

A TOUCH OF THE OCEAN

I

Los Angeles. Boyle Heights. MOTHER's piano room. The room is almost empty. It is lonely, ambient, and deserted, except for one thing. A piano with a bench is placed off-center. It is in perfect condition. It is obviously very well taken care of. Someone cares for it. THE PIANIST, a little girl of almost 7, hums to herself, a melody (Chopin's Waltz in A Minor, B. 150, Op. Posthumous) stuck in her head. She waltzes in, playing with a Blues Clues plushie. The plushie is missing an ear and a leg. She places the plushie on the floor, looks over at the piano, and gets excited. She sits on the floor facing the toy. She has something to say to the toy, a secret to tell.

THE PIANIST: Hey, can I tell you a secret? It's a secret so you can't tell no one. No one! But you have to pinkie promise. Pinkie promise? Good, and if you ever tell, well then I'm not gonna like you no more.

Do you see that piano over there? (*goes over to the piano and points at it*) This one? It's Mom's piano, and she doesn't let me touch it. She says it's too precious to touch so I can't touch it. Do you know what that means? Precious? I don't really know what it means, and I tried asking her. I said, "Mom, what does precious mean?" But she didn't answer me, and she does that a lot. I think maybe if I was a piano, then she would tell me, because she likes being with her piano, more than she likes being with me! Maybe if I was a piano, then maybe I could be precious to her, too. Isn't that a funny word? It sounds funny. Precious. Precious. Precious. (*giggles*) Precious. Maybe it means pretty, because I think mom's piano looks pretty. Don't you think? I wish I was a piano. I wish I was pretty.

But today I'm mad at her. I'm mad at her because she said I couldn't go to Minnie's birthday party because she wouldn't be able to go with me and that "little girls shouldn't go anywhere by themselves." But I'm not a little girl, I'm gonna be 7 soon. I'm gonna be 7 and that basically makes me a woman. So I got mad at her because Minnie said that there was gonna be a pool, and

pizza, and games, and everything! But Mom can swim. And Mom's not letting me go, and I really wanted to go, and it's not fair, you know. She gets to do whatever she wants and I can't do anything! It's not fair, and it makes me so mad... and so I did something. I did something bad. (giggles) Come here! Let me show you, but remember you can't tell no one.

Look. (*touches the piano and flinches back*) Oh! I touched the piano. (*giggles and looks around*) I'm gonna touch it again.

THE PIANIST touches the piano with her finger, then with her whole palm, then continues to touch the piano everywhere and giggles until she remembers something.

THE PIANIST: Oh, oh! Look, look, look!

THE PIANIST opens the piano lid and smiles.

THE PIANIST: It's the ocean... or at least that's what Mom calls it. She says that this is the ocean and that she likes to swim in it, but she says that sometimes when she goes swimming she gets lost. That sometimes the ocean is too big and she gets lost in it, but that when she opens her eyes (*opens her eyes*) *like this*, and takes a deep breath (*breathes in deeply*) *like this*, then she remembers how to get back to shore. At first when she told me that, I didn't really understand. I said, "Mom, you say that this is the ocean, but it doesn't look like the ocean, so why do you call it the ocean?" She never told me why, only that it was a feeling, and I still didn't understand, but then I did this.

THE PIANIST touches the piano keys, slowly touching more, until it becomes a song, a familiar melody (Chopin's Waltz in A Minor, B. 150, Op. Posthumous).

THE PIANIST: And now, I think I'm starting to understand what she was saying

THE PIANIST giggles and continues playing her melody.

THE PIANIST: Look! I'm swimming.

She continues to play. Suddenly another voice speaks.

MOTHER: Imelda?

THE PIANIST stops playing.

MOTHER: What are you doing?

THE PIANIST didn't notice her mother enter the room, and she's scared.

THE PIANIST: (*quietly*) Nada.

MOTHER: What?

THE PIANIST: (*a bit louder*) Nada.

MOTHER: No que nada. I see you touching the piano.

THE PIANIST doesn't answer or turn around, but stays frozen in place. MOTHER approaches her.

MOTHER: What did I say about being in this room?

THE PIANIST: To not go in here.

MOTHER: And yet here you are. Niña traviesa.

THE PIANIST: I'm sorry Mommy. I'll go.

THE PIANIST gets up from the piano bench and quickly tries to leave, grabbing her plushie.

MOTHER: Did I say you could go?

THE PIANIST stops where she is at, still not looking at MOTHER.

MOTHER: Sit down.

THE PIANIST sits down where she was standing.

MOTHER: Not on the floor.

THE PIANIST turns around to see MOTHER gesturing towards the piano bench. THE PIANIST, unsure what is happening, slowly makes her way to the piano and sits on the bench, not looking at MOTHER.

MOTHER: Mirame.

THE PIANIST looks at MOTHER.

MOTHER: Give me your toy.

THE PIANIST gives MOTHER her the plushie.

MOTHER: Turn around.

THE PIANIST slowly turns around.

MOTHER: Now play.

THE PIANIST turns to look at MOTHER, confused.

THE PIANIST: Mom?

MOTHER: You heard me. Play.

THE PIANIST slowly realizes what MOTHER has given her. Permission. The freedom to swim.

THE PIANIST begins to play her song again. MOTHER intently watches. Listening. THE PIANIST accidentally hits a wrong note. MOTHER flicks THE PIANIST on the back of her head.

THE PIANIST: Ow.

MOTHER: Do it again.

THE PIANIST: Mom?

MOTHER: Do it again, and this time, don't get caught in the wave, or else you'll drown.

THE PIANIST turns back around, and continues playing. She plays the right note this time.

MOTHER: Hm.

Transition.

II

Years later. Los Angeles. Boyle Heights. THE PIANIST's bedroom. The walls are empty, the bed is not made, and a broken lamp lives in one of the corners. The bedroom window has bars on the outside. On the inside of the window hangs a lock. A digital clock, bent on one side, sits on the bedroom drawer. It reads 11:59pm. The bedroom door opens. THE PIANIST, almost 18 years old walks into the bedroom, quickly, quietly. She has a fading black eye and a healing busted lip. She

holds a pouch in one hand, a key in the other. She closes the door behind her. She puts the key in her pocket, then takes out some cash from the pouch and places it inside her jacket. She puts the pouch aside. THE PIANIST goes into her closet, and hidden behind clothes and blankets are two duffel bags and a backpack, already filled with things inside. She gently takes each of them out of the closet. She closes the closet doors. She grabs the pouch and opens the backpack, placing the pouch inside it. The digital clock turns to 12:00am. At the exact same moment, a quiet knock comes from the window. THE PIANIST rushes over to the window VALERIA, now 18 years old, appears on the other side of the window with a backpack on her back. THE PIANIST takes out a key from her pocket and puts it into the lock. The lock opens, and THE PIANIST takes the lock away as she opens the windows.

VALERIA: (quietly) Stand back.

THE PIANIST stands back while VALERIA takes out bolt cutters and starts to cut the window bars. The bolt cutter makes a noise. THE PIANIST looks quickly at the door, scared.

THE PIANIST: Shit. She's gonna hear us.

VALERIA: Well I'm not stopping now.

VALERIA keeps cutting the bars. One, two, three, then VALERIA grabs the bars and places them aside. THE PIANIST grabs VALERIA as she helps VALERIA through the window. VALERIA makes it inside. As VALERIA throws the bolt cutters on the bed, she goes to THE PIANIST and they hug each other tightly.

THE PIANIST: Valeria, you made it.

VALERIA: Of course I did. I'm very reliable.

They pull apart and VALERIA gently grabs THE PIANIST's face, inspecting her black eye.

VALERIA: Unbelievable.

THE PIANIST: (*wincing*) Does it look that bad?

VALERIA: It looks better actually. That stupid bitch.

THE PIANIST looks away, not knowing what to say.

VALERIA: Hey, I'm sorry. I shouldn't say that.

THE PIANIST: No you're right. She is a stupid bitch. She can rot for all I care.

VALERIA gives her a small smile and puts THE PIANIST's hair behind her ear.

VALERIA: Well then let's go before the bitch catches us.

THE PIANIST blushes and pulls back to go grab her bags.

THE PIANIST: You got the train tickets?

VALERIA: Yup. The Big Apple awaits us.

THE PIANIST: And then Philadelphia.

VALERIA: (*sadly*) And then off to your dreams Curtis girl.

THE PIANIST smiles at VALERIA. VALERIA smiles back sadly.

THE PIANIST: Hey. We'll see each other on weekends.

VALERIA: I'd rather see you everyday.

THE PIANIST blushes and looks away from VALERIA to check the room one last time. VALERIA pulls out something quickly from her bag, closing her hands around it to hide it.

THE PIANIST: Okay I think that's everything, we should go-

VALERIA opens her hand and presents the little gift to THE PIANIST.

VALERIA: Happy birthday.

THE PIANIST opens her eyes and looks at the tiny Blues Clues keychain of Blue from VALERIA.

THE PIANIST: (in awe) Val, you didn't have to.

VALERIA: Yes, I had to. Besides...

VALERIA takes off her backpack and shows THE PIANIST the keychain on her bag. It's a tiny Blues Clues keychain of Magenta.

VALERIA: We're matching now. Now you can never get away from me.

THE PIANIST goes to VALERIA and tightly hugs her.

THE PIANIST: Thank you.

VALERIA: Of course. I'd do anything for you Mel. Anything.

As they start to pull apart they look into each other's eyes. Something changes. VALERIA leans in and kisses THE PIANIST, catching THE PIANIST by surprise. VALERIA suddenly realizes what she did and jumps back, embarrassed.

VALERIA: Sorry, I shouldn't have done that. I don't know why I-

THE PIANIST kisses VALERIA, and VALERIA quickly sinks into the kiss. They kiss each other deeply, gently, almost forgetting that they aren't the only two people in the world. A noise from outside the bedroom door. They break apart. Music begins to play (Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Op. 43: Variation 18).

THE PIANIST: (quietly) Let's go.

They quickly grab the bags as they head out the window. VALERIA goes first. THE PIANIST hands her the bag she was holding, but before exiting the window, she looks one last time behind her. She jumps through the window. VALERIA hands THE PIANIST the bag, and they both start running. The climax of the song begins to play. They run, far, far, far, far away from the house THE PIANIST once knew. They laugh as their adrenaline pumps through them, and as they run they grab each other's hands, going faster and faster and faster and faster. Nothing matters except the two of them. Nothing matters except what's ahead. What exciting things are ahead. They run and run and run and run. In the distance, you can hear a quiet sound. An echo. A call. A cry. Imelda. Imelda. Imelda. THE PIANIST and VALERIA keep running.

Transition.

III

Years later. New York City. Manhattan. THE PIANIST's living room. Packing boxes are everywhere. A couch sits in the middle, and there are stairs placed behind it. On the wall next to the stairs is a wedding portrait of THE PIANIST and VALERIA. Beside that portrait, is a case full of medals and trophies. VALERIA, now 26 sits on the floor, unpacking a box filled with books. THE PIANIST, now 26 years old, enters, runs down the stairs excitedly, with a laptop in hand.

THE PIANIST: VAL! VAL! VAL!

VALERIA turns around curiously to look at THE PIANIST.

THE PIANIST: I got it! I got it! Oh my god I finally got it!

VALERIA: Got what?

THE PIANIST: The pieces that I'm going to do for the Chopin competition.

VALERIA: You did!?

THE PIANIST: YES.

VALERIA: Well then tell me!

THE PIANIST tries to get around the packing boxes.

THE PIANIST: (*struggling*) Give me a sec.

VALERIA: No, tell me now! Tell me tell me tell me tell me.

THE PIANIST escapes the boxes and plops down next to VALERIA. THE PIANIST hands over her laptop to VALERIA and VALERIA takes it from her and looks at it.

VALERIA: Mhm. Oh No 2, yeah, of course you're doing that one. That one is a nice one. Interesting. Oh!

VALERIA looks at the pianist curiously.

VALERIA: You chose 'Torrent Etude' instead of 'Winter Wind.'

THE PIANIST: Mhm.

VALERIA: Why? I thought you said ‘Winter Wind’ was the one you were sure you were gonna do.

THE PIANIST: I was, but then I was thinking should I do what I like or should I do something that could impress everyone?

VALERIA: You should do what you like.

THE PIANIST: Oh but that's so boring. Why choose boring when you can choose impressive? I want to impress people.

VALERIA: What about ‘Torrent’ would be more impressive than ‘Winter Wind’?

THE PIANIST: Oh I am so glad you asked. With ‘Winter Wind,’ everyone knows that piece. It's popular. It's also not something that would amaze the judges. But this one, this one would for sure catch their attention. Usually when people play ‘Torrent Etude’ it can sound so mushy, I mean with the speed it's hard to make every note sound so clear. It's sensitive, you have to be sharp and articulate without trying to rush the song. Each note means something, there's dynamics. Without thinking about the purpose of each note being played, everything blends together and it all becomes so bland. It's not bland. There's layers. There's hills and there's mountains. They're different. There has to be differences. The song has a story, if you just try to rush through the story no one is going to be listening. Plus, there are melody lines that not many would notice, but I did, and I think that makes this impressive. I know I can play this. I'm gonna fucking kill it. I'm gonna fucking blow everyone away.

VALERIA: You really are something, you know.

THE PIANIST: A little ego has never hurt anyone.

VALERIA: (*making a tiny gesture with her fingers*) A little?

VALERIA then makes the gesture turn into a big one, spreading her arms wide.

THE PIANIST: Okay okay.

They both start laughing. VALERIA points at the laptop screen.

VALERIA: And this one?

THE PIANIST looks at the laptop screen.

VALERIA: Nocturne in B major. Why did you choose that one?

THE PIANIST shrugs.

THE PIANIST: Because you like that one.

VALERIA smiles widely at her, then launches herself at THE PIANIST, kissing her all over her face. She looks at THE PIANIST lovingly.

VALERIA: Are you excited?

THE PIANIST: God I'm so excited I could throw up.

VALERIA: When are you going to start practicing?

THE PIANIST: Right now.

VALERIA: Right now? The competition is a year away!

THE PIANIST: It's gonna take a year to learn all my pieces.

VALERIA: We haven't even finished unpacking.

THE PIANIST: We can do that tomorrow.

VALERIA squints her eyes at THE PIANIST, looking menacingly at her.

THE PIANIST: Please?

VALERIA gives in.

VALERIA: Fine, but only because it pays the bills.

THE PIANIST: Or it's because you love me.

VALERIA: Unfortunately.

THE PIANIST kisses VALERIA's forehead, and gets up. VALERIA grabs her hand, stopping her.

VALERIA: Don't practice too much. We both know how you get when you do.

THE PIANIST: But I need to practice.

VALERIA: (*threateningly*) Imelda.

THE PIANIST: I won't.

VALERIA: Imelda. We're married now. I know this is your life, but now I'm part of it, too. Don't you want me to be a part of it?

THE PIANIST goes back down to VALERIA.

THE PIANIST: Of course I do. I love you.

VALERIA: Then show me that you do. Don't lose yourself in the music. Don't get lost, because then I can't find you. Let me be a part of you. Let me in. Okay?

THE PIANIST gives in, putting her forehead against VALERIA's.

THE PIANIST: Okay.

VALERIA: Good. Now, show them what you can do.

Transition.

IV

A montage in the span of a year. A piano with a binder full of music placed on it sits in the middle of the stage. THE PIANIST goes to sit on the piano bench. She begins to play Chopin's Nocturne in B major, Op. 9 No. 3. As THE PIANIST plays, VALERIA enters enthusiastically. VALERIA sits with THE PIANIST, enjoying the music. She puts her head on THE PIANIST's shoulder. THE PIANIST kisses VALERIA on the head and continues playing. Then VALERIA gets up and exits.

Now VALERIA enters enthusiastically, looking at the music sheet. THE PIANIST nods her head to indicate VALERIA to turn the page. VALERIA turns the page for THE PIANIST. She kisses THE PIANIST on the back of her head and exits.

Now VALERIA enters happily but less excitedly. She hugs THE PIANIST from behind. THE PIANIST does not respond. VALERIA exits.

Now *VALERIA* enters calmly but contentedly. She takes away *THE PIANIST*'s music sheet. *THE PIANIST* continues playing. *VALERIA* exits.

*The music changes now, morphing into another song. *THE PIANIST* begins playing Chopin's Etude in C Sharp Minor, Op. 10 No. 4, "Torrent Etude."* *VALERIA* enters neutrally, bringing *THE PIANIST* a plate of food. She exits.

*Now *VALERIA* enters a bit more frustrated. *VALERIA* sees that the plate of food was left untouched. She takes it with her and exits.*

*Now *VALERIA* enters curiously. She nudges *THE PIANIST* on the shoulder. *THE PIANIST* brushes her off. *VALERIA* exits sadly.*

*Now *VALERIA* enters sadly. She approaches *THE PIANIST*, looking at her. *THE PIANIST* ignores her. *VALERIA* exits slowly.*

*Now *VALERIA* doesn't enter, rather she stands at the doorway, watching *THE PIANIST* from a distance. *VALERIA* does not come in. *VALERIA* exits.*

*At the end of the song, an orchestra begins to join in. *THE PIANIST* closes the lid of the piano, and gets up. The orchestra continues the song for her. *THE PIANIST* goes to the doorway, taking one last look at the piano. *THE PIANIST* exits.*

The orchestra changes the song.

Transition.

V

*Poland. Warsaw. Backstage waiting room. The orchestra plays Chopin's Grande Valse Brillante in E Flat Major, Op. 18 (Orchestral version). An audience applause is heard from afar. *THE PIANIST* stands with *PIANIST #2* and *PIANIST #3*, in the middle of a conversation.*

PIANIST #2: ...I mean I love Chopin, but there's something about Liszt that truly shows what one can do when you use a piano to its full potential.

PIANIST #3: Both are exceptional, but I personally prefer Rachmaninoff's pieces. His ability to tell a story with a full range of emotions is extraordinary. Best piano concertos in my opinion.

PIANIST #3: *(to THE PIANIST)* What about you my friend? Have a favorite?

THE PIANIST turns to PIANIST #3 in surprise, seeming to only be listening now.

THE PIANIST: Chopin.

PIANIST #3: You okay there? You seem a little nervous.

PIANIST #2: A little? You look like you're going to wet yourself.

PIANIST #3: It's hard to imagine a pro like you to still get nervous.

A cheer is heard from afar.

THE PIANIST: In this situation, who wouldn't be?

PIANIST #2: I hear you. You know the last time I was here I-

HEIMLICH enters the room, having just finished playing on stage. The three pianists stare at HEIMLICH. HEIMLICH continues walking past them.

PIANIST #2: I hope your back didn't break after your circus performance.

PIANIST #3: Circus performance? I thought you were trying to vomit. It also made me vomit.

PIANIST #2 and PIANIST #3 laugh as HEIMLICH quickly walks away from them.

PIANIST #2: Heimlich is so easy.

THE PIANIST: Heimlich? I thought that kid had another name.

PIANIST #3: It's what everyone here has been calling him.

PIANIST #2: Because every time he gets on stage and plays, he starts jerking like this.

PIANIST #2 starts jerking back and forth, the way one would if they were choking and receiving the Heimlich.

PIANIST #2: *(laughing)* He looked like he was doing the Heimlich, or rather he needed it, and the name stuck.

PIANIST #3 joins in the laughing. THE PIANIST does not. A voice from the intercom interrupts them.

INTERCOM: Imelda Zácatenco to the stage please. Imelda Zácatenco to the stage.

THE PIANIST begins to leave.

PIANIST #3: Break legs my friend!

PIANIST #2: And don't vomit.

PIANIST #2 and PIANIST #3 exit. Before taking another step, the lights begin to dim. A single spotlight on THE PIANIST. THE PIANIST checks her hands, and they tremble slightly. She closes her eyes and takes a deep breath. When she opens her eyes again, she walks onto the

stage. The lights go back up, and there is an applause as she does. The orchestra surrounds the piano that is placed centerstage. THE PIANIST bows to the audience. As she takes her seat the applause dies down and lights dim. Blue lights remain on the orchestra, a single white spotlight on THE PIANIST. The orchestra begins to play Chopin's Concerto No.1 in E Minor, Op. 11 (Vivace). As THE PIANIST is about to play the first note, the lights go out. The music continues, but slowly the sound of the music changes from a live orchestra into a phone speaker.

Transition.

VI

The morning after. Poland. Warsaw. A hotel penthouse. There are couches and chairs arranged in the room, but most importantly a piano sits slightly off center stage. THE PIANIST sits at the piano, listening to Chopin's Concerto No.1 in E Minor, Op. 11 (Vivace) on her phone, continued from the previous scene. She listens intently, focusing on nothing else but the music. VALERIA walks into the room.

VALERIA: Honey?

THE PIANIST does not answer.

VALERIA: Baby?

VALERIA walks up to THE PIANIST. THE PIANIST does not look up at her. VALERIA grabs THE PIANIST's phone and turns off the music. THE PIANIST looks up at VALERIA as VALERIA sits on a chair across from her. VALERIA waits for THE PIANIST to say something, but THE PIANIST continues to stare into nothing.

VALERIA: Imelda.

THE PIANIST: Hm.

VALERIA: Are you okay?

THE PIANIST: Hm?

VALERIA: Are you okay?

THE PIANIST: What? Yeah. Yeah. No, I'm good. I'm good. I'm great actually.

VALERIA: Yeah?

THE PIANIST: Yeah. Having the time of my life.

VALERIA: Really?

THE PIANIST: Yeah. I am. Muy bueno.

VALERIA leans forward carefully, cautiously.

VALERIA: You don't seem okay.

THE PIANIST: Oh but I am. I'm so okay. I'm so great. I'm happy. I'm ecstatic. I'm joyful. I'm merry. I'm delighted. I'm okay. I am so, so, so, so okay.

VALERIA continues to stare at THE PIANIST, waiting for her to say more. THE PIANIST sighs out.

THE PIANIST: Yesterday was okay, too. I mean, it was only one of the most important days of my life, but no, in the end it was okay. I'm okay. I mean, I only spent my whole life waiting for yesterday, spending months and months slaving myself away. But it was okay. It's okay. But I mean, I can't lie I was fucking nervous. Who wouldn't be? But then I sat down, and I hit that

first note, and I was okay. It was all okay. (*laughs*) I hit that first note, and I already knew my name had that first place on it. I mean, how could I not? I had just given the performance of my life out there and it was... it was awesome. I mean, you could just feel the electricity in the room. Did you not feel it? The anticipation, the excitement... the glory. The glory of it all, and every single person in that room felt it. So how could I not win? How could the judges see what everyone else saw and choose otherwise? And so I was okay. It was all going to be okay. And then they finally announce the winners. Fifth place... fourth place... third place...

Beat.

... And then they gave me second place. Fucking second place. And then, they have the audacity to give first place to Heimlich. That little 18 year old kid who probably has a chiropractor on speed dial. I mean... Heimlich? The same fucking Heimlich who can't keep a rhythm to save their fucking life? That Heimlich? (*laughs*) Well, I didn't know they just gave awards out to the bare fucking minimum. He played like an amateur and they just gave him first place? Like that? Heimlich was basically holding mommy's hand out there and- (*laughs*) oh wait, Heimlich doesn't even have a mom. Well, maybe if they had a mom they wouldn't have started sucking the judges titties out there for the lack of breast milk they didn't fucking receive as a stupid fucking child. I mean, is it my fault that I grew up with a mother and he didn't? Is that why the judges were baby-ing him out there for his amateur fucking dollar store of a performance? Heimlich couldn't even recognize an arpeggio even if it was a little dog biscuit dangling in front of his little stupid face. We don't even have a dog, and I'm sure I could teach it to play better than that little cunt. Is that what they're giving awards out for? For being the biggest fucking cunt? (*laughs*) Well then, if we are then congratu-fucking-lations to Heimlich because he sure won with that one.

THE PIANIST laughs and laughs and laughs... until we see her start to cry, going a bit insane. VALERIA doesn't approach THE PIANIST, because she is unsure what THE PIANIST would do next. THE PIANIST buries her face into her hands, rubs off all the tears they cried, sniffles, and crosses their arms over themselves.

I worked so hard... I worked so fucking hard for that...

VALERIA goes over to THE PIANIST and gives her a big hug. THE PIANIST hugs her back, crying into her chest. Slowly, the sobs start to quiet, and THE PIANIST becomes silent. THE PIANIST breaks apart from VALERIA and looks down at their hands to see that they are shaking, violently. THE PIANIST clenches their fists to calm down.

You know what my mom used to do when I... when I would accidentally play the wrong note? She would hit me... the back of my head... right here... the next time harder than the last. And when I couldn't get my scales right... she would grab me by the hair, and... and tell me how stupid I was. How fucking stupid I was... and oh (*chuckles*) and when I couldnt keep up with the tempo... Well... you already know the rest...

VALERIA wipes tears away from THE PIANIST's face, stroking her hair.

VALERIA: Hey, why don't we go back to bed. We can stay in, and order breakfast and finish watching that show you like. That sounds pretty good, no?

THE PIANIST: You know what. That sounds great.

Neither THE PIANIST nor VALERIA move from their spot. VALERIA holds THE PIANIST's hand.

VALERIA: You'll be okay?

THE PIANIST: Yeah. Yeah. I'll be okay.

THE PIANIST looks over at the piano.

THE PIANIST: Yeah. It'll be okay. I'll just... I just gotta work harder.

VALERIA: Imelda?

THE PIANIST lets go of VALERIA's hand and turns to the piano.

THE PIANIST: Yeah. I'll just work harder and harder and harder... And I'm not gonna stop... I'm not gonna fucking stop.

THE PIANIST starts playing some notes. VALERIA stands up, placing her hands on THE PIANIST's shoulder.

VALERIA: Imelda. Stop.

THE PIANIST does not stop.

VALERIA: Imelda.

THE PIANIST: Don't stop... don't stop...

THE PIANIST starts hitting the piano keys, harder and harder.

THE PIANIST: Stop...Stop...STOP.

THE PIANIST falls over on the piano, sobbing. VALERIA puts herself over THE PIANIST, holding her as THE PIANIST keeps sobbing. She sobs, and sobs, and sobs, and sobs.

Transition.

VII

Years later. Philadelphia. The Curtis Institute of Music. A rehearsal room. There is a piano in the room, and a chair off to its side. LUNA, an 18 year old girl sits at the piano, playing Bartók's

Allegro Barbaro Sz.49. She plays with full concentration at first, but begins to lose herself. Some notes hit too hard, some notes that aren't even in the song. THE PIANIST, now 45 years old, opens the door, holding a binder and a spill-free cup in her hand.

THE PIANIST: Luna.

LUNA jumps, unaware that THE PIANIST was there.

THE PIANIST: You were drowning. I've come to save you.

LUNA: Sorry Professor Imelda.

THE PIANIST: That's alright. For now. Out there you can't allow yourself to get lost like that. It's sloppy, it's lazy, it's... it's a cry for help, so I'm here to help. You understand me?

LUNA: Yes.

THE PIANIST: Good. Now, I have a train to catch so I don't have much time. Show me what you have so far.

LUNA turns back to the piano and puts her fingers into starting position on the keys. THE PIANIST puts her things down, sits on a chair, and watches. LUNA plays Bartók's Allegro Barbaro Sz.49, and THE PIANIST slowly looks away, closing her eyes to really listen to the music. LUNA starts to rush, making THE PIANIST open her eyes. LUNA stops at THE PIANIST's voice.

THE PIANIST: Don't rush. Keep it steady.

LUNA places her fingers into her starting position, and starts the song over again. THE PIANIST closes her eyes. LUNA fixes her mistake, but now she plays slower. THE PIANIST stops her again.

THE PIANIST: Why are you slowing down?

LUNA: You said to be slower.

THE PIANIST: I said don't rush. In what world does 'don't rush' mean 'be slow.'

LUNA, embarrassed, does not respond.

THE PIANIST: Take it from the same place.

LUNA, starting to become frustrated, puts herself into starting position, and plays again. So far, THE PIANIST says nothing. A good sign. LUNA continues farther than the previous time, when suddenly she hits a wrong note.

THE PIANIST: What was that?

LUNA stops. Holding her breath, LUNA stays frozen, nervous. THE PIANIST gets up and points at the page.

THE PIANIST: What is that?

LUNA looks up at the page.

LUNA: F double sharp.

THE PIANIST: And what note are we supposed to play if it's a F double sharp?

LUNA does not answer, but instead plays the G natural note on the piano.

THE PIANIST: And what note did you play?

LUNA looks at THE PIANIST, slowly becoming angered at this treatment.

THE PIANIST: What note did you play?

LUNA looks at the piano, and annoyed, sighs out. She plays the F sharp note.

THE PIANIST: So you do know. Of course you do. You played the other notes correctly so there was no reason for you to hit the wrong note. Why didn't you answer me earlier?

LUNA, not wanting to answer, rolls her eyes and looks away from THE PIANIST. THE PIANIST sees this, becoming angered, yet tries to maintain her composure.

THE PIANIST: Luna. When I asked you, 'what was that,' why didn't you answer me?

LUNA: I don't know.

THE PIANIST: (*scoffs*) That's not an answer.

LUNA: You wanted an answer. I gave you an answer. Sorry if you don't like it.

THE PIANIST: First you don't answer me, then you roll your eyes. Now you're giving me attitude, then what? You're going to start teaching *me* how to play? How about you actually practice for once so that you don't sound like a 70 year old mental patient with two broken thumbs?

LUNA turns quickly to THE PIANIST, taken aback.

LUNA: Who do you think you are talking to me that way?

THE PIANIST: Excuse you?

LUNA: Sorry that I'm not playing like you. But you can't talk to me that way. It's mean.

THE PIANIST: I am mean. I'm also an accomplished pianist. I've performed in countries you can only dream about. I've been regarded as one of the best in my league, if not one of them, then the one. The best one. If you don't like what I'm saying because you think it's mean, then fine, I'm mean. But one thing I am not is a liar. If I think you're playing like a donkey, I am going to tell you you're playing like one. I can't continue to baby you and cheer you on as you *try* to make your way through a symphony. Playing is not hard. Commitment is. Discipline is. Feedback is. I should know. How do you think I got to where I am? By crying to my mommy? No. By actually practicing and dedicating the free time I have to prove to everyone what a good pianist actually sounds like. How music should sound like. And what you are doing my dear, is not it. Regard me as your villain, but respect me as your teacher. Others would kiss my feet to be in your position. You not only disrespect yourself when you act that way, but you disrespect your parents. How shameful. Now. Stop acting like a child and play the damn piano like you mean it.

LUNA is speechless. She cannot believe the person she once respected as her teacher. LUNA, in disbelief, laughs.

LUNA: You know what. No. I know my worth, and this... it's not worth it. I'm done.

THE PIANIST: Done? (*laughs*) I didn't say you were done.

LUNA: (*gathering her things*) Well, I say I'm done, and I'm leaving.

THE PIANIST: Leaving my ass.

LUNA heads to the door, and THE PIANIST gets in her way. THE PIANIST grabs her chair and places it directly in front of the door. THE PIANIST sits on the chair.

LUNA: (*incredulously*) What are you doing?

THE PIANIST: Finish the song, then you can leave.

LUNA: Hell no.

THE PIANIST: Fine. Don't leave then.

LUNA: This is wrong. You could get arrested for this.

THE PIANIST: Wouldn't be the first time. Sit.

Unbelievable. LUNA, sick of THE PIANIST's shit, angrily obliges.

LUNA: Fine. Whatever.

LUNA throws her stuff on the floor and sits down at the piano, and begins to play without her music sheet, very rapidly.

THE PIANIST: No.

LUNA stops playing.

THE PIANIST: Play it like you're supposed to.

LUNA starts again, but still plays quite fast.

THE PIANIST: Nope. Again.

LUNA starts again, still fast.

THE PIANIST: No. Again

LUNA plays slower, closer, but not quite.

THE PIANIST: Again.

LUNA plays comedically slow.

THE PIANIST: Again.

LUNA then starts playing faster. Faster. Faster. Faster, and faster after every 'Again.' Again, again, again.

THE PIANIST: Again. Again. Again! AGAIN.

LUNA slams on the keys.

LUNA: UGH. IF IT'S SO EASY THEN WHY DON'T YOU PLAY IT. Huh? Come on. Play it. PLAY IT.

THE PIANIST and LUNA stare at each other, tense and heated. No one is happy. THE PIANIST makes her way over to the piano. LUNA stands up as THE PIANIST takes her place. LUNA crosses her arms, watching, waiting to prove herself the victor of this fight. THE PIANIST puts her arms up, revealing her hands. Her hands tremble violently. THE PIANIST tries to play, but her hands don't allow her to. Her hands fall. LUNA's face falls, shocked at what she's witnessing.

THE PIANIST: I can't play it.

THE PIANIST turns to LUNA, staring into her eyes angrily.

THE PIANIST: I can't play.

LUNA: I guess that makes both of us.

Beat.

Chaos.

THE PIANIST throws her cup at LUNA. It misses LUNA, then THE PIANIST throws LUNA's books at her, one hitting her head. LUNA turns away from THE PIANIST, crouching in fear.

THE PIANIST: My mother used to beat me if I didn't play how she wanted. I used to bleed until I couldn't play anymore. And I fucking hated her for it. But no matter how much I hated her, I NEVER made excuses. NEVER. EVER. I have Parkinson's. What's your excuse?

LUNA starts crying. Slowly, while looking at LUNA's terrified face, THE PIANIST looks around the room and realizes what she has done.

THE PIANIST: Oh. Oh no. Oh god. Hey. Hey. Luna I'm-

LUNA: DON'T TOUCH ME. DON'T YOU DARE FUCKING TOUCH ME.

THE PIANIST flinches away at that. LUNA grabs all her belongings, quickly, and tries to head out the door. Before exiting, LUNA stops at the door.

LUNA: Like mother like daughter.

This shocks THE PIANIST to her core. LUNA exits. THE PIANIST paces back and forth, picking up her cup off the floor and trying to clean the spill with her sleeve.

THE PIANIST: (*whispering quietly to herself*) No I'm not my mother. Not my mother. Not my mother. Not my mother. Not my mother.

THE PIANIST begins hitting her arm softly.

THE PIANIST: Not my mother. Not my mother. Not my mother.

THE PIANIST gets louder, more aggressive.

THE PIANIST: I'm not her. I'm not her. I'm not. I'm not. I'm not. I'm...

THE PIANIST wipes the tears off her face.

THE PIANIST: I can't do this anymore. I can't do this. No. I quit. I quit.

THE PIANIST grabs her things quickly and storms out of the room.

Transition.

VIII

Years later. New York City. Manhattan. A kitchen. On the stove sit a pot with boiling water inside. On the kitchen counter sits carrots, potatoes, zucchini, corn on the cob, cilantro, onion, and garlic. Beside the veggies is a plate filled with scraps of beef fat and consomé de res. THE PIANIST, now 54 years old, stands in the kitchen trying to open a garlic bulb. She hums Chavela Vargas' "No Volvere." VALERIA, now 54 years old, opens the door with a grocery bag in one hand, a red rose in the other. THE PIANIST doesn't notice. THE PIANIST, seeing this, hides the rose behind her back. VALERIA transfers the grocery bag to the hand that holds the rose and slowly approaches THE PIANIST, and surprises THE PIANIST by wrapping her free arm around THE PIANIST from behind, hugging her tight. THE PIANIST, realizing what is happening laughs in relief, making VALERIA smile. VALERIA then unwraps her arm and reveals the red rose to THE PIANIST, offering it to her. THE PIANIST's face brightens.

VALERIA: For my love.

THE PIANIST: (*excitedly*) For me?

VALERIA: No. For me actually.

They laugh. THE PIANIST takes the rose and kisses VALERIA.

VALERIA: Oh! And...

VALERIA takes out güisquil from inside the grocery bag.

VALERIA: The chayote you requested.

THE PIANIST: Where I'm from we say güisquil.

VALERIA: Well where I'm from we say chayote, and chayote it shall be.

VALERIA smiles and kisses THE PIANIST on the head. VALERIA goes to the kitchen counter to wash her hands. THE PIANIST continues to try opening the garlic bulb. She struggles. VALERIA sees this, but tries not to help. As VALERIA grabs the veggies and pours them into the pot, THE PIANIST drops the garlic. VALERIA jumps in immediately.

VALERIA: Here, let me help.

VALERIA grabs the garlic and opens it, placing the garlic cloves to the side.

THE PIANIST: I thought I had it.

VALERIA: It's okay. That's why I'm here. Now. What else do we need to do?

THE PIANIST smiles, feeling relieved.

THE PIANIST: We need to chop the onions and mince some garlic for the rice.

VALERIA: Onions. Garlic. Got it.

VALERIA starts to chop the onions as THE PIANIST grabs a wooden spoon to stir the pot.

VALERIA: So, *güisquil*. Did your mom call it that?

THE PIANIST: No, it was my grandma actually. This is her recipe.

VALERIA: Your grandma? You never talk about your grandma.

THE PIANIST: I mean she did die when I was young. Not much to talk about there.

VALERIA: And yet you remember a whole recipe from her.

THE PIANIST: Probably the only thing I remember. Plus she wrote it down for me.

VALERIA finishes chopping the onion and starts to work on the garlic.

VALERIA: So... how'd you get the recipe?

THE PIANIST: When I was younger, my mom and I would go to Texas during the summer and visit my grandma. My mom never talked about her and so sometimes I felt like I made up a grandma. Like she was a figment of my imagination. But apparently my grandma didn't even know I existed until I was like four, and when she found out she got upset she demanded to see me. So every summer for like two weeks we could visit my grandma. Mom never seemed like she wanted to go, but I guess she felt guilty? I don't know, but either way, every time we came to visit my grandma would make caldo de res. God it smells just like the way she made it.

THE PIANIST starts humming “No Volvere” and continues to stir the pot. VALERIA finishes mincing the garlic.

VALERIA: So when did you stop visiting your grandma?

THE PIANIST: My grandma?

VALERIA: Yeah, you said you used to visit her every summer.

THE PIANIST: I did. How do you know that?

VALERIA: ...You just told me.

THE PIANIST: What? No I didn’t.

VALERIA: Yes. You did. And then you started humming that pretty song you always hum.

THE PIANIST: ...I did?

VALERIA: Yes. Mel, are you teasing me?

THE PIANIST: Are you teasing me?

VALERIA: What? What are you talking about?

THE PIANIST: Valeria. What are *you* talking about?

VALERIA: You were just telling me about your grandma. You said this is her recipe.

THE PIANIST: ...I did. Didn’t I?

VALERIA: Imelda?

THE PIANIST: Sorry. It just slipped my mind.

VALERIA: Imelda.

THE PIANIST turns to look at VALERIA, afraid.

VALERIA: There's something you're not telling me.

THE PIANIST: I didn't want to worry you.

VALERIA is taken aback.

VALERIA: Imelda. When you and I got married I took you with everything and every possible thing. In sickness and in health. Your condition isn't going to hurt me. It's when you decide to keep things from me that hurts. I'm here to endure everything with you. If I'm worried well that's on me, that's not for you to decide. We're doing this together, Mel. Let me in.

THE PIANIST's eyes start to water. She looks straight at VALERIA.

THE PIANIST: It's getting worse. I can't remember simple things. I couldn't remember to get the tomatoes even though I read the recipe at least three times. I couldn't remember the olives even though I wrote it down, and I forgot I wrote it down, too. The other day, I couldn't recall the movie we had just watched. I'm starting to forget I had a grandmother. I'm forgetting how my mom used to look like. Val, I'm forgetting how to play. I can't remember my songs anymore. I can't feel the ocean anymore. I can't-

THE PIANIST begins sobbing, and VALERIA hugs THE PIANIST tightly.

VALERIA: I'm here. I'm here.

THE PIANIST: Valeria, what if I forget you?

VALERIA: Shhh. Don't say that.

THE PIANIST: But what if I do?

VALERIA looks at THE PIANIST intently.

VALERIA: You won't forget me, baby. You won't because I'll always be here. I'm not leaving.

VALERIA wipes a tear away from THE PIANIST.

VALERIA: And if you do forget, then that's okay, because I'll remember for the both of us. Okay? I'll remember.

VALERIA kisses THE PIANIST on the head. THE PIANIST kisses VALERIA.

THE PIANIST: Never forget that I love you. Okay Val? Never forget that.

VALERIA: I won't. I won't.

Transition.

IX

Years later. Los Angeles. Santa Monica. A living room. In the living room is an armchair by a window, a couch by the front door, and a piano placed between the two. The sound of a wave crashes in the distance. IMELDA, now 62 years old, sits in the arm chair staring out the window. She watches the waves crash on the ocean. She is blank and unmoving. VALERIA, now 62 years old, sits on the couch reading a book. The doorbell rings. VALERIA puts her book aside, goes to

the door and opens it. LUNA, now 35 years old, appears at the door, holding a plate of tamales in hand.

VALERIA: Why hello there.

LUNA: Hi Mrs. Zácatenco. I hope you don't mind but I brought tamales.

VALERIA: Oh how sweet, but Mrs. Zácatenco is my wife. You can call me Val. Come in, come in.

LUNA walks into the living room. VALERIA closes the door, taking the tamales and placing them on the table.

VALERIA: It's not everyday you get tamales from a world-famous pianist. I should know. I live with one.

VALERIA gestures to LUNA to follow her. VALERIA goes over to IMELDA, and LUNA finally sees her. LUNA is timid, keeping her distance. VALERIA puts her hand on IMELDA's shoulder.

VALERIA: Honey?

VALERIA strokes IMELDA's hair from her face as LUNA walks closer to observe.

VALERIA: Honey? Hi there. There's someone here who wanted to come see you.

VALERIA gestures to LUNA, as IMELDA's eyes follow.

LUNA: Hi Imelda. Remember me? It's Luna. I was your student from a very long time ago. What, I think it's been... 20 years? More. Crazy how time flies.

IMELDA blankly stares at LUNA. IMELDA doesn't react, rather she turns around to face the window again.

LUNA: She doesn't want to talk to me.

VALERIA: It's not personal, sweetie. It's just the way it is.

LUNA: Does she recognize me at least?

VALERIA: Who knows. There are times where she doesn't even recognize me

LUNA: It's that bad?

VALERIA, trying not to let her emotions get to her, chooses her words carefully.

VALERIA: What is 'bad'? How do we even define that? Is something bad simply because it's not good, or is it bad because we don't like it? What is 'good' anyways? Maybe it's not good or bad. Maybe it's just life. Maybe it just is. Try to take control and you'll only suffer. So, the only other option is to accept it. To regard it as it is. Life. I've hated this stupid disease for years, but all it brought was pain. For the both of us. She didn't need that. She needed support, and so no matter how much I hated what it's done to her I learned to accept it because... because there is truly nothing else you could do. At this point, you let time take the wheel, and you hope it gets you steadily to the end. This is time taking the wheel. So, no I wouldn't say it's 'that bad'. Rather, I'd say it's what's supposed to happen. We both knew it would come one day, so I do my best to not see it as a bad thing. Just a thing. Otherwise I'll drive myself insane. The world doesn't need more insanity.

LUNA: ...I'm sorry.

VALERIA: What are you sorry for? Life sucks, but we do what we can with it. Now, sit down. I won't let your visit be a bore.

VALERIA gestures to the couch, and LUNA sits down on it while VALERIA joins her.

VALERIA: So. It's been a long time since you last saw Imelda. Why come now? I'm sure you're a busy woman.

LUNA: Life is busy. But the other day, when I read on the news that Imelda was sick, I... it made me realize just how short life is. You wake up everyday never knowing if it's going to be your last. Then when the time comes, you realize there were so many things you wanted to do, so many things you wanted to say, that you didn't get to. I didn't want it to be like that. Not with Imelda.

You know, the first time I saw Imelda play was on my cousin's tablet in Mexico. My parents were not wealthy. Not in the slightest. But whenever we went into the city to visit my cousins they had things I had only ever wished to have. They had a TV, phones, a soft bed, their own rooms. Everything. It was always exciting whenever we would go visit, and they let me play with their tablet. I don't even remember how I found the Chopin video. I guess I clicked on the video because it looked interesting? All I know is that the video started, and this beautiful woman walked onto the stage with her head high and her arms swinging beside her, and my ears perked. Something exciting was going to happen. This woman starts playing and I just couldn't look away. My eyes became like glue. Imelda Zácatenco played Chopin like no one had ever played Chopin before, and ever since that day my life changed completely. Almost 30 years later and I have never forgotten that.

So when I told my parents that I wanted to play piano they actually supported my dream. My mom was able to convince a music teacher in Mexico City to show me how to play the piano, in exchange my mom would clean there after-school while I stayed for my lessons. She was always like that, my mom. She never asked for things without giving back in return. It was really good, those years. I got to study and my parents were able to live their humble life. And it was good... until it wasn't. Until we couldn't stay anymore. My parents had to find a better means to life, a way to survive.

Then we arrived in California when I was about 10, and we lived with my cousins in this house in Los Angeles. My parents worked on the farm getting paid next to nothing, and life was getting so much harder. When I offered to quit piano and help my parents on the farm, they outright refused, offended even. They said my life was meant to be better than theirs. I was born to go farther than they ever could. I will always, always be grateful for what my parents did for me. Fuck anyone who says otherwise. And so I grew up there. I would study piano and my whole family, me, my parents, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, all 12 of us lived in that one house. And then I met Imelda. My hero.

I was walking home from school when suddenly I see her at my doorstep, just standing there, and I still think it's pretty crazy, because when I went up to her asking what she was doing there, she said she used to live there, at that exact same house I was living in. Isn't that crazy? I didn't even know she was from Boyle Heights. It was almost as if fate put her right there, waiting for me. At my literal doorstep. She talked to my parents, got to know my family, and it felt almost as if I was in a dream.

Beat.

Did you know she was the reason I was able to go to Curtis. She put in a good word and (*laughs*) I didn't even have to audition. I didn't even need to show them any papers, Imelda took care of all of that... And I didn't know that. All these years and I didn't know she did that. Did you? Did you know she did all that?

VALERIA: Yes. I did. She was very fond of you.

LUNA shakes her head in disbelief.

VALERIA: I only found out a couple of years ago that she did that. When she wrote me a letter.

VALERIA: She wrote to you?

LUNA: Yes. She did. She told me everything, in the letter. She also said wanted to catch up with me. She actually gave me her phone number- or rather your phone number. And I never responded. I was just so busy I- I don't know why I waited so long.

LUNA looks over at IMELDA. Sad. Regretful.

LUNA: But it seems that I'm too late for that.

VALERIA puts a sympathetic hand on LUNA's hand.

VALERIA: As long as she's still here, it's never too late.

LUNA smiles gratefully at VALERIA's words. VALERIA gestures over to the piano.

VALERIA: Why don't you play something for her? I've tried to, but I'm not very good at it.

LUNA: I'd love to.

LUNA goes over to the piano and sits down. She closes her eyes and thinks of a song to play. When she finds it, she puts her fingers on the piano into her starting position. She starts playing Liszt's Liebestraum No. 3, smoothly and lovingly. Not long after, IMELDA slowly looks over at LUNA, as if recognizing her. VALERIA notices this and quietly gasps. IMELDA then closes her eyes, puts her hand up in the air, and starts to mimic the song as if she's playing it. The lights dim and a white spotlight stays on IMELDA and VALERIA, a blue faded spotlight on LUNA, while on the other side of the stage appears IMELDA and VALERIA at 11 years old, when they first met. They play with each other as they chase each other around the stage, giggling. They exit. Then on the stage appears IMELDA and VALERIA again, now 18 years old. They sit on the floor, talking, laughing about something. They hold hands, and they giggle to each other. They exit. Lastly, IMELDA and VALERIA walk on stage, both now 27. IMELDA walks away angrily but VALERIA stops her. IMELDA turns around, and falls into VALERIA's embrace. They dance and

slowly make their way off stage. The song finishes, and the lights come back on. VALERIA has tears in her eyes. IMELDA opens her eyes.

IMELDA: That was wonderful Luna. Great arpeggios.

LUNA turns around in surprise. She rushes over to IMELDA.

LUNA: Professor Imelda!

IMELDA: That's the song I always played for my sweetheart over there. 'Love Dream.' The first time I played it for her she liked it so much she slept with me.

VALERIA: (*crying and laughing and scolding*) Imelda!

IMELDA: What? It's a nice memory.

LUNA: (*getting teary*) Professor. I just wanted to tell you... to tell you that I've always looked up to you, and because of you my life was completely changed. My dreams are all thanks to you. Thank you, and I'm sorry for not coming when you wanted me to. I'm so sorry.

IMELDA puts her hand on LUNA's head.

IMELDA: There is nothing for you to be sorry about. You're here now. That's what matters.

IMELDA looks over at the piano and tries to get up. VALERIA quickly rushes over.

VALERIA: Careful Mel!

THE PIANIST: I'm fine. Just take me to the piano please. While I'm awake.

VALERIA and LUNA assist IMELDA on either side and sit her on the piano. IMELDA inspects the piano keys as VALERIA and LUNA give her space. IMELDA puts her hands over the keys, caressing them as one caresses a forgotten lover.

IMELDA: (*whispering to the piano*) Take me home.

IMELDA starts playing Chopin's Waltz in A Minor B. 150 Op. Posth. (extended version). As she plays, the lights on the stage dim and a white spotlight stays on her. Slowly, an orchestra begins to play with her, as if asking for permission. Then, as the orchestra joins, a white spotlight on the other side of the stage slowly appears, revealing IMELDA at 41 years old, playing on a piano. Both of these women begin to play in tune with one another, while the orchestra brings these two together. Finally, the orchestra starts to fade away, saying goodbye. The spotlight on the 62 year old pianist dims, as the spotlight on the 41 year old stays, continuing the song. The 41 year old starts to play quieter, her spotlight begins to dim, and as she does another piano joins her in sync. The 41 year old stops playing, the other piano continues. Lights go up.

Epilogue

56 years ago. Los Angeles. Boyle Heights. The sound of waves crashing. MOTHER's piano room. MOTHER sits on the piano bench, her piano at center stage. She plays Chopin's Waltz in A Minor B. 150 Op. Posth., warmly, lovingly. On stage left a door opens, revealing IMELDA as her 6 year old self. She watches MOTHER play. MOTHER stops playing.

MOTHER: Imelda?

IMELDA gasps and hides behind the door. MOTHER turns to the door.

MOTHER: I know you're there.

IMELDA appears at the doorway again, looking shyly at MOTHER. MOTHER smiles.

MOTHER: You can't see the piano from over there. Come.

IMELDA excitedly runs up to MOTHER. MOTHER picks her up and sits her on the bench right next to her.

MOTHER: Now, do you see this?

MOTHER caresses the piano keys.

MOTHER: These are called 'keys.' They call it that because they open the doors to wonderful places. Do you want to know where my door goes?

IMELDA nods excitedly.

MOTHER: My door goes to the ocean. So when I open this lid, I see the ocean, and when I play it feels like I'm swimming.

IMELDA: Swimming?

MOTHER: Yes! Swimming. Swimming and swimming and swimming until suddenly I get tired of swimming. I go back to the sand and I dry myself in the sun before it's time to swim again. I love to swim.

IMELDA: You know how to swim?

MOTHER: Yes, but there are some days where I forget how to swim. Some days I see the ocean but it's a sad day. The clouds are gray, the sky is dark, and the waters become scary. I try to swim, try to see if I can still do it, but then I start to drown. Do you know what drowning is?

IMELDA: When you can't swim.

MOTHER: Right. Except you're already in the water. And all you want to do is go back home until the sun comes back in the sky and the waters are kinder. So, when I get lost and start drowning, I just open my eyes (*MOTHER closes her eyes then opens them*), I take a nice deep breath (*MOTHER takes a deep breath*), and then I'm back. I'm back home.

IMELDA looks at MOTHER in wonder.

IMELDA: But mommy, I don't get it.

MOTHER: Hm?

IMELDA: You say that *this* is the ocean?

MOTHER: Mhm.

IMELDA: But it doesn't look like the ocean.

MOTHER: Mhm.

IMELDA: So why do you call it that? Why the ocean? Why not somewhere else?

MOTHER: Because I love the ocean.

IMELDA: Do you love me?

MOTHER: Of course I do mijita. I love you very much.

IMELDA: So then why do the keys not take you to me?

MOTHER looks at IMELDA, humored by that thought.

MOTHER: You're already here. You're my home.

IMELDA hugs MOTHER tenderly. MOTHER is taken aback by this gesture, but slowly embraces IMELDA.

IMELDA: How can I get to the ocean Mommy?

MOTHER: You have to feel it. The ocean is a feeling, *mija*. Once you let yourself feel it, you'll be swimming in oceans all over the world. And I hope that for you, those oceans are nice and calm, that they're cold and soothing, and I hope that no matter what, when you find that you don't want to swim anymore, that you are able to find your way back to shore, and I hope those shores are beautiful.

IMELDA unsure what exactly MOTHER means by all of this, but accepting them nonetheless.

IMELDA: Okay mommy. I love you.

MOTHER: I love you too Imelda. Now. Should I finish the rest of the song?

IMELDA nods. MOTHER puts her hands on the piano, into her starting position, and begins the song again. The song begins to fade out as the lights begin to dim. At the final note, the lights are gone.

End of Play.