

ASH

Written by  
Rudi Anna

Rudi Anna  
459 Willard Street #201  
Quincy, MA 02169

Cell. 617-894-3056  
Rudianna28@hotmail.com

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EXT. CITY STREET - DUSK

We track sideways on a pair of sneakers running with purpose along a broken city sidewalk. The pace is even, conditioned. Moving with the sneakers, we slowly lift up past the pendulating legs... arms... and finally the face of a WOMAN. This is ASHLEY (20's). We can see that she is a young and beautiful creature. Her frame is small, her poise fortified with an inner confidence, and yet.

A SMALL ELECTRONIC DEVICE on her belt. Hard to say what it's for.

Now Ashley's running towards us, and we're close up on her brown, wearied eyes.

As we widen, towering city structures glistening behind her. She breathes hard.

Over the image, an even, slightly disheartened older male voice levels out...

MALE (V.O.)

Dear Ash...

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - EVENING

Ashley's course and nimble female fingers tipped with scarlet nail polish inject a key into a dead-bolt, smartly turning it to the left. We pull out to see Ashley walking into her apartment.

MALE (V.O.)

I got your letter yesterday. I was so happy.

INT. APARTMENT ROOM - EVENING

Ashley enters the room and moves down a narrow hallway of a dimly lit apartment, the likes of which has seen better days. Her forehead is heavy with perspiration, her hair frazzled from exercise. She shuffles through a small stack of the day's mail. One ENVELOPE arrests her attention.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It seemed the only thing that was making my time here so hard was not hearing from you.

The envelope is torn open. Her name and address poorly written on the cover. The return address reads by stamp:

**ATTICA CORRECTIONAL FACILITY.**

From it, she pulls out a folded loose-leaf letter tucked inside a Christmas card, its cover depicting a jolly Santa Clause hanging a stocking over the fireplace. She glances over the hand-written note, quickly folds it up and slides it back into the envelope.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for writing me. I was really beating myself up over you

Ashley slips off her sneakers with her feet, checking her phone. From behind her, we see a door open:

AN OLDER WOMAN with broad shoulders, a chubby face enters, startling Ashley. She is the Ninera or Nanny.

NINERA

Buenas.

Bundled in the Nanny's arms is an INFANT BABY BOY holding a Sophie the Giraffe toy in his tiny fingers. This is Ashley's son.

Delighted, Ashley nuzzles her face against her son's, peppering him with little kisses. The Ninera passes him to Ashley.

ASHLEY

(to Ninera)

Que tal, Mamen?

Ashley kisses the Ninera tenderly on the cheek.

NINERA

Bien, bien, gracias a Dios. Le iba a preparar la botella. (I was just about to prepare his bottle)

ASHLEY

Ah, si...

Ashley hands the Baby back to the Ninera. The Ninera places him in a high chair, then moves to the refrigerator, taking out a large plastic container.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...I just hope you know how much a part of my life you are. You are my hope and world.

(MORE)

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I intend to do everything in my power to be the best...sober, Dad to you. My goal is to make you happy.

The Ninera pours milk from a plastic container into a little Sponge Bob sippy-cup while:

Ashley examines her son, wiping his cheek, fixing his shirt. The Baby seems to pull away from his mother.

ASHLEY

(whispering to Baby)

Mommy's sweaty'n gwoss, huh?

(baby talk)

So sweaty and gwoss.

The Ninera screws the lid back on the sippy-cup, then points to a heavy text book resting on top of a stack of other large text books. They look like they haven't been opened in a long time.

NINERA

Rego mi cafe sobre tu libro de sociologia. (He spilled some of my coffee on your school book.)

ASHLEY

Uh-huh...Pues...no importa. No te preocupes. (It's not really important, don't worry about it.)

Ashley smiles. The Ninera returns a look of mild disappointment as she helps the Baby drink. Ashley watches this, wanting to help, but remains frozen in her gaze.

ASHLEY (cont'd)

He's so thirsty, huh? Whatta thirsty boy!

MALE (V.O.)

...I saw the board of pardons today. They are recommending 19 months...June next year, but I won't know for sure until about a month from now. I could do only 10, but I'm not holding my breath. You'll know when I hear.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Ashley walks down another short hallway, entering a bare, colorless living room, the only exception being a muted TV in a corner, showing cartoons. She dumps the day's mail on the table.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ...Anyway, thanks again for the card with such good news. I am the proudest father in the world.

Ashley turns the TV off. She flips open a laptop on a coffee table and turns it on. While waiting, she examines her arms and legs for blemishes. Then she takes the same ELECTRONIC DEVICE from before, flips out its USP, and plugs it into the laptop... A CHARGE light flashes on.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
 It said that you're making some money as a cashier and doing well at it I'm sure.

MOMENTS LATER

on the monitor, we see that she is writing an email:  
***Marsella's Lounge at 8:30 is perfect. What would you like me to wear?***

Below her response we see the original e-mail: ***Oliver said I would get a deal with you tonight. 8:30. Usual spot?***

She blandly reads the message. She looks at the TV for a bit, lost in thought when - the Ninera and Baby enter. Quickly, she hits SEND, pulling the laptop screen down a little.

ASHLEY  
 Did you empty the trash today?

NINERA  
 I do right now, okay?

ASHLEY  
 Thank you. Can you put him in his walker?

NINERA  
 Claro... Claro.

The Ninera slides the Baby into his walker. He starts CRYING the second he is in it.

NINERA (cont'd)  
 (softly to Baby)  
 Calmate, chavalito. (calm down,  
 little one.)

MALE (V.O.)  
 I don't think I'll make it out for  
 your graduation, but please let me  
 know the details.

The Nanny grabs a full wastebasket and leaves.

ASHLEY  
 Gracias.

Ashley watches her child whimpering in his walker, but something catches her eye. She notices:

A small box under the coffee table, strewn among a pile of magazines, old junk mail and baby toys. She picks it up and opens it.

MALE (V.O.)  
 Are you graduating with high  
 honors? I hope you were studying  
 hard as hell, getting good grades.  
 What did your major end up being?

Inside the box are a number of folded notes, pictures, various mementos - but on the top is a dated PHOTO of a white MALE in a formal, navy dinner dress uniform warmly embracing a Chicano WOMAN wearing a simple white dress. It appears to have been their wedding day. These are Ashley's parents.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
 ...Let me know. I am so excited  
 about your future!...I'm glad your  
 mom is doing well too. Are you two  
 keeping in touch?

Ashley's gaze is halted by: Her father's Christmas card and letter on the table. The Baby sniffles in its walker.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
 I'm not sure how much she's had to  
 do with your success anymore, but  
 you have both been a success story  
 to me.

Ashley folds up the letter, slips it back in the card, and drops it into the box, covering the photograph.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
 I am proud of her too. I think I  
 still love her.

Ashley drops her face, some unresolved feelings brewing inside. Her gaze grows distant, her eyes tearing.

The Ninera comes back in, wiping her hands. She glances to the computer, and then to Ashley. They exchange a long hard look - an awkward understanding.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D) (cont'd)  
 Man, Ash, there is still this part  
 of me only she can hold, and that  
 only she can carry... and that  
 creates this lack... I think I'll  
 have to feel inside for the rest of  
 my life.

Ashley wipes her forehead. Embarrassed. Ashamed.

ASHLEY  
 Me tengo que alistar. (I need to  
 get ready.)

NINERA  
 (with serious resolve)  
 Si. Como no. (Of course)

Ashley closes her laptop.

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

Steam circulates around a rain of hot water as Ashley showers. She lathers the shampoo through her hair.

MALE (V.O.)  
 ...Make sure you visit Grandma, OK?  
 Hey, if you get a chance, come and  
 visit me too. I think it's out of  
 the way, though, but, damn that  
 would be nice.

As we pan down, she touches herself along her breasts and thighs. She whispers something indistinct to herself. Then she uses her right hand to cross herself. It is a Hail Mary. She does this over and over again, the water falling over her face.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

In front of a vanity mirror, Ashley stands with one bared leg on the seat as she massages lotion onto her thigh, then her calf.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...Your picture is far from ugly.  
You really have grown into a  
beautiful woman.

She struggles to pull a tight, short, shiny skirt above her waste. Her lace bra is anything but modest, followed by a loose hanging cotton blouse.

MALE (cont'd)  
I keep expecting to hear you're  
going 'Hollywood,' or something.

In front of a propped up vanity mirror, she paints her lips with a thick red lipstick as she transforms in front of our eyes from a simple young mother to a gorgeous woman dressed to appeal to any man's carnal desire.

MALE (V.O.) (cont'd)  
...I made the mistake of showing it  
to a friend in here and that was  
the last time I show pictures of  
you to anyone.

A deep sigh as she looks deeply into her eyes, then down to her waist. She pulls her shirt tightly around her hips, cinching it... examining the reflection... turning her hips this way and that.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ashley enters the kitchen to find the Ninera feeding her child. Behind them, Ashley swipes a paper towel to press against her red lips to wipe away the excess lipstick.

MALE (V.O.)  
...I would love to call you, but I  
think you have a block on your  
phone. I will try and call this  
Sunday if the blocks are down.

Ashley tosses the paper towel in a garbage basket under the sink.

ASHLEY  
No me esperes (Don't wait up.)



The Ninera looks up.

NINERA

Ay hija, porque no te quedas aqui con nosotros. El nino necesita estar con su madre. (Oh child, why don't you stay home with us. The boy needs to be with his mother.)

Ashley shakes her head - no. She wishes she could.

ASHLEY

Te lo agradezco muchisimo. Se que mereces mas que lo que te puedo dar. (I am so grateful to you. I know you deserve more than what I can give you.)

NINERA

Cariño, no me debes nada. Pero si quieres darme algo...pues, acompañame a la iglesia. Allí aprenderas de un camino mejor. (Dear, you owe me nothing... but, come to church with me. There, you'll learn of a better way.)

ASHLEY

Ay, Tia...

Ashley has heard it before as she bends down to kiss the Ninera on the cheek. She moves to her baby child. A long - long kiss on his forehead.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...If I can't get through, I will try every Sunday and maybe I'll get through eventually. OK?

She leaves the room. The Ninera pauses before picking up the spoon to continue her feeding.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - NIGHT

The stark hallway is illuminated only by Ashley's sheer beauty. Her eyes remain sad.

MALE (V.O.)

... Ash, I just can't believe how great you're doing. Keep up the good work. You don't realize it, but you've helped my self-esteem a lot.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Ashley busts out the door of her apartment. Parked on the curb in front is a TOYOTA CORROLA. She unlocks the car and gets in.

MALE (V.O.)  
 ...Thanks, Ash, for being such a  
 good kid. You're doing everything  
 I wish I would have done when I was  
 your age...

INT. TOYOTA CORROLA - DRIVING - NIGHT

Ashley drives, while talking on her cell phone.

ASHLEY  
 Ya, I'm just about there... Yes.

She takes out a GPS Tracking Device from her bag, then sticks it on the dashboard. She activates it, a red light turning on. The Device's Electronic Female Voice chimes on:

TRACKING DEVICE (V.O.)  
 Device activated. Plotting  
 position.

ASHLEY  
 Okay, it's on.

A beat. Ashley drives, watching the Tracking Device.

ASHLEY (cont'd)  
 You see me now?... Yes, it's  
 charged. Don't worry, Oly. I'm good  
 to go.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Ashley stands, leaning against her car in a strip mall parking lot. She smokes a cigarette while she waits.

MALE (V.O.)  
 By the way, sorry about the  
 Christmas card...They claimed to  
 have ran out of birthday ones so  
 this was all I could get my paws  
 on. It's probably closer to  
 Christmas than your birthday by the  
 time you read this anyway.

A jet black LINCOLN SEDAN pulls up next to her. She ashes her butt on the ground.

INT. LINCOLN TOWN CAR - CONTINUOUS

Ashley slides into the back seat, pulling her dress down so it doesn't ride up too much. To her side sits an OLDER MAN in a business suit on his cell phone. He pays her no regard. The car pulls away.

MALE (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
...Anyways, I will let you know  
when I find out my 'real' release  
date. I hope it's soon. I can't  
wait to see you.

The man hangs up his phone and looks to Ashley... Creepily...  
Lustfully...

OLDER MAN  
Hello again...

She doesn't resist as he begins gliding his finger up her skirt.

MALE (V.O.)  
Like I said, I will write soon. I  
miss you, and I love you so very  
much...Love...Dad.

Ashley looks out the window, watching the street roll by.

Black.

The End.