

Home

Short Film

Halle Hazzard

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

A soft humming drifts around the kitchen. AMAYA (6) listens as it flows in and out of her grandmother's chest, a sound as natural as the rise and fall of the sea.

Her grandmother stands at the counter and slices open a ripe julie mango. The blade glides through with a soft *rip*. The fruit neatly splits in two.

Amaya stands on her tippy toes, her eyes wide with wonder. She watches its golden-orange flesh gleam in the light.

GRANDMOTHER

(holding up the mango)

See dis', Amaya? This fruit grow sweet in di hot sun. Back in Trinidad, we had a mango tree right in front di yard - one so sweet yah could smell it from di road.

AMAYA

(jumps up excited)

Ooh let me taste!

GRANDMOTHER

Patience, child. Good tings' does come to those who..

AMAYA

(pouting)

"Wait." I know grandma!

She smiles and hands Amaya a slice. The juice drips down her fingers, sticky and rich. Amaya bites in, her eyes widen.

GRANDMOTHER

Yah tasting all ah Trinidad in dat mango, enuh. The colors of carnival, the markets in Port of Spain, the sea that never ends.

Amaya looks at her grandma in awe, as if her words are magic.

GRANDMOTHER (CONT.)

It di whole world in yuh hand dey. And
each bite is ah likkle piece of *home*.

AMAYA

(excited)

Really?! I wanna go! Can we go?

GRANDMOTHER

(laughs)

One day I'll take yah dey'. Yah gon' see.

She caresses Amaya's cheek. Amaya leans into her touch. She finishes the mango, the juice trailing down her chin.

Their laughter fills the kitchen, warm and alive.

TITLE: HOME

INT. CHURCH - EVENING

SUPERIMPOSE: "TEN YEARS LATER"

The flame of a wick candle burns on an altar, wax oozes down the stem. A framed portrait of Amaya's grandmother rests beside the candle. Its light flickers shadows across it.

AMAYA (V.O)

I always thought the sweetness of that
mango would last forever. But sweetness
sours over time, and forever ends too
soon.

Amaya (16) sits in the pews with her mother and a few family members. Her eyes fixate on the portrait at the altar.

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

The same goes for memories. I imagine mine
will fade over time. But my grandmother's
voice still lingers... even in the silence
of these walls.

The priest's voice echoes from the pulpit, pulling Amaya from her

thoughts.

PRIEST

Welcome all, to the vigil service for Miss
Camille Noel, beloved mother, grandmother
and friend.

Amaya shifts uncomfortably in her seat. She glances at her
mother who holds a solemn expression on her face.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

Ms. Noel was a beloved matriarch. She spent
her later years here in America, and passed
last week while visiting her home country,
Trinidad. There, she will be buried in her
hometown, San Juan.

PRIEST (CONT'D)

(motions hand)

Her granddaughter, Amaya, will now lead us in
a eulogy.

Amaya rises, her movements echo through the church. She steps behind
the podium clutching a few papers in her hands. She glances at the
faces in the pews — all watching. Waiting.

AMAYA

(timidly)

Thank you everyone for being here today.

She lays out two sheets of paper: A printed prayer, and a
handwritten poem titled "For my grandmother". A few teardrops
stain the ink on the poem, blurring a few of the words.

AMAYA

(hesitant)

In honor of my grandmother, I would like
to read...

Amaya scans the pews. For a moment, she imagines her grandmother is
sitting there... but it's only an empty space. She folds her poem in
half, and rests it aside.

AMAYA (CONT'D)

Um, in honor of my grandmother, I would
like to read the Guardian Angel prayer.

She picks up the prayer, holding it steadily in her hands.

AMAYA

(emotionless)

Angel of God, my guardian dear to whom
His love commits me here, ever this day
be at my side to light and guard, to
rule and guide. Amen.

Amaya walks off the stage and takes her seat in the pews. The priest
takes his place at the pulpit.

PRIEST

Thank you for that beautiful prayer, Amaya.
Now, a reading from the Gospel, according
to John. "Jesus said to the crowd..."

The priest continues his sermon, but his words fade away. Amaya's
attention shifts to the altar again. She fixates on the photo of
her grandma that sits beside the burning candle.

The words of her poem rest on her lap, folded away, unspoken.

INT. CAR RIDE NIGHT

Amaya and her mother drive home from the vigil. Amaya stares ahead
silent - the world around her still a muffled blur.

MOTHER

Amaya! What goin' on with yah, nah?

AMAYA

(coming back to herself)
Sorry, what?

MOTHER

Why you ain't read the poem? Everyone
woul'da love it.

AMAYA

(guarded)

Just didn't feel right sharing it.

MOTHER

(sighs)

Well, you should add it to the list of poems you're going to submit for the Laureate contest.

AMAYA

It won't matter. I'm not submitting.

MOTHER

(surprised)

What yah mean you're not submitting?
You've been working so hard on it.
You can't put life on hold just because of this, Amaya.

AMAYA

(agitated)

Grandma was the one who inspired me to start writing in the first place.
What's the point if she's not here?

MOTHER

(firm)

The point is to finish what you started.
Don't be using her death as an excuse to put aside your work.

AMAYA

(sarcastic)

Well excuse me for grieving and actually having emotions, unlike you! You didn't even look sad at the vigil.

AMAYA (CONT.)

Maybe because you're going to the actual funeral in Trinidad while I'll be stuck here — ALONE.

MOTHER

I grieve too, Amaya. But money don't stretch like it used to. I'm already taking extra shifts at the hospital to pay for my plane ticket.

Her mother's hands tighten slightly on the wheel.

MOTHER

You also have school. Yah cyah just drop everything for a funeral.

AMAYA

(disbelief)

School? You think school matters more than grandma's funeral?

MOTHER

You have your life here Amaya - your future. I not risking that for one trip.

AMAYA

You just don't want me there!

MOTHER

Don't be putting words in my mouth, nah. The vigil was good enough. It gave you a chance to say your goodbyes.

AMAYA

(angrily)

A thirty minute vigil isn't a goodbye! I should be going to the funeral too!

MOTHER

Amaya, I can't bring you! That's final!

AMAYA

Grandma would have *hated* you for this!

MOTHER

(stern)

ENOUGH! I will not hear another word from you!

Her mother takes her eyes off the road. A red light appears ahead. Its distorted glow floods across the windshield.

The car drifts. The argument hangs in the air.

AMAYA
(frightened)
Mom! The light!!

Her mother looks up, startled and slams on the brakes.

She doesn't stop in time. **CRAASHHH!!!**

Metal shrieks, glass shatters. The world goes dark.

EXT. STREET

POV - AMAYA'S EYES

Flashes of red and white ambulance lights dance in a blurry motion. Amaya is carried out of the car and placed onto a cold leather stretcher. Her body weightless, uncooperative.

The ringing in her ears drowns everything out – until her mother's voice tears through, raw and panicked.

MOTHER (O.S.)
AMAYAAA!!!

Her mother's voice slowly fades away into an echo. Amaya's eyes grow heavy and flicker shut. Her heartbeat slows.

The world slips away into darkness.

EXT. BEACH - DAWN

Amaya jolts awake with a sharp gasp. Her eyes fly open, chest heaving as if she's been holding her breath for too long. Her heartbeat thunders in her ears, slowly overtaken by the sound of crashing waves.

Powdery sand clings to her fingertips. The sun warms her skin.

FISHERMAN
(echoey - distant)
Ayeee!!!

Amaya flinches, startled by the voice in the distance.

FISHERMAN (CONT)
(arms flailing)
Aye! What you doin' out dey?! Beach
close enuh!

A man with a straw hat and fishing rod walks up to her, his linen shirt soaked with sweat – or maybe the sea. He looks about middle-aged, his eyes gentle and wise, like he could recite all of life's answers in parables.

FISHERMAN
Miss, ya ain't got a home? Beach close.
Ah terrible storm comin' soon.

AMAYA
(disoriented)
W-Where is this? And who are you?

FISHERMAN
(amused)
Miss, you in the isle of Trinis! And I is a
fisherman. Ya must be a real yankee in truth.

AMAYA
(confused)
I'm sorry. I'm where?

FISHERMAN
You in Trinidad, miss. Yah bunks ya head
or wah?

A strange weightlessness settles over Amaya. The sunlight warms her skin – it feels too gentle to be real.

AMAYA

T-That's not possible. This must be a dream. Or am I...

FISHERMAN

(sucks teeth)

Ya ain't no dead. But yah gwan catch yuh death if ya stay out here. Storm rollin' in soon.

Amaya looks up at the sky, which appears clear.

AMAYA

(confused)

What do you mean? The skies look fine.

FISHERMAN

Eh child, dis ain't no ordinary storm. Dis' di kind that sneak up on yah in di night. If yah get caught in it, you'll be stuck here *for good*.

AMAYA

What do you mean "stuck here"?

FISHERMAN

I mean... I hearin' the sailor whistle at sea. Yah best find shelter.

AMAYA

(Pauses - worried)

B-but where do I go? I can't even remember how I got here.

Amaya paces nervously. The fisherman crosses his arms. He nods to something half-buried in the sand.

FISHERMAN

Look. I think yah drop something dey?

Amaya spots a corner of weathered paper peeking out of the sand, The wind tugs at it, making a crisp flicking sound. She picks it up, dusting it clean. It's the poem she wrote for her grandmother.

FISHERMAN

Dat' look important. Yah lucky I got
a good eye.

AMAYA

(curiously)

So... if this is really Trinidad, how far
is San Juan from here?

FISHERMAN

(laughs heartily)

San Juan? Lawd Jesus... It pronounced "Sah wah".
Yah talkin' like a true foreigner, enuh.

AMAYA

(rolls her eyes)

Okay... well, how far is "Sah wah" from here?

FISHERMAN

Yah must go Port of Spain first. A bus from
dey can take you up di road to San Juan.

He begins to walk toward the back shore. Amaya follows. He points to
a dirt path further up the beach.

FISHERMAN

See that path ova dey'? Walk dat until
you reach di road. A bus stop will be
right across the street. Yah cyah miss it.

FISHERMAN (CONT)

And remember, don't get caught in di storm.
If you do, you'll never get home.

Amaya nods slowly, still confused by the fisherman's warning. She
begins to walk towards the path ahead - but stops.

AMAYA

I'm sorry, I didn't get your -

She turns around to ask for the fisherman's name - but he vanishes.
A gust of wind brushes past her. **WHOOOSH!**

The shoreline remains empty, as if the fisherman was never there at all.

Part 2: Isle of Trinis

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT: PORT OF SPAIN- DAY

Amaya steps off the bus and enters Charlotte Street. A faint hum of Soca music and steel pan drums move through the air. Amaya follows the sound, the music growing louder and louder.

She arrives at a small Carnival procession. A lone moko jumbie leads the crowd, swaying on stilts. Kids run into the procession with paint and oil. One of them grabs Amaya's hand and leads her into the crowd. Vibrant, regal, the moko jumbie steps over Amaya.

The drums swell, music rises. The crowd cheers as the moko jumbie strides forward. Masqueraders dance past in feathered costumes. A Blue Devil blows fire into the air.

A masquerader smears paint across Amaya's face. She laughs, swept up in the movement and music.

END MONTAGE

EXT. CHARLOTTE STREET (CONT)

Amaya reaches the end of the procession and enters a bustling area of shops and vendors.

She arrives at a clothing booth. Colorful dresses hang on racks. An elderly woman sits behind the table. She watches Amaya with a mischievous glint in her eye.

VENDOR

How these young people like to fete so?
Carnival season just start, enuh.

She reaches under one of the tables and pulls out a rag.

VENDOR

Clean yahself up. Comin' in my shop
lookin' like yah fete til sunrise.

Amaya sheepishly takes the rag and wipes the paint.

VENDOR

Now, what could I get for yah?

Amaya spots a display of necklaces on the front table. One of them – a delicate gold chain with a tiny cross. She touches it gently.

VENDOR

Ahhh... that one suits yah. Go on, try it.

Amaya picks up the necklace and clasps it around her neck. She walks over to a small mirror propped against a crate to admire it, but the glass only reflects the street behind her.

Her face falls.

VENDOR

Eh, child. Yah okay? Ya lookin like yah seen a ghost.

Amaya touches the mirror. Her fingers slightly smudge the glass – her reflection nowhere to be found.

AMAYA

(panicked)

I-I can't see myself.

VENDOR

Relax, nah. Yah must be faint from di hot sun. Now tell meh, where yah heading child? Ya out here by yahself?

AMAYA

(anxious)

I'm trying to get to San Juan.
My family's there.

VENDOR

Well yah in luck. The bus right down di street. It does drop off by the cemetery in San Juan.

Amaya spots the bus parked down the road.

VENDOR (CONT.)

Go on, now. And keep di necklace.
It muh treat.

Suddenly, a gust of wind rips down the street.

WHOOOSH!!!

Feathers fly. Paper debris dances in the air. The steel pans clash off key. Amaya shields her eyes. She looks again—

The masqueraders, the moko jumbie, the vendors... all gone. Only the wind remains.

Amaya stands frozen, the gold cross glinting faintly at her chest.

Part 3: The Storm

EXT: CEMETERY - EVENING

The bus pulls away leaving Amaya at the edge of an old cemetery. She holds her poem in her hand - refolding it gently.

Suddenly, a gust of wind rushes through.

FWIP— The poem rips out of her hand.

AMAYA
No-no, no-!

It blows through the open cemetery gate. Amaya runs in after it.

EXT: CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

The poem flutters across the dirt and lands by a half-exposed grave. Amaya cautiously moves toward it, when a thick fog begins to roll in.

Heavy, low, it creeps between the tombstones, emerging dense and fast. Amaya loses sight of the graves, the path... and then the poem.

AMAYA
(panicked)
W-Where is it??

She kneels, blindly patting the ground. The fog thickens and swirls. The wind rises, its howl carrying a haunting, almost human moan.

AMAYA

Is someone there?!

A shadowy figure appears out of the fog. It rises from the mist, its silhouette unmoving. Amaya freezes.

The figure takes a step toward her. Terrified, she jumps back - her foot bumps into a small tombstone behind her. She falls to the ground.

THUMP!!!

The figure glides a few inches closer, the movement too smooth to be human. Amaya stumbles to her feet and makes a break for it.

She sprints through the dense fog, barely seeing the path. She reaches the gate at the end of the cemetery but it's locked. The figure remains visible behind her, slowly drifting through the mist.

Amaya scales a cement wall next to the gate, scrambling up the carved stone. She throws herself over, tumbling hard onto the other side-

The fog stops at the wall's edge. The figures dissolve away.

GRAVEDIGGER (O.S)

(cackling)

Eh-eh, who said yuh cud pass through
meh cemetery, nah?!

Amaya flinches, breathless and terrified. A Gravedigger stands outside the gates - a muddy shovel in one hand, a Stag in the other.

GRAVEDIGGER

Yuh runnin' from tings' that cyah hurt yuh, enuh.

AMAYA

W-what was that?! That shadowy thing?

GRAVEDIGGER

Something callin' to yah. But you only know
how to run from what yuh supposed to face.

AMAYA

It took my poem! I can't find it in all that fog.

GRAVEDIGGER

Oh- dat piece ah paper you was chasing after? That ting' long gone. Lost in di mist. Trust me, yah ent wanna go looking for it dis' time of di night.

AMAYA

(frustrated)

That paper was for my grandmother! I was supposed to give that to her! I came all this way -

GRAVEDIGGER

Sometimes we gotta leave tings behind... Learn to let tings go. That what graveyards ah for, enuh.

The Gravedigger sighs and takes one last sip of his Stag.

GRAVEDIGGER

Noel house right up di hill dey.. The likkle yellow house with di mango tree in di front.

AMAYA

(confused)

How did you know-

rumble rumble... thunder moans through the sky.

GRAVEDIGGER

Storm comin'. Yah best get goin.

Rain droplets gently start to tap Amaya's skin. The Gravedigger walks away, disappearing into the distance.

Amaya looks at the foggy cemetery- her poem nowhere to be found. She reluctantly turns away and begins her final walk up the hill.

EXT: NOEL HOUSE - NIGHT

Amaya arrives at a yellow house with a mango tree in the front. Chatter comes from inside the house, like a gathering is taking place. Amaya enters, the door creaks open.

INT. NOEL HOUSE

She walks into a dimly lit foyer. A raucous sound of laughter erupts down the hallway. Amaya follows the sound —her heart beating with eagerness.

She recites the words of her poem in her mind, like a prayer, in hopes that the person she is looking for is there waiting for her.

AMAYA (V.O)

I remember you humming at the kitchen counter.

I would stand on my tippy toes to watch, as you cut a ripened julie mango in half.

Your movements calm and methodic, your eyes soft and wise, peering down at me every few moments.

Amaya enters a room filled with women. They dress in soft pastel colors, their accents bounce around the room, like a melody.

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

Stately and beautiful, your hand would descend from above, and place the fruit in mine.

[Flashback] Grandmother smiles and hands Amaya (6) the fruit.

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

I would eat the mango, letting my cheeks cave, as the taste of your love and care hit my tongue.

The years pass on so naturally, but I will never forget the hands who gave it to me.

Amaya searches the room. Suddenly, her eyes grow wide.

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

Like night turning into day, I always remember you.

Her grandmother sits across the room, smiling at her.

AMAYA

Grandma!!!

Amaya runs over and embraces her.

AMAYA (CONT'D)

I-I can't believe it. You're really here.

GRANDMOTHER

You are so brave child, traveling so far
on your own. I am happy to see you.

AMAYA

You were supposed to come back up to the
states. Mama and I were waiting for you.

She holds Amaya's hands in her own.

GRANDMOTHER

It was time for me to come home, Amaya.
This is where I must rest.

AMAYA

But home is with us - it's with me and mama.
I don't want to leave you here.

Her grandmother caresses her face, wiping the tears from her eyes.

GRANDMOTHER

I know, child. But I am not gone. Just how
your mother is a part of me, I live within
you as well. I am always with you, Amaya.

Amaya nods in understanding, wiping her tears.

AMAYA

(sobbing)

Will I ever see you again?

A beat. She gives her hands a firm squeeze.

rumble, rumble... BOOOM!!

A clash of thunder shakes the house. The wind picks up outside. The
walls begin to tremble. The guests at the gathering fade away. Their
laughter turns into distant echoes. Amaya looks around unsettled.

AMAYA
What's happening?!

The rain pelts the windows. The wind howls louder and louder.

GRANDMOTHER
The storm is calling you back, Amaya!
It's time to let go!

Amaya looks down and realizes she is clutching her grandmother's hand.

AMAYA
But I'm not ready-

GRANDMOTHER
You are.

She opens Amaya's palms and places something in them - it's her poem, carefully folded.

GRANDMOTHER
Take this with you. When the time is
right, we will meet again one day.

Tears well behind Amaya's eyes. She hugs her grandmother, one last time - and lets go.

INT. HOSPITAL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Amaya wakes up, eyes opening to the ceiling tiles of her hospital bedroom. Her head rests on a soft pillow, her breathing steady. Her mother jumps up from the bedside chair.

MOTHER
Amaya! Thank goodness you're awake!

Her mother hugs her. Amaya tries to move but winces in pain.

MOTHER
Don't move too much, hon. You're still
hurt from the accident.

Amaya touches her chest. She's still wearing the necklace the vendor gave her. Her mother hands her the poem, folded the same way her

grandmother gave it back to her. Tears well behind her eyes.

AMAYA
Mom... I miss her.

Her mother pulls a chair closer to her bedside.

MOTHER
I know. I miss her too.

Tears roll down Amaya's cheeks. Her mother wipes them.

MOTHER
She is a part of us, Amaya. She will
always be with you — and so will I.

She touches Amaya's necklace. It gleams in the light.

AMAYA (V.O.)
I used to think home was a place—
an island I only dreamed of.

But now I know... it's this feeling right
here. This warmth— a love that lasts
long after a person is gone. A love
I could never forget.

Amaya's mother grabs her hand, holding it tight.

FADE OUT

THE END