



EVER On The Edge

Everlayn Borges

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When Everlayn Borges was 17 years old, she escaped in the middle of the night to cross the border between the desert of Juarez, Mexico and El Paso, Texas. She ran through dangerous terrains with extreme risks, for a life lived in freedom!

When I had the opportunity to listen to Everlayn's story I was taken through an intense, emotional roller coaster where we shared laughter and tears.

Everlayn - "I am originally from Cuba. Ever since I was a little girl, I've been involved in the world of performing arts. I studied classical ballet, contemporary dance, and drama. When I was 17 years old I left Cuba to perform in Merida, Yucat-

an, Mexico. I had a contract with a Cuban company that was extremely serious and communistic. The Cuban company that I was a part of, had a problem with the Mexican director of my show who they had made the deal with - meaning the deal of the Cuban show representing Cuba, in Merida, Yucatan. At the time I was underage, yet always very aware of what was going on politically. Although I had a contract for six months that the Cuban company wasn't allowed to break, they still did.

Due to the disagreement with the Mexican director, The Cuban company flew to Mexico, while the artist group was there to set up a meeting with all the artists from their company.

- "The Cuban company I was part of told us to pack our bags, and that we had

to be at the airport the following morning to go back to Cuba. That was very hard for us because the opportunity that we had as Cubans being able to travel with our talents was rare.

With a limited connection to the outside world of Cuba, the ability to travel overseas was small for Everlayn and a once in a lifetime opportunity.

- "We didn't have anyone overseas that was helping us since my father's disappearance when trying to leave Cuba on a raft for freedom. My father was a talented and amazing man. I looked up to my father for the courage, and I said to myself - *I'm staying to work!* Even though I was only making \$10 for two shows a day."

Almost no one from Everlayn's group showed up at the airport the following

day like they had been told to.

- "We all stayed at a very small hotel, so the Cuban Consulate of Merida came knocking on the doors of everyone, shouting that everyone who didn't show up at the airport (how we were told to do) would be sent to jail when we got back to Cuba. We didn't open the door. My entire life in Cuba was a boarding school. Ever since I was eight years old I lived and breathed in the school, so it felt like I got shot in my head when they told us that!

When Everlayn started reflecting on her life back in Cuba, she knew that she had to make a drastic life decision right then and there.

- "So I escaped through the window of my hotel room since I couldn't go through the front door, because I was underage, and there was always someone there watching who was leaving."

A lot of things were going through her head when she had made up her mind to escape and convinced her two girlfriends to come with her.

- "It felt like an adventure, and I was very young, so I was extremely positive that everything was going to work out for the best. I believed I could conquer the American dream. I always knew that if my father could jump on a raft for freedom, I could jump from the second-floor window of my hotel room for it as well. So I escaped with two other girls, after convincing them to do it, although I was the



youngest one. I assured them that we'd go to Miami and become millionaires. I told them that in one year, we'll be so rich so that we can bring our families (she laughs). I already knew that after a year and a half you can get your residency in the U.S. So I was willing to sacrifice myself for a year and a half to make that happen.

She later found out that going to jail was a scare tactic the Cuban company used to manipulate them into leaving Mexico.

- "Now obviously we were not going to go to jail. I found out much later that when the Cuban company realized that what they said about us all go-

ing to jail didn't work out, after three more girls had left to cross the border, they changed their statement and said that no one would go to jail, but instead get their names on a record, that wouldn't allow them to ever travel out of Cuba again!

After jumping out the window from the second floor, Everlayn's life was never the same again.

- "My life completely changed! After my escape, we managed to hide in a house for 15 days. Everybody (authorities, the venue, the Mexicans and Cubans) were looking for us in Mexico, so we wanted to wait until everything had quiet down. Eventually, we were able to catch a

plane and fly from Mérida Yucatán to Mexico City, to meet with “the coyotes” – *the coyotes are the people that help you cross the border*. We paid them, and the following morning we met two of them at the bus terminal in Mexico City. They were brothers, it was a family business. The two brothers came with us on the bus to Juarez City, which took 24 hours.

Everlayn and her friends got on the bus without any legal documents or passports. Now they just had to wait.

– “The most difficult moment with this whole journey was when the authority came inside the bus and asked for identification. We had to fake that we were sleeping and ‘the coyotes’ had told us to not lift our heads when we heard someone walking inside the bus because if they suspected that we were not Mexicans, they would ask for identification. I think that was the most stressful part of the whole journey because if something happened I knew I wouldn’t be able to run from it, being trapped on a bus. Luckily nothing happened. We arrived in Juarez City. This was the final city where we were going to cross the border from, to El Paso, Texas. They gave us food, a nice place to rest and towels to shower. My two girlfriends had gone out drinking that same night and came home

drunk hours later. I didn’t go because I was still 17 years old. Instead, I stayed in the house with another Cuban lady, who was a painter, that I had met through ‘the coyotes’.

‘The coyotes’ had made a structured escape plan for Everlayn, her two girlfriends and the Cuban painter, to cross the border and get to Texas.

– “So in the middle of the night, the ‘coyotes’ woke us up to cross the border.

“I always knew that if my father could jump on a raft for freedom, I could jump from the second-floor window of my hotel room for it as well.”

They had described these trails we had to take to get to a river. Once we got to the desert in Juarez, the helicopters were already in action, circling, and looking for us! I started running and jumped into a river. As soon as I came out of the river, I hid behind a tiny tree, but within seconds the lights came on and I started running through the desert! I remember it being pitch black, but the headlights that came on from the Mex-

ican & American base, and helicopter spotlights were so strong. It had an enormous power intensity! We had been directed by ‘the coyotes’ to not stop running no matter what. Just run run run! And that’s exactly what we did! We ran two and two together – first, it was the painter and I. Then my two girlfriends after us. By the time I looked back, the police were really close to my two girlfriends and I was thinking to myself – *what am I doing crossing the border*

with this painter lady, whom I hardly know?!

If they catch my girlfriends I’m going to go to Miami by myself. ‘The coyotes’ had told us that we needed to follow a straight line when we ran, and when we crossed a specific tree, there was going to be a fence that we needed to pull up, it had already been prepared for us. Once we got under the fence, we’d officially be in El Paso, Texas. Then we would keep going straight until we’d reach a Burger King. From Burger King, the other brother was going to wait for us, give us plane tickets, and take us to the airport! So everything was a mission! We never got caught, although we were very close to it. After the intense escape, we managed to make it to someplace that looked like an outside warehouse, or a place where they fix cars. There was a fence everywhere that we had to jump

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across. Since we hadn't run straight like we had been told by 'the coyotes', we were completely lost. Yet we were so happy at that point, because we felt freedom, but still so much uncertainty. We had escaped but were wondering what to do next. We continued walking in the dark, and in the middle of the street, I saw a car that was going very slow behind us. I started sensing that it could be the other brother, that we were supposed to meet us outside the Burger King. He got out of the car and asked if we needed a ride. *You know he tried to be low key because he knew how the police worked.* We didn't speak any English, so he told us in Spanish to get into the car immediately! That's when we knew it was him! He had started looking for us when he didn't see us at the Burger King we had agreed to run to. We got into his car, and he gave us our plane tickets to Miami. We took off

to the airport and had to stop in Dallas first. Before we left, he warned us that Texas is very conservative and that we should walk directly to our separate gates at the airport, and not to stay around, chit-chatting, because the police would already be out looking for us, and had certainly informed the airport!

But Everlayn and her friends took his instructions very lightly - joking around and filled with adrenaline after the extreme night they had just experienced.

- "Of course, we did exactly what he told us not to do! While at the airport, we were so excited, we were having so much fun in the bathroom playing around, filled with adrenaline, and talking about all the things we had gone through. And of course, I started seeing these people in the corner of my eye - one by one, coming to drink water from a water fountain next to us. It appeared to me that they were listening to us and leaving. All of a sudden three of them came up to us and ask for identification. We were speechless! **In broken Spanish one of them asked Everlayn and her friends if they had crossed the Mexican border.**

- "We responded yes, and they told us to come with them. We were so scared! But they were actually very nice and told us that we needed to complete

some paperwork because if we made it to Miami without any documentation or record that we had been there, we wouldn't be able to ask for asylum when we reached Miami.

After the girls provided the civil dressed immigration police with their information, they were free to proceed to their gates.

- "I had to tell them the whole story from the beginning when I was born, who my mother and father were, all the schools I went to while living in Cuba. They asked me about EVERYTHING! Afterward, they walked us to the planes and we were free to go.

Fast-forwarding time - it was a very rough start for Everlayn once she finally reached her end destination - Miami. What did you do once you got there?

- "It was very hard in the beginning because I didn't have any source of income. I came to Miami with \$40.

After several months in Miami, Everlayn missed a court date to see an immigration judge about her case, back in Texas (where her paperwork had been prepared, before getting on the plane to Miami).

- "I eventually got a deportation order, because I had been unable to see the immigration asylum judge at a given date, since I didn't have any money to buy a plane ticket to fly back to Texas, and I didn't speak any English. At the time we were living with a lady, in her house. She's rented out rooms to us, and she knew



my situation so she took me to see a Cuban American lawyer, who told me that I didn't have to pay him anything at all since he loved helping other Cubans, *his father was a Cuban born lawyer as well.*

The lawyer that was supposed to help Everlayn with her case, had told her he would transfer the case to Miami and would take care of the immigration legal process from there, as well as getting the deportation order removed. However, he didn't keep his promise and didn't do anything that he'd said he would help her with, instead, Everlayn's case was closed!

- "He never answered the phone, he didn't do anything. Years passed by...

Back in Cuba, Everlayn was very successful in school. Being that she had performed on television since the age of 15, she knew a lot of artists that were popular in Cuba, and had political asylum and established in the U.S.

- "So I reached out to them in Miami, because they were my friends. And thanks to them my two girlfriends were able to get jobs as dancers at a show. Why not me? - Because I still looked very young and had a very unique look. But I was still so happy because now we were a team! We shared all the food, we shared ev-

everything. I was very blessed because I was able to attend an audition through my friends show, for a film called *The Specialist*, with Sylvester Stallone, Sharon Stone, and James Wood. I booked the film as a principal dancer. It was my first job in the U.S! Because of that opportunity, I was able to survive. I met the choreographer for the film, who started hiring me for everything! That was my oppor-

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tunity to audition through his company for Julio Iglesias. I eventually started performing as a soloist dancer and backup singer for the legendary singer Julio Iglesias, at the biggest and most iconic venues all around the world. But it was so difficult for me because I had to travel with a piece of paper called 'parole', after being in this country for seven years, because my case wasn't able to re-open. Luckily, through some friends of

some friends, I was able to receive social security, but that was about it. One day I lost the parole paper, and I couldn't request another one. I had to wait for a year to get out of Miami again!

At that time, a good friend of Everlayn felt so bad for her, so she scheduled an appointment for her with her friend's husband who was an amazing lawyer. Everlayn agreed to see him, without any information about who he was.

- "At that point, I didn't have much hope, because I had already been through so much. When I finally went to the meeting that my best friend, at the time, had scheduled for me, I walked into the office. To my shock and disbelief - it was the same lawyer I had seven years ago, who hadn't done anything for me!

He looked at me, I

looked back at him, and we almost had this 'out-of-body experience'. He told me to have a seat. I knew it was him, but I wasn't going to say anything. After I sat down, he said to me - "*I'm sorry*", with a very sympathetic and soft voice...- "*how are your girlfriends?*". I responded that I don't know, that we got separated, that one got married to a comedian, and the other one I haven't talked to much. I told him that I had been working for Julio Igle-

sias for many years, traveling. The lawyer looked at me and said – *“I’m sorry, I’m not going to charge you anything. I’m going to do everything possible for you as fast as I can so that you can get an appointment with immigration and receive your residency within 6 months”*. He asked me to make an appointment to get my biometrics and bring the papers back to him. After several months of waiting, I was finally able to get an appointment at the U.S immigration office. I was called into an office, once I arrived – a lady walked in, carrying a huge ‘tower’ of files, ALL MINE, from the past, as I was trying to reopen my case (file folders). It was probably thirty files with all the different lawyers throughout the years that I had hired to reopen my case, after it was closed in Texas. It was all in a stack! She went through the papers one by one, opening different folders, and shaking her head, and then she looked at me and said – *“I’m so sorry for all that you have been through. I am going to give you your residency right now!”*. And I couldn’t believe it!

When Everlayn finally received her residency after seven years in Miami, she was finally able to see her mother, who she had been in phone contact with throughout her entire escape.

– “My mother fainted at the airport when she saw me,”

a tear-filled Everlayn says.

Today Everlayn has both American and Cuban citizenship, and has her own TV show called “Ever on the Edge”, where she shares an amazing journey of getting people out of their comfort zone, and showcases extreme lifestyles around the world.

– “I think the sky’s the limit,” she laughs.

Some of the places that Everlayn has traveled to in her TV show include Bolivia and Peru. – “I went to Salar de Uyuni salt flats in Bolivia, one of the great wonders of the world – Machu Picchu, and Cusco – where I met Panchito – *the beautiful alpaca that is in my teaser for the show*. I’ve been to the Mecca of the surfing world – Teahupū in Tahiti, **also known as one of the deadliest places to surf in the world.**

I got VERY into Freediving. I’m extremely blessed to have met the genius cinematographer Bob Gordon, who has become a mentor to me while bringing to life **EVERONTHEEDGE** – without him, I couldn’t have done it.”

Currently, Everlayn resides in Los Angeles California, to promote her TV show and work on a broad mix of work and creative projects – “I’ve been working with *DP Hue* hair company on a campaign that they are launching on social media. It’s a miniseries for Instagram and the media outlets. They are an

amazing crew of wonderful people. I came to Los Angeles for the show which is “my baby”, but suddenly I had the opportunity to also be representing *DP Hue*.

Everlayn continues to stay busy – “I’m working on a movie called **Invisible**, with Bert Hesse, who is the CEO of Studio South, South Carolina Film Studio and executive producer of the film. It’s a film that is based on an incredible true story about homelessness. It’s featuring American Idol contestant Bo Bice and myself! We haven’t started filming yet, but this is another project that I am very much looking forward to being working on”.

And I can’t wait to see where Everlayn will take us next, while conquering her American dream!

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