

INCHES AWAY, GALAXIES APART

Written by

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INT. GIANA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

The sun is low in the sky. GIANA ROSE LOPEZ, 18, stout but pretty with short brown hair is adjusting a star-shaped hair clip in the kitchen mirror. A Polaroid camera hangs from her neck. Taped to the edges of the mirror are a series of beautiful Polaroid photographs.

Her father JORGE, 43 with a mild beer belly and wearing a navy janitorial uniform, walks in carrying a box. When he sets the box down on a chair, he eyes an envelope on the kitchen table.

JORGE

When are you going to open it,
mija?

GIANA

Today. Priscilla finally got hers.

Giana watches in the mirror as Jorge pulls old photo albums and stacks of yellowing photographs from the box.

GIANA (CONT'D)

What is that stuff?

JORGE

Just stuff. Your mother's, I think.
(a beat)
Probably belongs in the garbage.

Giana walks over and reaches into the box. She picks out a single photograph; the corners have been cut and the back reads "Halloween 2019." Giana grins at it.

GIANA

Garbage? These are memories!

JORGE

Painful ones.

Giana's phone buzzes. She returns the photo to the box.

GIANA

I gotta go. Don't forget your
lunch, Papi. And leave the box.
I'll go through all this later, ok?

She pecks him on the cheek, pockets the envelope, and exits the house.

EXT. PARK BENCH - CONTINUOUS

PRISCILLA HERNANDEZ, 18, bronze skinned with fake colored extensions in her hair, is sitting with earphones in and dribbling a basketball.

Giana is walking towards her. She stops, gets on one knee, and takes a photo of Priscilla with her Polaroid. Priscilla looks up and rolls her eyes.

PRISCILLA

I've been asking you since we were five to please ask my permission before you take my picture.

GIANA

And I've been telling you since we were five that you're a better model when you don't know you're modeling.

PRISCILLA

Well, you look five years old with that damn hair clip again. You gotta put that poor thing to rest.

GIANA

No way! This thing is good luck. It helped me win the spelling bee.

PRISCILLA

Yeah... when I gave it you in the 3rd grade! Throw it out already.

GIANA

And I was wearing it when I got Bobby during spin the bottle at my cousin's quinceñera.

PRISCILLA

Ew. Look, I'm just saying, there are more modern hair clips.

GIANA

Yes, but today is a special occasion!

She holds up her letter. Priscilla pulls hers from her jacket pocket. Giana is grinning with excitement.

GIANA (CONT'D)

Let's do it!

Sitting side-by-side, they simultaneously open their letters and read in silence.

GIANA (CONT'D)

Yes! I got in!

Priscilla nods slowly.

PRISCILLA

Yup... Me, too.

Giana's smile fades. She looks at Priscilla, confused. Priscilla avoids eye contact.

INT. GIANA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The sun is gone and the night is dark.

Giana enters and slams the door behind her. She's been crying. She rips the hair clip off and throws it in the trash. She misses and it lands on the floor beside the trash can.

INT. GIANA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The stove clock reads 2:11am. Giana is sitting at the kitchen table. There are hundreds of photographs strewn everywhere. There is a cup of coffee in her hands.

She's staring at the "Halloween 2019" photograph. It shows Giana and Priscilla dressed up as Danny and Sandy from *Grease*, respectively. After a moment she slams it face down on the table.

Jorge enters in his pajamas. He looks around in shock.

JORGE

Mija, what are you doing up?

GIANA

Couldn't sleep.

JORGE

Are- Are you drinking coffee?

Giana takes a sip and starts tearing up. Jorge shifts some photographs aside and joins Giana at the kitchen table.

JORGE (CONT'D)

Mi amor, what's going on? You hate coffee.

Giana starts to cry.

 GIANA
 It's so disgusting.

Jorge takes the cup from her and rubs her back.

 JORGE
 Talk to me.

Giana stays quiet for a moment, then looks up at her father.

 PRISCILLA (V.O.)
 G, I got another acceptance letter
 in the mail yesterday.

FLASHBACK - THE PARK BENCH - EARLIER

 PRISCILLA
 And I'm thinking about going.

 GIANA
 Wow... That's great...

Priscilla laughs nervously.

 PRISCILLA
 Yeah... It's my dream school, G.

Giana is frowning.

 GIANA
 But... can you even afford it?

 PRISCILLA
 What?

 GIANA
 I'm just saying, realistically
 speaking, that's an expensive
 school.

She holds up her letter.

 GIANA (CONT'D)
 This is more affordable.

She looks hopeful.

 PRISCILLA
 (scoffing)
 It's also 5 miles away.
 (MORE)

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)

I want to get the hell away from
this town, G. Away from my family.

GIANA

But... what about what we talked
about? Our plans?

Priscilla shakes her head.

PRISCILLA

I'm sorry, I really am. I never
thought I'd get in! But I did.

A beat. Giana is fighting tears.

INT. GIANA'S KITCHEN - BACK TO PRESENT

PRISCILLA (V.O.)

This is what I want.

Giana is wiping her tears. Jorge sighs.

JORGE

I'm sorry, querida. That couldn't
have been easy.

GIANA

First Mom leaves, and now this.

Jorge shifts uncomfortably. After a moment, he puts an arm
around Giana and pulls her close.

JORGE

Mi vida, she's still your friend,
even if she's far away. Your mother
and I... There's no fixing that,
but I regret every day that I never
told her how much I loved her.
That's my mistake to live with.
Don't let it be yours.

Giana sniffs.

GIANA

What do you mean?

JORGE

If you love Priscilla, make sure
she knows it.

Jorge kisses the top of her head.

JORGE (CONT'D)
I'm going back to bed. Try to get
some sleep okay?

GIANA
Thanks, papi.

Jorge leaves. Giana looks at the "Halloween 2019" photograph.
With a deep breath, she pulls out her phone.

SUPER: *"Meet me before school? Our spot."*

EXT. PARK BENCH - DAY

The sun is just starting to appear. The stars are still out.
Giana is sitting, elbows on her knees. She glances at her
phone several times.

Giana leans back and looks up at the stars. After a moment,
she closes her eyes.

PRISCILLA (V.O.)
Omigosh, if my parents find out!

GIANA (V.O.)
Stop leaning, you're too heavy!

FLASHBACK - HALLOWEEN 2019 - EXT. PARK BENCH - NIGHT

The girls are stumbling down the street, Priscilla leaning
heavily on Giana.

They collapse onto the bench. Priscilla is in a fit of
giggles. Giana straightens up, flustered.

GIANA
I told you those drinks were bad
news.

Priscilla sits up and gives Giana an exaggerated pleading
look.

PRISCILLA
You're not gonna tell anyone,
though, are you?

She bats her eyelashes. Giana laughs and nudges her.

GIANA
You know I won't.

Priscilla hugs Giana, resting her chin on Giana's shoulder. They stay like that for a moment. Priscilla watches Giana.

PRISCILLA

Is it bad that I really want to
kiss you right now?

A beat. Giana frowns.

GIANA

Wha-?

As Giana turns her head, Priscilla plants a kiss on her. Giana's eyes are wide.

PRISCILLA (V.O)

Hey.

EXT. PARK BENCH - BACK TO PRESENT

Giana stands to face Priscilla. They are standing on opposite ends of the bench.

PRISCILLA

I got your text. What's up?

Giana stands and wrings her hands nervously.

GIANA

Look, I know it's your dream
school, Priscilla, and I'm not
gonna tell you not to go. But... I
just wish I had known you had
different plans.

PRISCILLA

G, it's not about you. Or us. I
have to do this for myself. You
know what life is like with my
family.

GIANA

No, I know that. I know. I just
wish you had said something to me.

PRISCILLA

Seriously? Giana, I only applied
with you to that school because you
weren't listening to what I wanted.
All you paid attention to was what
you wanted!

GIANA

I thought we wanted the same thing!

PRISCILLA

I don't want to rot here!

Silence. Giana starts to cry. A moment passes.

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)

Come with me, G. Leave this town.

She looks hopeful. Giana blinks, then shakes her head.

Priscilla sighs, then turns to leave.

GIANA

Priscilla! Please... I don't know
how to do anything without you.

A beat. Priscilla approaches Giana and hugs her.

PRISCILLA

You'll find a way, Giana.

A few tears escape Priscilla's eyes. A moment passes.

PRISCILLA (CONT'D)

We both will.

INT. GIANA'S KITCHEN - DAY

SUPER: "Several days later..."

Warm light fills the room. A window is open and the curtains are flapping in the breeze. Giana walks in with the box of photographs and sets it on the table. She rummages until she finds what she's looking for.

It's the "Halloween 2019" photograph. Giana sighs heavily and turns towards the trash can. A strong breeze blows the photograph out of Giana's hands. It lands on the ground beside the trash can.

Giana shifts the trash can over. She slowly reaches down and picks up the photograph. Beside it is the star shaped hair clip. She picks that up, too.

Giana looks from one to the other. Then looks at the trash can. A beat.

Giana walks back towards the box. She clips the hair clip onto the corner of the photograph, smiles, and tucks it away inside the box.