THE WAITING

ANGEL RIVERA MORA
Here we are. A new day, and a new beginning. It’s January 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2018 when my mom, my dad and I arrive to New York because we lost our house in Puerto Rico. But I know that there’s another reason for moving so suddenly.

Let me introduce myself. My name is Ethan Stevens Johnson. I’m 17 years old from Puerto Rico, just like my mom. My dad was born and raised in the United States in North Carolina. They met and fell in love. When I was around the age of 10 I was curious to know how my parents first encounter was, so I asked my mom about her love story with my dad. She didn’t think it twice before telling me to sit down and listen to the moment that her life changed forever.

“I was the stewardess of the airplane your dad was boarding. He was there for an important meeting with the owner of the job that he has right now. We had a few more trips and after the third one he and I started talking and decided to meet outside of work hours since we just had a couple of minutes between trips. Months passed, and we fell in love. A year passed, and we had you, our only child.”

“Mom, did you try to have other kids?”

“Yes Ethan, we did. But I lost the baby. And after that we knew that you were meant to be our only one. You were and still are the perfect kid that we were waiting for.”
That was the first time in a while that I saw my mom so in love with my dad. But now everything is different. They don’t talk like before, they don’t kiss each other like before, they don’t look at each other like before. It’s like the flame of love just vanished. But right now, the biggest thing on my mind is the fact I’m a junior in High School. Twelve years of sitting at a desk and I still feel the same way about school: it’s not meant to be for me.

Everybody knows that High School is one of the most important stages in life, where we get to meet new people that might impact our future in positive or negative ways. But for me meeting new people or making new friends at my old school in Puerto Rico wasn’t easy. In that school I was the type of boy that always got pick on by the other guys because they believed that since they look bigger than me, it gives them the right to do anything that they want.

It’s been months since I came to New York and I haven’t met anyone yet. Every day I just stare at the window to look at the people who walk around the block. An old man who walks his dog every morning. The mailman who drops the cards every Tuesdays and Saturdays. A tall guy who likes to run every Monday, Wednesday and Saturday for 20 minutes. A young girl who rides her bicycle every Wednesday as soon as her dad comes from work.

I can spend all day looking at the people, just observing their appearance or their way of walking, and never get bored. But when I try to step outside the door and make conversation it never works out for me. I think it’s better if I just watch. Simply watch.
Now it’s July and for the past seven months that I’ve been in my house I have notice that there’s something different about every single person I have watched. The old man now walks his dog four days instead of seven days. The mailman just comes on Saturday. The tall guy just runs Mondays and Wednesdays for ten minutes. The young girl doesn’t ride her bicycle anymore. I thought, what could be the reason for this to happen? Until I finally got it. She and her mom were wearing black clothes. And that’s when it hit me, her dad passed away.

Although I’m not a psychologist or a professional with a background at analyzing people it is very clear when someone is going through a hard time. But what can I do about it? Pretty much nothing, just keep watching.

My life aside from looking out the window is very boring, just the normal things.

Wake up, eat, go to my room. Done.
Wake up, eat, clean, go to my room. Done.
Wake up, eat, sleep. Done.
Wake up, eat, go to my room. Done.

My life has become a cycle and I don’t want to break it. I like my cycle, I feel protected in my cycle. But then it’s time to start school again. It’s time to break my cycle; no more watching all day.

-222 Days… September 10-

“Ethan come, breakfast is almost done,” my mom calls.
“I’m coming, give me five more minutes.” Heading to the kitchen I see that all the plates are set up. This is unusual since my mom has never done it in the past. “Mom are you ok? Since when you set the table?”

“Well Ethan, it’s a new day in a new state. And also, today is your first day at LexAnn High School.” I could tell that she is full of emotion about me going to school, but I’m not a big fan of school. Since my experience in my last high school I knew that school wasn’t for me. In my old school nobody liked me, I felt that I was always left behind.
The outsider.
An outcast.
Nobody talked to me or even looked at me. In gym class nobody wanted me to be in their teams or in any class discussion. I was like a ghost traveling around. Lost in space. Wishing to go far beyond the unseen.

“Hurry up eating your breakfast. You are going to miss the train.”

“Yes, I’m done.” I take my backpack and turn to my mom and dad to say goodbye.

“Bye.” I call to them. My mom replies but my father is very into the newspaper. He just shakes his head and that was it. I open the door and made my first step outside the apartment, but this time with a new destination: High School. I take my phone out, open My Music app and press random. On my way in the train I listen to one of my favorite’s songs of the week “Call Out My Name” by the Weekend. My ride to the school is around twenty-five minutes so basically, I could listen to more than five songs. The train stop, and I am already on my tenth song. I got out and started to walk to school when a notification from the calendar shows on the lock screen.
**FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

9.10.18

This day will be the toughest beginning of all. When I enter LexAnn High School I see all the students running side to side to get to their first class as we hear the sound of the bell throughout the crowded hallway.

1st period **Math** 9:00am-10:00am (Ms. Mora)

2nd period **Art** 10:05am-11:10am (Mr. Clarke)

3rd period **English** 11:15am- 12:20pm (Ms. Deyne)

**LUNCH**

4th period **Computer Science** 1:25pm- 2:30pm (Mr. Francisco)

I can’t say that the classes were that bad. So far, the only thing that hasn’t change is the fact that I’m still alone. I’m a small ant in this giant anthill. I finish my first three classes, and now it’s time for the worst part of the day. The time when the people transform into wild animals, where small kids are picked on by the tallest. Where the good guys are picked on by the bad guys. It is lunch time.

I did the line to pick up my food then I look for an empty table to sit down and eat. There are six long tables in the cafeteria and all of them have their own group of people. The first one is for those who are always doing their homework or reading books, I like books, but I hate doing my homework. I do them right after I feel the pressure of the deadline getting closer. Everything to the eleven hour. I can see that the four middle tables are where the football, basketball and baseball players sit down.
All the way to the back is the sixth table where just a few people sit and there I consider my place to sit and enjoy lunch. For my first day I can’t complain how it’s going. They served cheese burgers with a slice of tomato. But I’m not a big fan of the vegetables or anything that has a weird color, so I push aside the tomato and just eat the cheese burgers.

I finish eating, stood up and went to the bathroom and wash my face. I got out and took my phone, open My Music app and press continue. This time it’s a Spanish song playing, “Robarte Un Beso” by Sebastian Yatra and Carlos Vives. I look at the time to make sure that I won’t be late to class. While I’m walking around I try to look for a special spot with a bench or any place to sit down and just watch.

Simply watch.

I find this bench that connects the sophomore students with the juniors and seniors. I sit down, skip a few songs and continue watching the people walking in front of me. There’s this girl, probably a sophomore because of her blue uniform. She brushed her hair more than ten times and like the typical sophomore girl the brush and the mirror can’t be out of her hands. There’s this guy, probably a junior because of his grey uniform, walking with big headphones and loud music so everyone could listen to it even if we don’t care. He looks like the type of guy that steals the homework from the others and still manage to pass the class. But there’s another guy sitting on the floor alone, wearing his blue uniform. For a moment I thought to go and talk to him, but I decide to just watch. Just for a little longer. But I don’t simply watch; I observe and truly look at him. He has light skin, curly brown hair and as soon as the sun-light enter through the windows of the hallway I see his bright green eyes. And just like that, lunch time was over.
Before entering the classroom, I make sure that it’s the right room. And yes, it is. As soon as I enter the computer science classroom these two students look at me like as if I was fresh meat for them. Two students that I didn’t notice on the previous classes. I start to look for a seat but all of them are taken. The only one available is the row next to these two students who keep staring at me. When the class begins their focus switch to the teacher instead of me.

“Good afternoon class. For those who are new my name is Mr. Francisco and I’m going to be your computer science teacher. Before beginning the lesson of the day I’m going to take attendance.” He starts to call the names out loud and they all reply with the same answer as in the previous classes.

“Alexander Collins?”
“Present!”
“Veronica Cruz?”
“Present!”
“Erika Cruz?”
“Here.”
“Laura White?”
“Here.”

He mentions all the names, but I noticed that he skipped mines. I quickly take my schedule out again to make sure that I’m in the right class. When I look up Mr. Francisco is looking back at me and I know that something’s coming up. Now is the moment when I’m on the spot; open to everyone but close to myself.
“Today is a new year and I see some familiar faces from last year tutoring sessions. But there’s a new student in LexAnn High School.” This is the moment when I stop being invisible and start being seen by all my classmates. In that moment all the eyes just stare at me. I look around to see if there is anyone else new besides me. But no, there isn’t. “Yes, you. Come on up and introduce yourself.” I hesitate for a few seconds, but he is very persistent about introducing myself in front of all the class. I’m so nervous that my legs began to shake, I can’t swallow, I turn white and my heart is trying to run out of my chest. I don’t know how but finally the words came out.

“Well my name is Ethan Stevens Johnson and I come from Puerto Rico.”

“Can you please tell us more about you? What do you like to do in your free time?” Mr. Francisco ask me.

“Well almost all the time I’m just reading or watching T.V. or just looking outside my window.”

“Thanks for sharing and welcome to LexAnn High School Ethan.” Mr. Francisco say.

I am so thankful that I’m back in my seat, safe in my place where I can just focus on myself and nothing else. While the class is in process those two students continue staring at me. The same ones that were looking at me earlier when I arrived to the class. I look at them back and they smile at me. After seeing them smile I know that everything could be different. I know that there might be hope for my lonely life. That maybe it’s time for me to give another chance to find a true friendship. Finally, the class is done and I’m ready to leave when I see that these two students starts to walk towards me. I just began walking away to try to avoid any type of conversation even if deep down I want to talk to them.

“Hi, Ethan?” The guy yell so I would stop walking, which I did. I stop.
“Yes?”
“My name is Alexander Collins,” he says to me.
“And my name is Laura White,” the girl says right after him.

“Hi Alexander, hi Laura,” I say back to them.

After a few minutes of talking and talking we start walking out of school. And apparently, they both live close to my apartment, just a few blocks away. After having a long conversation, we got to the point that we even trade our Snapchats, Facebooks and other social media to be in contact. After that I know that my days at school might stop being black and white and now they would have color. But I’m afraid. Afraid to get too attach and then repeat my mistakes from the past. A past that should remain buried in the most deep part of the earth.

Looking back at my old high school I always had to pretend that I was happy. I had to lie to my parents telling them that I had many friends. But the truth is that I was more alone than a dead person in their grave. I knew that pretending to have something that you don’t can consume you from the very deep inside. It can make you something that you’re not and eventually after building a wall of lies, after lies, after lies, it will collapse.

Back in Puerto Rico everyone bullied me for pretty much my entire high school year. And it all started because I thought I had the best friend in the world whom I could trust in almost everything. But I was wrong. The bullying started because the person who I trusted the most betrayed me.
During all that time I asked myself “What do the bullies get from hurting others? What have I done to deserve this?” I let the bullying continue for around three months. I questioned myself “Why did I let it go so far?” Maybe, I was tired of fighting. I just felt that I couldn’t handle it anymore. The pressure, the words, the actions. Those are the ones that hurts the most. And I tried to stop it.
I tried to stop the bullying.
The pain.
I tried to stop even time itself.
But that wasn’t enough. It was me who at the end had to move out of the country because it got to the point where I didn’t care for anything or anyone. Not even my own life. And yet here I am, trying to give myself a second chance.

*BLINK*
My phone lit up. And it’s them. They are my new beginning.
As soon as I hear the sound of my alarm at 6:30 in the morning I wake up and grab my phone and there it is the message I was waiting for. I’m a lucky boy, aren’t I Alexander Collins?

**Jayden**- Good morning babe.
Happy Anniversary! 6:00am

**Jayden**- I just want to say that you are the best person that I’ve met. Even though we are miles I love you. 6:02am

**Me**- Good morning. Happy Anniversary!!!!!
I’m so happy for having you in my life.
Thanks for everything. 6:31am

**Jayden**- Thank you!! 6:31am

**Me**- So what are your plans for today bae? 6:32am

**Jayden**- Nothing so far. Maybe go and run some errands and do some stuff with my mom, what about you? 6:33am

**Me**- I will do my homework and maybe go out with Laura. 6:33am

**Jayden**- Oh, say hi to Laura from me. 6:33am
Me- I will. There’s a song that I want you to listen. It’s call “Perfect” by Ed Sheeran. The minute I heard it I thought about you. 6:33am

Jayden- I’ll try when I finish listening to the song. 6:34am

Jayden- Wow. Alex you made me cry. 6:40am

Jayden- That was a beautiful song. 6:40am

Me- I’m glad you like it bae. 6:41am

Me- Bby I gotta go. My mom is calling me. Text me when you get home. 6:41am

Jayden- Ok, have a wonderful day. 6:41am

Jayden- Love you. 6:41am

Me- Love you more. 6:42am

It’s been a full year since I met the person that now I care a lot about. A year in which I learned to love myself in order to love others. I learned that life is much easier if you have someone that you can call when you are not feeling good or when something amazing happened. And today, September fifteen I can celebrate how love has gotten into my life.
Laura tells me that long distance relationships doesn’t work. That you can’t really rely on someone else that you haven’t physically met. For me I don’t need to see him physically in order to know that I like him. But what truly hurts me is that I haven’t told Laura about me and Jayden or that I’m gay. She knows that I’m talking to someone and for her it is a girl named Crystal who lives in Miami. Long distance relationships does work. No matter that we are miles apart our love has remained strong.

It’s already 8:30pm and just when I least expect it I feel the vibration of my phone.

**Jayden-** Hey bby. 8:35pm

**Me-** Hey my love! 8:36pm

**Jayden-** How are you? 8:36pm

**Me-** I’m good, hby? 8:36pm

**Jayden-** Better than ever, thanks to you. 8:36pm

**Me-** Awww. 8:37pm

**Me-** Bae I have to take a quick shower and have dinner, brb. 8:43pm

**Jayden-** And don’t worry bae take your time. I’m going to take a shower too. Text me when you can. 8:44pm

**Me-** Okey. 8:46pm
Love! There’re so many things that people say about you. But what truly matter is what me as an individual think. I don’t have the love of a father in my life, just me and my mom for the moment. I have the love of a sister who before leaving to college showed me that no matter how much we could fight, at the end we are siblings and the love that we have for each other it’s what count. Now I have the love of a guy, the type of love that eventually will make me grow as human.

Me- Bae, I’m back! 11:06pm

Me- Are you there? 11:30pm

Me- Apparently you went to sleep without saying good night. Again. 11:46pm
The author of the “The Waiting” has a sequel in the works. Taking place before his move to New York, it tells the tale of Noah Quezada and the two people who will change everything in his life.

Aiden will face the struggles of humiliation and hardship trying to achieve his American Dream.

Penelope will learn how it feels to lose everything that made her world secure.

Both will begin a journey full of mystery that will lead them to see the true colors of life.

Sit tight. This is just the beginning.
I’ve completed my very first book! But I couldn’t have done this alone.

I want to start by saying, thanks to the person who encouraged & inspired me to write this novel Ms. Akilah Clarke. I’ll always be grateful for what you’ve done for me. You were the person who in the first place made me the writer that I am today. Thanks to you and to “Behind The Book” I published my very first short-story “The Pawn.” Which after a year & six months I can call now my very first novel; “The Waiting.” Thank you for your time to read all my drafts and to hear all the different versions for the stories. You are truly a role model for me.

Thanks to Jessie Salfen for being my second & last editor of what I can call now very proudly, my book! Thanks for pushing me to make The Waiting an amazing piece of writing. I want to thanks to both artists: Ms. Lucia & Bryan Quezada who made sure that my vision for the book could be as I was expecting. Thank you for your patience and for portraying the face of my first novel.

This book couldn’t come true without the unconditional support from my family. Thanks to my mom: Mercedes, my dad: Angel, my little brother: Matthew & my big sister: Loreanne. Thanks for being part of this crazy journey of mines that I can proudly say it’s done.
Last but not least I will like to thank everyone who were the inspiration behind each character. Ms. Akilah Clarke, Maicol Garcia, Ms. Lucia, Richy Nouel, Angel P., Bryan Quezada, Loreanne Rivera, Veruzhka Roldan & Karen Segura. Each and every single one of are the reason why “The Waiting” has come true.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angel A. Rivera Mora hails from Aguadilla, on the beautiful island of Puerto Rico. He came to the United States when he was seventeen to pursue his educational goals and dreams. He graduated with Honors from an International High School specifically created for English Language Learners. Angel has performed and created original musical theater through his work with the Possibility Project. This experience combined with his love of literature and his compassionate heart led to Angel’s debut as a young adult author. He is currently attending LaGuardia Community College and plans to transfer to a four-year college to study Social Work. Angel hopes to continue to use his writing to unlock the stories of those around him.
Waiting is the best, most accurate, most honest, and most riotously funny movie ever made about the service industry. Here's how I see it— the world is divided into two groups of people: those who have waited tables and those who haven't. But those of you who have felt the pain, degradation, and humiliation of waiting tables will piss your pants laughing at how PERFECT this movie is. First-time writer/director Rob McKittrick has created a dead-on depiction of 24 hours in the restaurant biz.