

The Adjunct

written by

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1

EXT. THE PARADISO CAFE - NIGHT

1

Sitting at one of the outside tables of The Paradiso Cafe, CAROLINA CELAYA, recent MA graduate, chips away at a stack of papers that need grading. A bunch of poorly written Literacy Narratives. Bland sentence structure. Fragment ideas. Too many pronouns. So many. Pronouns. So many...Carolina dozes off.

From inside the cafe, EMILY, the barista, comes up to Carolina.

EMILY

(tapping on Carolina's shoulder)

Hey. It's midnight. Closing time.

CAROLINA

(slightly disoriented)

Oh. Uhm. Yeah, of course. Thank you.

Carolina looks down at the stacks of papers before her, wondering where she can go from here.

2

EXT. A PARKING LOT - NIGHT

2

Several small piles of papers now adorn the dashboard of Carolina's car. She sips on a cup of fast-food coffee.

As she continues grading, leaving marginal comments, underlining spelling errors and circling tense shifts, Carolina finds herself dozing off.

She checks the time.

3:06 AM

She sinks back into the driver's seat and closes her eyes.

3

EXT. FNU GYM - MORNING

3

Carolina grabs a duffel bag out of her car and walks over to the gym, which opens at 6 AM. She waits a minute or two for one of the workers to unlock the door.

4

LOCKER ROOM

4

Carolina showers in the locker room. Soapsuds drip down to her feet. She reaches over and shuts the water off.

5 INT. DEUXIEME MAISON CLASSROOM - MORNING

5

Carolina sits at the front of an empty classroom, chipping away at the last of the papers she has left to grade.

Upon writing "91" on the last of them, she cracks her neck, stretches, and sits back for a minute, her eyes closed.

Suddenly, the classroom door opens and ESTEBAN, one of her least promising students, walks in.

ESTEBAN

Good morning, professor.

He sits down at his usual desk in the back row and taps his pencil rhythmically along to the loud, obnoxious music emanating from his headphones.

Carolina is visibly annoyed. She looks down at her phone.

7:04 AM

Nearly 30 minutes before class starts.

She takes a deep breath, and sighs.

6 LATER

6

Carolina lectures in her first ENC 1101 class of the day. She's clearly knowledgeable, passionate. But the students in her 7:30 AM class would clearly rather be anywhere else.

CAROLINA

So, anyone wanna share where
they're at with their Rhetorical
Listening blogs?

One student emphatically raises their hand.

Carolina looks on at them explain their project. She nods, and nods, and nods. Eyes slowly growing heavier. The sounds of the classroom fading into a droning buzz.

Esteban is dead asleep in the back of the room.

Amanda laughs at a meme on her phone.

Carolina's eyes look on at her students, slowly growing heavier.

7 EXT. FNU COURTYARD - MORNING

7

Carolina walks down the courtyard towards the DMAC building. From the corner of her eye, she sees Dr. Kraemer, the chair of the Writing and Rhetoric Department.

She waves her down and approaches her.

CAROLINA

Hey, Dr. Kraemer!

DR. KRAEMER

Oh, hey, Carolina. How are you?
How's the semester going?

CAROLINA

Oh, good, good. Teaching a couple sections of 1101 here and a few over at NDC.

DR. KRAEMER

Oh, wow. That's a lot. You managing okay?

CAROLINA

Yeah, yeah. It's not so bad. But uh...

(beat)

I was wondering if you knew anything about that full-time instructor position that had opened up.

DR. KRAEMER

Oh. Right. Well, we finished up interviews with all of the candidates. Now, just waiting to hear from all of the people on the search committee. Everyone who applied should be hearing back really soon. Just give it a little time.

CAROLINA

Gotcha. Okay, well, that's great.

DR. KRAEMER

For what it's worth, you really impressed everyone. I think you really stood out.

"For what it's worth," Carolina thinks. That doesn't sound very promising.

CAROLINA

I, uh. I'm glad.

DR. KRAEMER

I know it can be hard. Being an adjunct. I had to do it for a few semesters while I waited to hear back from some different positions I'd applied for. It's hard work. The hours can be unkind. Pay could stand to be better. But just keep pushing.

CAROLINA

(forcing a smile)

Thank you, Dr. Kraemer. That means a lot.

(beat)

I'm, uh, gonna head to my next class, but thank you! It was so great seeing you.

Carolina begins walking over to her next class just as Esteban runs up behind her and taps on her shoulder.

ESTEBAN

Hey, Miss.

Carolina stops and turns around.

CAROLINA

Oh. Hey, Esteban. What can I do for you?

ESTEBAN

I had a question about the Literacy Narratives.

CAROLINA

(continuing to walk)

Do you mind if we walk? I have another class in a couple minutes across campus.

ESTEBAN

Yeah, yeah. Anyway, uh, I was just wondering if I could get an extension on mine. I just. Last week was super busy, I had a lab report due the same day I had an exam and, well, with work...

Carolina grits her teeth and slowly inhales through her nose and out of her mouth.

Esteban looks down and away from her, seemingly ashamed. Frowning.

Carolina's eyes fix on Esteban. He seems to genuinely feel bad. Or he could be full of it. Either way, Carolina yields.

CAROLINA

(rushed)

Hey. It's fine. Sure. You're gonna lose 10 points for the late submission, but just get it to me on Friday, okay? I'll be in the English Department conference room holding office hours.

ESTEBAN

Oh. Uh. I'm not on campus on Fridays. Does Thursday work?

Carolina stops in her tracks.

CAROLINA

(increasingly frustrated)

Look. I. I'm teaching over at NDC on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Just. Just email it to me.

ESTEBAN

Thank you, Miss!

Carolina continues walking across campus, now running a little late. She looks down to check the time.

CAROLINA

Shit.

She stumbles into her second class of the day, a little out of breath.

CAROLINA (CONT'D)

Hey, y'all. Sorry I'm late.

(stopping to catch her breath)

So...rhetorical listening...

TIME LAPSE OF A CLOCK, STOPPING AT 2 PM.

8

INT. SEÑORA CELAYA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

8

Carolina sits at the kitchen counter, watching as her mom, ILEANA CELAYA, cooks up some picadillo.

ILEANA

Bueno, y que? Como va el trabajo?

Eyes closed, resting her head on her hand, Carolina takes in the smell of the ground beef and raisins cooking in tomato sauce and sazón seasoning. Her favorite.

ILEANA (CONT'D)

Oye. Que? Tienes sueño?

CAROLINA

(startled)

Oh. No, no. Todo va bien. Mucho trabajo, pero...nada que no pueda manejar.

ILEANA

Vaya que bueno. Mira que a Michael le esta yendo bien ayi en la Universidad de Georgia

CAROLINA

Que bueno. Mikey siempre fue super inteligente. Le va ir bien aya.

ILEANA

Ay si, pero como lo extraño. Por lo menos tu todavía vives aquí en Miami y me vienes a visitar.

Carolina and her mother share a smile, Ileana reaching out and caressing Carolina's arm for a moment before turning around to check on the picadillo.

ILEANA (CONT'D)

Ya casi esta.

CAROLINA

Oye, mami. Y el correo?

ILEANA

Ah. Te lo puse ayi en una bolsa por la puerta.

Carolina gets up and brings the bag over to the couch, seemingly checking the pile for a specific letter. Nothing but bills.

ILEANA (CONT'D)

Oye, y explicame otra vez: Porque no puedes recibir correo a tu apartamento?

Carolina shrugs.

CAROLINA

Ay, ma. Ya te dije. El dueño de el edificio no le gusta que le llegue correo ayi.

ILEANA

Que raro es eso. Nunca e oido de algo asi. Porque no hablas con el? Eso debe ser contra la lei. Como es que se llama ese edificio donde estas rentando?

CAROLINA

(annoyed)

Ay, ma! Ya! Olvidate de eso. Total. Prefiero que lleguen aqui las cosas. Me da chance de verte a ti.

ILEANA

Bueno. Sierto.

Carolina's phone buzzes. She picks it up. A message from an unknown number reads:

"Hello. Saw ur ad on SC. I wanted 2 buy sum feet pix."

Carolina, with a blank face, responds:

"Hey, baby. It'll be \$20 for the set. \$35 if you want a specific nail polish color. ;)"

Another buzz from her phone prompts Carolina to remove her slip-ons. She begins taking pictures of her feet, looking over to make sure her mom isn't looking. Then...

Ileana walks over to the couch, sitting down next to Carolina, startling her. Ileana places a tupperware container full of picadillo on the table across from them.

ILEANA (CONT'D)

Mira. Para que tengas ayi en tu casa. Te puse un container de arrozito tambien.

Carolina looks down at the picadillo and then hugs her mom.

CAROLINA

Gracias, ma.

ILEANA

Ay, mi niña. Que orgullosa estoy de ti. Mi hija la profesora. Wow.

Her mother's words strike Carolina. *Orgullosa*. She seems on the verge of tears.

9 EXT. THE PARADISO CAFE - NIGHT

9

Sequence of Carolina grading outside of the Paradiso Cafe.

Emily comes outside and walks up to Carolina, brown paper bag in hand.

EMILY

11:50. We're closing in 10. Manager told me I had to start bringing the chairs in.

CAROLINA

Oh, yeah. Sure, sure. I'll be out in a minute.

EMILY

I, uh. I got you some croissants that didn't sell. They have Nutella inside. They're very yummy.

Carolina reaches out and takes the warm, brown paper bag.

CAROLINA

Oh. I...

(beat)

Thank you. That's really nice of you.

EMILY

Yeah, we, uh. We usually have to throw them away, but fuck that. I think that's so stupid. Wasteful.

CAROLINA

Yeah, that's so silly. Thank you.

(eyes squinting as she looks at the name tag)

Emily. It means a lot.

EMILY

Well, you know. I see you out here working super hard all the time. Just. Wanted to let you know you're appreciated.

Carolina smiles softly, visibly touched by the gesture.

CAROLINA

Well, again. Thank you. Probably
gonna eat these for breakfast
tomorrow morning.

Emily smiles brightly.

EMILY

See you tomorrow, probably.

CAROLINA

(half-laughingly)
Probably. Yeah.

10 EXT. A PARKING LOT - NIGHT

10

Carolina grades in her car.

After getting through some papers, she yawns and sits back
for a beat.

Carolina gets out of the car, dragging herself over to the
trunk. She places her bag inside and pulls out a blanket and
pillow.

She opens one of the back doors, throws down her pillow and
settles in for sleep.

The tupperware of picadillo sits on the passenger's seat, a
good quarter of it eaten.

The open glove compartment reveals an assortment of letters
and bills.

This is Carolina's home, like so many adjunct professors
across the country.

Laying there in the back seat, she hears a notification from
her phone. Drained and exhausted, she doesn't think to check
it at first, but eventually musters the will to lean over to
the front of the car and grab it.

She opens up her email application.

(1) new email from...DR. VANESSA KRAEMER

She taps on the email.

Her eyes scan through every inch of the attachment letter.

Her eyes seem to stop at a line, and her mouth just barely
opens right before we CUT TO BLACK.