

Mara
by
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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

MARA, age 8, sits on a piano bench and dismally plunks at piano keys. An open beginner's piano book sits in front of her on piano. FATHER comes in, sits beside her, and gently adjusts her hands.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mara again sits on the piano bench. She stumbles through "Ode to Joy" by Beethoven. After several agonizing minutes, she throws the book to the ground in a fit of anger and storms out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mara, age 12, plays an elaborate tune. Her father sits on a couch, watching with a smile on his face. When she is done, she shakes her head and slumps down on the face of the piano. He walks over and puts his hand on her shoulder. Without looking up, she shakes her head.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - EVENING

Mara and her father stand in the school hallway in fancy dress. On the door is a sign that reads PIANO FESTIVAL - JUDGE MARY JENSEN. Mara swallows hard and looks up at her father uncertainly. He smiles and pats her back. She looks away and rolls her eyes, then opens the door and walks into

INT. SCHOOL CHOIR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Front and center of the room stands a piano. Behind it at a table sits FESTIVAL JUDGE MARY JENSEN and two ASSISTANTS. Jensen nods at Mara, who sits down and smooths her dress. She plays a few chords to warm up and then begins to play her song, but stumbles a few notes in and stops.

She tries again, and again stumbles through the notes. She looks up at Jensen, who nods at her to try again. She tries one more time, but her fingers falter even worse than before. Tears slip down her face as she stands and runs out of the room, past her father, who looks after her, bewildered.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mara, age 17, stands in living room across from Father. No audible dialogue, but it is clear they are having an argument. The piano sits open between them.

Mara gestures towards piano angrily, and then walks over to it and SLAMS the lid down, knocking a piece of sheet music to the ground. She storms out of the room. Father looks after her, then slowly bends down to pick up the sheet music.

EXT. COLLEGE GREEN - DAY

Orientation day. Mara stands on the campus green with her mother and father, who she ignores as she bounces around from booth to booth advertising various clubs that the school offers.

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Mara sits at her desk surfing the internet. Her cellphone RINGS; she glances down. CALL FROM DAD. She silences the phone and looks back at her laptop.

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - DAY

Mara, age 19, sits on a couch in her dorm room with her arms around a BOY. He whispers into the side of her face as he plays with her hair. She giggles. Her CELLPHONE RINGS. She silences it, and her and the boy disappear into the couch.

INT. COLLEGE DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Mara is in bed, asleep. Her CELLPHONE RINGS. She groans and sits up. From another bed in the room, we hear SHUFFLING.

ROOMMATE
(harsh whisper)
Mara! What the hell dude.

MARA
(groggily)
'm sorry.

She checks her phone, then scrambles out of bed.

MARA (CONT'D)
It's my mom.

She stumbles out into the hallway of the dorm.

MARA (CONT'D)

Hello?

She listens for a long moment, and then she slowly slides down the wall to the floor. SILENCE, and then a RINGING NOISE. The ROOMMATE comes out into the hall and puts her hand on Mara's shoulder. Mara looks up, tears in her eyes.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Light peeps through the kitchen windows. It is a gorgeous day outside; you can feel the warmth in the sunshine coming in. Inside, darkness. Many people mill about, dressed in black. On a table in the center of the room are several casserole pans surrounding a large spray of flowers. Mara leaves the throng and heads to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mara sits down at the piano bench, and reverently lifts the lid. She places her fingers on the keys, and presses a few down, then winces. She sighs, and then picks up a piano book that is lying on the top of the piano. It is open to "Ode to Joy."

She begins to pick her way through the song. At first it is tentative, but as her fingers remember how to do this, she becomes more confident and the simple melody rings out.

INT. MARA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mara sits at the same piano bench in a new house. She is 23. A framed photograph of her father sits on top of the piano, and seems to smile down on her as she plays through a tune. Tears slip down her cheeks as she plays, but she smiles.

INT. MARA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mara, age 35, is sitting on the couch, bobbing her head to PIANO MUSIC being played by CHARLIE, her 12-year-old daughter. She stands up and joins Charlie on the piano bench, and they begin to play an elegant DUET.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mara, age 75, enters living room and sits at piano bench. She is graceful, self-confident. She begins to play a complicated melody.

FADE OUT: