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April 12, 2022

Coda

by

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An abstract of  
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CODA

By

Caroline Munroe Stewart

**SETTING:** A small apartment. There are many pictures and photo albums everywhere. Every piece of décor looks like it's about 50 years old and smells of mothballs. A gorgeous, old upright piano that's well loved is the most prominent piece in the apartment.

**TIME:** Now

**CHARACTERS:**

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| AMELIA             | A woman in her 80's suffering from Alzheimer's. She's determined to remain independent despite her progressing condition. She was a professional pianist in her prime and remains proficient in her playing. |
| JENNY              | A woman in her 50's. Daughter to AMELIA. She's doing all that she can to help her mother while also raising her kids. She has essentially assumed the role as her full-time caretaker.                       |
| YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE | She's about 21-years old. Joyful, bubbly, and youthful as she plays piano in clubs. Seen in flashbacks. She later doubles as the NURSE to come and take care of AMELIA.                                      |
| YOUNG CALVIN       | 23-years old, future husband to AMELIA. He's charming and absolutely in awe of AMELIA. He does anything and everything to make AMELIA happy.   |

***A note about the play:***

This play is inspired by a song I wrote in high school that depicts the progression of Alzheimer's. Allow the music to tell the story, while never explicitly saying AMELIA's ailment. The music can be found from this link:

<https://www.noteflight.com/scores/view/582564c844d4f5ec524b36ef1eca92d7c83fb7b3>

**SCENE 1**

*Lights up. Single spotlight on AMELIA, who sits at the piano in her apartment. The apartment reflects her age: well-loved furniture, photo albums and memorabilia scattered about, older appliances. She plays the entirety of “Coda”. This moment seems to be a bit out of reality. Embrace the other worldly nature of it as this song is a representation of the entire story. Once she finishes, the lights illuminate the rest of the stage and she begins to write on her sheet music. JENNY enters.*

JENNY

Good afternoon mom.

*(AMELIA jumps, startled, as she thought she was alone.)*

AMELIA

Goodness, Jenny! You're early!

JENNY

I usually come by around lunch time.

AMELIA

Well you just scared me half to death.

JENNY

My apologies mom, I'll try to give you more of a warning next time.

AMELIA

Thank you.

JENNY

Was that you playing before I walked in?

AMELIA

Who else would it be?



JENNY

I'm so happy that you can still play.

AMELIA

Still? What do you mean "still"? I have always been able to play. I will always play.

JENNY

Yes, I'm sorry, of course you will.

AMELIA

Muscle memory. It's God's way of making sure that the gifts He gave you will continue past your prime. He's not done with me yet.

JENNY

Was that an original piece?

*(JENNY has her arms full of groceries, about to drop them all.)*

AMELIA

Um... Don't know- you know it's not a race to see how fast you can put the groceries away.

JENNY

Trying to make efficiency fun. We can make it a race. Wanna time me to see how fast I can put these up?

AMELIA

Like I did with you when you were a kid?

JENNY

Exactly! Like mother like daughter.

AMELIA

I would rather help you.

JENNY

No Mom, you just sit down and relax.

AMELIA

That's what I've been doing all day. Let me help.

JENNY

I got it all under control.

AMELIA

Ha! You never do.

JENNY

Well, you don't need to help.

AMELIA

But I can. So let me.

JENNY

Alright alright. Uhh, you can start by separating the refrigerated foods from the unrefrigerated foods. Can you do that?

AMELIA

Of course.

*(AMELIA hesitates and acts as though she's organizing correctly. She is, for the most part. Except for the fact that she starts to put the milk and eggs with the unrefrigerated foods. JENNY, while they continue to talk, subtly fixes AMELIA's mistakes.)*

JENNY

So, tell me. What did you do today?

AMELIA

Same as every day. Woke up. Ate breakfast. Played piano. And then you came. What did you do?

JENNY

Same as every day. Woke up. Put out any fires in the kids' lives. My husband didn't even bother to help because apparently he had a work call. Got you groceries. Then I came here.

AMELIA

Ha. Putting out fires. That's a good way of putting it.

JENNY

Kids' lives are crazy.

AMELIA

Kids are a handful.

JENNY

You only ever had me Mom.

AMELIA

Yeah, but you were a lot.

JENNY

Me? A lot? I never once got in trouble!

AMELIA

Thanks to my stellar parenting.

JENNY

Uhuh sure.

AMELIA

Sure? I raised you and look, you turned out just fine.

JENNY

Good thing I did! Between Dad whisking you away on some phenomenal vacation and you playing piano, you barely spent any time with me. I was the one taking care of you, not you taking care of me.

AMELIA

Well, I can't even begin to imagine having more than one. Props to you for doing it.

JENNY

Thanks. I love my kids though. I don't mind if they're a lot. It comes with the job title of "Mom."

AMELIA

How are... the kids?

JENNY

My kids? Your grandkids? They're good! Michael is nineteen now, and off at college. And Mia is sixteen, so she's just starting to drive which is great but also terrifying.

AMELIA

Ah that's right. You did the "M" thing with your kid's names.

JENNY

What?

AMELIA

All of your kids' names start with the letter "M", Martin and Mia.

JENNY

Yes, Michael and Mia.

AMELIA

That's what I said.

*(An awkward silence. AMELIA and JENNY finish putting up the groceries.)*

JENNY

Are you hungry for lunch?

AMELIA

I think so.

JENNY

You think so?

AMELIA

Sometimes I can't tell whether I am hungry or if my mouth is just bored.

JENNY

I'll make you a yummy salad with chicken, how about that?

AMELIA

Ha!

JENNY

What's so funny?

AMELIA

A *yummy* salad? Can you even make a salad taste good?

JENNY

If I could give you pizza, I would. But your doctor would not be happy with me.

AMELIA

How would he know? It's not like I would tell him.

JENNY

Fair.

AMELIA

You know back when I was young, I had a tomato sandwich every day in the summer. Just white bread, tomato, and mayonnaise. So simple, yet so delicious. Oh and we would sprinkle some salt on the tomato. Salt makes everything taste so much better.

JENNY

Those were awful. You used to make me one every week in the summer. I got so sick of tomatoes after that.

AMELIA

It was delightful! It was far better than any salad you could ever make.

JENNY

That sounds like a challenge!

AMELIA

Are you making lunch?

JENNY

Yes, I was just about to start. We're having a *yummy* salad with chicken.

AMELIA

Oh right, good luck with that.

JENNY

Would you like to get some music going?

AMELIA

But I just got done playing. Do you want to hear me again?

JENNY

Oh you don't have to if you don't want to.

AMELIA

I love to do it though.

JENNY

I know, but if you're tired, then we can just listen to a recording. Would you rather play or listen right now?

AMELIA

We can listen. I guess my fingers do need to rest a bit.

AMELIA

Ok, what should we listen to?

JENNY

Play something that takes you somewhere.

*(The stage splits between reality and a flashback from when AMELIA was 21. YOUNG AMELIA enters and begins to play measures 1-12 of the attached song "Coda". JENNY and AMELIA speak over the music.)*

JENNY

Woah Mom! Where did this take you?

AMELIA

I know this song! This was my song!

JENNY

It was! You used to play it all the time for me.

AMELIA

I was so, oh what's the word? Oh, "cool" back then.

JENNY

Was this difficult to play?

AMELIA

This? This was nothing. But it wowed the club, so I played it about every night.

*(JENNY continues cooking and continues to watch AMELIA relive this moment. YOUNG AMELIA completely embraces this song as she plays. YOUNG CALVIN enters. He is in awe with YOUNG AMELIA. He lights a cigarette and begins to smoke while never taking his eyes off of YOUNG AMELIA.)*

AMELIA

He loved it the most though.

JENNY

Who?

AMELIA

Your father.

*(YOUNG AMELIA finishes up playing. YOUNG CALVIN claps confidently. YOUNG AMELIA walks over to YOUNG CALVIN.)*

YOUNG AMELIA

If you're gonna stare at me, you might as well get me a drink.

YOUNG CALVIN

For the star? Anything.

YOUNG AMELIA

"The Star". I could get used to that.

YOUNG CALVIN

I could get used to watching and listening to you play young lady.

*(They stare at each other for a moment. The chemistry is absolutely electric.)*

Let me grab that drink, I can let the star be parched.

YOUNG AMELIA

Actually, how about one of your cigarettes first.

*(YOUNG CALVIN takes out a cigarette and puts it in her mouth. He lights it for her. This is an incredibly intimate moment.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

I'm sorry, I just have to say, you have the most beautiful eyes. What color are they, blue? Gray?

YOUNG AMELIA

If you stare long enough, you just might be able to figure out the proper hue.

YOUNG CALVIN

Well, if I'm ever so lucky to spend time in your eyes, then I'd die a happy man.

YOUNG AMELIA

Why thank you, but how many times have you used that line tonight alone?

YOUNG CALVIN

Honestly, I'm not sure if I've ever used that line.

YOUNG AMELIA

Really?

YOUNG CALVIN

Well, I've never used that line and meant it, until tonight.

YOUNG AMELIA

Ah, so you're a liar and a poet!

YOUNG CALVIN

Something about you makes me want to be a more truthful man.

YOUNG AMELIA

How? You just met me.

YOUNG CALVIN

Thank goodness I did.

YOUNG AMELIA

And you haven't even asked for my name!



YOUNG CALVIN

Well then, can I have the gift of knowing your name?

YOUNG AMELIA

Amelia. And you?

YOUNG CALVIN

Calvin.

*(AMELIA is visibly happy. She watches YOUNG AMELIA and YOUNG CALVIN converse. Who knows how much time has passed. AMELIA has fully tuned out the world around her as she relives this memory. The cooking timer rings. AMELIA is snapped out of her visual memory and YOUNG CALVIN and YOUNG AMELIA walk off stage. The sound startles her.)*

AMELIA

What alarm was that?! Is something on fire?!

JENNY

Sorry mom! That was just the timer saying the chicken was ready!

AMELIA

Oh, yum.

JENNY

I made myself a plate too, so if it's bad then we will both suffer.

AMELIA

Well lucky me then.

JENNY

This isn't nearly as bad as what I make the kids eat. They have to hold their noses when I serve broccoli because they think it tastes so bad.

AMELIA

That is exactly what you used to do as a kid. I would have to bribe you with cookies in order to get you to have a few bites of vegetables.

JENNY

I guess they have to get it from somewhere then.

*(Beat.)*

*(AMELIA notices that her food is prepared in a way that parents prepare their toddlers' food: cut up into bite- sized pieces.)*

AMELIA

Did you cut my food up for me?

JENNY

Oh... yes. Um I wanted to make eating a bit easier for you.

AMELIA

Why would it be difficult?

JENNY

It's just, the chicken can be a bit tough. I'm always afraid that I'll undercook chicken, so in turn, I always overcook chicken.

AMELIA

Oh ok. Next time, just cook the chicken better.

JENNY

That was rude.

AMELIA

It was honest.

JENNY

Well, you could try to be a little more gentle and a little more grateful that I took the time to make you lunch.

AMELIA

And you don't need to treat me like a child! I am a capable adult who is very capable of doing things.

JENNY

I know Mom.

AMELIA

Take eating for example. I know how to eat. Everyone knows how to eat. In fact, I've been eating longer than you have. You don't need to do everything for me. I am your mother after all.

JENNY

Which is why I love you. You took care of me all my life, so looking after you now is the least that I can do.

*(Beat.)*

There is something we need to talk about though.

AMELIA

What is that?

JENNY

Well since Dad... since his passing, I have taken on a lot of responsibility with you.

AMELIA

You didn't need to do that.

JENNY

No Mom, I did.

AMELIA

I'm perfectly fine on my own.

JENNY

Really?

AMELIA

Yes. I can entertain myself just fine. I can read. I can play music. I can write music. What else do I need?

JENNY

Someone to get you groceries. Someone to take you to your doctor's appointments. Someone to put out fires.

AMELIA

You only need to put out your kids' fires, remember? You just said it's a part of the job title "Mom".

JENNY

Well apparently it can be a part of the job title "daughter" too.

AMELIA

Since when?

JENNY

Since you stopped being able to take care of yourself. I wasn't aware of how much Dad did.

AMELIA

He really gave us the world.

JENNY

He gave you the world, that's for sure.

AMELIA

He loved you.

JENNY

Not enough to make the world seem like it revolves around me. His passing didn't make my life easier, that's for sure. It's a lot of responsibility taking care of you.

AMELIA

So am I just a burden to you?

JENNY

No no no that's not what I meant at all. All I'm saying is that I'm trying to fix everyone else's problems and I hardly have the time to fix my own.

AMELIA

What do you need help with?

JENNY

I've been so concerned with everyone else's lives that I'm not even sure what I need.

AMELIA

Don't you just have one kid at home now?

JENNY

Michael's at college, yes. But he calls about six times a day because he doesn't know how to get the wrinkles out of his clothes or if he should go to the doctor for a shooting pain in his knee. Everyday it's something different. And I never know what mood Mia is going to be in when she walks through the door or walks down the stairs. If something in her daily routine differs slightly, she panics. And I seem to be the only one that can fix anything.

AMELIA

Why can't their father help?

JENNY

Mark is too busy working to even begin to understand everything. He's either in the office late or on a business trip. He's always working. When he does have free time, it's spent going to Mia's volleyball games or visiting Michael at college. But I can't complain too much, because it is his job that pays the bills after all. His hard work is what allows me to take care of my kids as well as take care of my own mother.

AMELIA

Your dad worked a lot too.

JENNY

He always seemed to have enough time to make you happy though.

AMELIA

He really did. Doesn't your husband do that?

JENNY

His name is Mark. And he makes time to support the kids on his time off. That's what makes him a great father.

AMELIA

I wish that Calvin were here to tell you how to find that balance between work and relationships.

JENNY

It's hard, life is expensive and hard work takes time. But how else would we be able to give our kids the best life with the most security?

AMELIA

Marry rich.

JENNY

It's a bit too late for that.

AMELIA

Or be like me and simply be rich.

JENNY

Mom, that's not sustainable. You got money for your talent. But you stopped playing when I was born and I did not inherit your talents. I'm not a piano prodigy, I'm just me.

AMELIA

But you could have been.

JENNY

I am much better at listening than playing.

AMELIA

Making and listening to music is a full time job.

JENNY

Being a mom is a full time job.

AMELIA

I understand.

JENNY

Anyways, back to what I was trying to say: Since I have been having a hard time trying to find the balance between taking care of my household, my sanity, and taking care of you, I think it might be a good idea to start looking into getting a nurse.

AMELIA

A nurse?

JENNY

Yes, just someone who has formal training in this and can really provide some professional help.

AMELIA

Well, I don't want a nurse.

JENNY

It doesn't matter what you want.

AMELIA

Yes it does! It's my life and I'm perfectly fine on my own. You just help out, like a good daughter should.

JENNY

Right now, you can deal with not wanting professional help. You're right, you can still do a lot of things, I mostly help you with errands and cooking. I can handle that. But eventually, it doesn't matter what you want or don't want. At some point, you won't be able to do the basic things in life without assistance. At that point, it's not a matter of want but a matter of need.

AMELIA

Well clearly we're not there yet.

JENNY

Right.

AMELIA

So we don't need to think about it just yet.

JENNY

Not yet. But keep it on the back burner.

*(Beat.)*

AMELIA

Are you staying a while?

JENNY

Of course.

AMELIA

How long?

JENNY

As long as you'll let me.

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 2**

*Lights up. AMELIA plays measures 1-12 of “Coda” while JENNY sits on the couch going through photo albums. JENNY and AMELIA talk over the music.*

JENNY

Mom, look! This was the first time you and Dad took me to the beach.

AMELIA

Give me a minute.

JENNY

Those pigtails were too cute. I always hated when you put my hair in them though, because it hurt so much to get them that tight on my head.

AMELIA

At least when you were this age you actually enjoyed the beach. When we first brought you, you immediately cried when your feet touched the sand.

JENNY

Did I really?

AMELIA

Oh absolutely! You were a nightmare! But the beach is my favorite place in the world, so we stayed on the beach until you realized the sand wasn't going to kill you. Good thing you ended up liking it, I'm not sure what I would do if you hated the beach!

*(Brief silence as they flip through photos.)*

JENNY

Oh my goodness, Mom! Look at you!

*(AMELIA inspects the picture mentioned. A beat, and then laughter.)*

AMELIA

Oh my goodness.

JENNY



You were so beautiful!

AMELIA

Oh yes, if only I knew just how beautiful I was then.

JENNY

You still are beautiful, Mom.

AMELIA

Oh but so much of that beauty came from me simply being in love.

JENNY

Really?

AMELIA

Really! I always felt beautiful around Calvin.

JENNY

How old were you here?

AMELIA

Early twenties. Just after I had met your father.

JENNY

What was Dad like back then?

*(YOUNG CALVIN and YOUNG AMELIA both wander on stage again. Perhaps they are linking arms as they walk. Regardless, it's clear that they are in love. YOUNG CALVIN smokes a cigarette. AMELIA watches them both.)*

AMELIA

He was exceedingly handsome. The most charming man I have ever met. And, to make it better, we were both equally infatuated with each other. That never faded.

JENNY

Did you fall in love with him then?

AMELIA

I fell in love with him because of the way he smoked a cigarette. I had never experienced anything truly like it. I can't explain it, but love...love seemed to cloud the room with each of his exhales.

*(YOUNG CALVIN exhales smoke from his cigarette. YOUNG AMELIA and YOUNG CALVIN are visibly flirting.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

So when can I see you next?

YOUNG AMELIA

It's really a gamble. How lucky do you feel?

YOUNG CALVIN

With you, I feel like the luckiest man alive.

YOUNG AMELIA

Oh hush!

YOUNG CALVIN

Do you play here a lot, or was this just a special event that I, with some stroke of luck, stumbled into.

YOUNG AMELIA

Oh, I'm here most nights. If not playing, drinking. If not drinking, smoking. Every now and then, you might catch me dancing, if you're lucky.

YOUNG CALVIN

You dance?

YOUNG AMELIA

Only when the music makes me.

YOUNG CALVIN

I would love to see how the music moves you.

YOUNG AMELIA

Really?

YOUNG CALVIN

Just as long as you're moving with me.

YOUNG AMELIA

You flirt!

YOUNG CALVIN

And if you're not doing any of those, what else might you be doing?

YOUNG AMELIA

What's the fun in telling you everything now? Can't I let some things be a surprise?

YOUNG CALVIN

Only if I get to experience these surprises.

YOUNG AMELIA

You'll never get to, unless you ask me out.

YOUNG CALVIN

You're bold Miss Amelia.

YOUNG AMELIA

You're not bold enough Mr. Calvin!

*(YOUNG AMELIA and YOUNG CALVIN share a moment of laughter and the excitement of new infatuation. AMELIA relishes in this moment before returning to reality. JENNY's phone ringing snaps AMELIA out of this memory.)*

AMELIA

What was that?

JENNY

Oh it's just Michael.

*(Beat. Phone still rings.)*

AMELIA

Are you going to answer that?

JENNY

I'll call him back later.

AMELIA

What if it's an emergency?

*(JENNY answers the phone.)*

JENNY

Hi Michael, what's going on?...Did you really need to call me for that?... Yes, the stamp goes on the upper right hand side of the envelope. That's something you can google honey... Are you finally writing your thank you notes?... Oh good sweetie! Thank you for getting those done. I'm proud of you...Ya, alright I'm with your Grandma right now so-yes I'll tell her you say hi. Mom, Michael says hi.

AMELIA

Hi.

JENNY

She says hi back. I'll call you when I get home ok? Love you.

*(Beat.)*

AMELIA

I miss Calvin.

JENNY

I know you do. I miss Dad too.

AMELIA

Since he's been gone, I'm afraid that it'll be more difficult to keep his memory alive. Meeting Calvin is a memory I want to hold onto forever.

JENNY

Are you scared that you won't?

AMELIA

I'm not sure if I have control over which memories I keep and which slip away. Time is a thief. I'm afraid that the most valuable memories are the ones that Time will take first. And what will I do when my most precious and priceless memories are stolen from me?

JENNY

Oh Mom, I'm sure that one will stick with you.

AMELIA

How can you know that?

JENNY

You know, I read somewhere that your long-term memory usually lasts the longest. Usually, the most important memories are the ones that stick around the longest.

AMELIA

I need certainty. I can't rely on "usually".

JENNY

But even so, maybe if we start writing them down now, then maybe the memories will last longer.

AMELIA

But how do we know? How do we know that I'll even be able to recognize my own handwriting? The stories that I might write down might simply be stories. If I am even able to read them at that point.

JENNY

You don't need to think so much about this.

AMELIA

I can't help it, Jenny. It's a far worse thing in life to know what your end will look like. You just anticipate it. You can't escape knowing what will happen, or what might happen. Or, maybe worse, guessing what will be the first to go.

JENNY

Luckily, we're not there yet.

AMELIA

Yet.

JENNY

There's so much that you still know and remember. So, what we can do now is replay the memories you still have and document the things you still know, but only if that makes you feel better.

AMELIA

Perhaps...

JENNY

What can I do to help?

AMELIA

Besides stopping my mind from slipping: just be here.

*(AMELIA and JENNY sit on the couch in a mellow embrace. AMELIA watches YOUNG CALVIN and YOUNG AMELIA slow dance as measures 1-12 of the attached song "Coda" plays. They kiss for the first time.)*

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 3**

*Lights up. AMELIA strolls in from what we assume is her bedroom. She notices a glass with some water in it sitting on the piano. It has leaked condensation and started to create a stain on the piano.*

AMELIA

Who put this here? It will ruin my piano!

*(She picks it up, notices slight water damage on the piano, and becomes frustrated. Maybe she tries to scrub it off with her shirt sleeve. It doesn't help. AMELIA then sees YOUNG CALVIN admiring her from across the room.)*

AMELIA

Calvin, what did I tell you about leaving drinks on the piano.

YOUNG CALVIN

That wasn't me sweetheart.

AMELIA

Look at this ring! This is a very nice piano, you know.

YOUNG CALVIN

Of course I know, I bought it for you.

AMELIA

I simply can't afford to have the wood stained.

YOUNG CALVIN

I understand honey, that's why I would never do that.

AMELIA

It had to have been you, who else is here?

YOUNG CALVIN

You.

AMELIA

Yes, but I would never let this happen.

YOUNG CALVIN

It's fine, I'll fix it sweetheart.

AMELIA

Can you go and find me a towel?

YOUNG CALVIN

Where do you keep them?

AMELIA

The kitchen... I think.

YOUNG CALVIN

But where in the kitchen?

AMELIA

... with the rest of the towels.

YOUNG CALVIN

Which are where?

AMELIA

Fine, I'll do it myself.

*(She walks to the kitchen, dumps the water out in the trash can. Beat.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

Honey?

AMELIA

That's not where it's supposed to go is it?

*(YOUNG CALVIN starts searching for a towel.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

It could be.

AMELIA



But it's not.

YOUNG CALVIN

It's not a big deal. We'll clean it up. I'll clean it up.

AMELIA

Right...

YOUNG CALVIN

It's just water.

AMELIA

I know...

*(YOUNG CALVIN hands AMELIA a towel)*

YOUNG CALVIN

Aha! Look what I found.

*(AMELIA grabs a towel and dries the cup off. She searches through the cupboards and closets in the kitchen, but cannot find where she keeps her glasses. Her frustration grows.)*

AMELIA

Where on earth do the glasses go! Honey, where did you move them?

YOUNG CALVIN

How could I have moved them?

AMELIA

They were right here! In the cabinet above the sink. I distinctly remember them being here, don't you?

YOUNG CALVIN

I don't know. I don't live here.

AMELIA

Stop being silly. Where are they?

YOUNG CALVIN

I'm not sure.

AMELIA

They're gone, they have to be. Every single glass I own is gone.

YOUNG CALVIN

Every single one?

AMELIA

Yes!

YOUNG CALVIN

Do you think every single glass you own just grew legs and walked away?

AMELIA

Maybe! It's the only plausible explanation.

YOUNG CALVIN

Where have you looked?

AMELIA

Everywhere I've looked everywhere! And I can't find them, I can't. If you can't find them either then we might as well give up.

*(AMELIA gives up on trying to find the location of the glasses. She suddenly slams the glass in her hand on the counter out of frustration. The glass shatters on the counter. AMELIA begins to panic.)*

AMELIA

Oh no. oh no oh no oh no.

YOUNG CALVIN

It's alright honey. It happens. We'll just clean it up.

*(She tries to find a broom, a cloth, anything to help clean up the mess. She finds nothing.)*

AMELIA

What if... what if I don't know how?

*(We can feel the heartbreaking discovery that she can no longer do all simple tasks on her own. AMELIA begins to break down. YOUNG CALVIN moves to comfort her.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

It's alright. I'm here. I'll clean it up. You don't need to worry about this sweetheart. I'll take care of you.

AMELIA

No no no you don't understand. If I can't do these things, these simple things, then Jenny will hire a nurse to watch me.

YOUNG CALVIN

A nurse?

AMELIA

Yes! A NURSE!

YOUNG CALVIN

And that's a bad thing?

AMELIA

Of course it is.

YOUNG CALVIN

How so?

AMELIA

How so? What do you mean "how so"?

YOUNG CALVIN

Why is this bad?

AMELIA

If Jenny hires a nurse....then.... It means that....

YOUNG CALVIN

That what?

AMELIA

That I actually need one.

YOUNG CALVIN

It's ok to need someone.

AMELIA

Not someone who takes care of sick people.

YOUNG CALVIN

What about me? I took care of you when you were sick.

AMELIA

You had to. In sickness and in health. Remember?

YOUNG CALVIN

How could I forget? Can I tell you something?

AMELIA

What?

YOUNG CALVIN

When we said "Til death do us part", I lied.

AMELIA

You lied?

YOUNG CALVIN

Because I vowed to love and cherish you as long as we *both* shall live.

AMELIA

And since I'm still-

YOUNG CALVIN

Yes, you don't get the short end of the stick just because I left first.

AMELIA

I need you. I need *your* help.

YOUNG CALVIN

I know, I know. What helps me in times like these is to focus on what you can control.

AMELIA

What if I feel out of control?

YOUNG CALVIN

Then focus on what you know.

AMELIA

And what might that be?

YOUNG CALVIN

Music.

AMELIA

Right.

YOUNG CALVIN

Why don't you play me something? I've missed hearing you play for me.

*(She leaves the broken glass on the counter and escapes to the piano to calm her. It's the one thing she knows with 100% certainty. She begins to play measures 13-19 of "Coda". Her emotions resonate through this short section of music. During this section, YOUNG CALVIN both admires her playing as he always has and begins to consolidate the broken glass on the counter. When he's done, YOUNG CALVIN exits. AMELIA looks up after she finishes playing.)*

AMELIA

How did this stain get here?

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 4**

*Lights up. AMELIA sits at the piano writing down the music she played in the previous scene so that she has sheet music of the song she's writing. JENNY enters with arms full of papers. They are mostly brain exercises recommended by the doctor. She also brought cookies from a bakery they used to frequent.*

Good morning Mom!	JENNY
Shhh.	AMELIA
Oops, don't mean to interrupt you.	JENNY
I'm almost done.	AMELIA
Are you writing a song? Or are you just scribbling on old sheet music?	JENNY
Mhm.	AMELIA
Mhm to what?	JENNY
Writing.	AMELIA
Writing what?	JENNY
New part	AMELIA

JENNY  
New part to what?

AMELIA  
To my song.

JENNY  
The one you used to play?

AMELIA  
Uhuh.

JENNY  
You and Mia speak the same way, how funny.

AMELIA  
Who?

JENNY  
It's nothing, I'll leave you be.

*(JENNY walks into the kitchen and drops her papers on the counter. She notices the glass as she places the box of cookies on the counter.)*

What happened this morning?

AMELIA  
What do you mean?

JENNY  
Where did this broken glass come from?

AMELIA  
Oh, that was me. I was going to clean it up later.

JENNY  
Mom, you can't just leave broken glass around. You could've gotten hurt.

AMELIA  
Well I didn't. See?

*(She holds up her hands to show the absence of injury.)*

JENNY

Why didn't you call me?

AMELIA

Why would I call you about something that I can do myself?

JENNY

Clearly you couldn't clean this up yourself.

AMELIA

I said I would do it later!

JENNY

When was later going to be?

AMELIA

I don't know! I was going to figure it out if you'd just let me.

JENNY

You know what would've helped?

AMELIA

What?

JENNY

Having someone here to check in on you.

AMELIA

Isn't that what you're here for?

JENNY

I'm here to be your daughter. A pretty good daughter, might I add. A nurse can be here to take care of you when I can't.

AMELIA

You could just come more often.



JENNY  
I come every day!

AMELIA  
Stay longer.

JENNY  
And leave my family?

*(Beat.)*

AMELIA  
Are those cookies from Honey and Oat? The bakery that was by our old house?

JENNY  
Oh yes, I was driving by today and thought I would surprise you.

AMELIA  
Why thank you! When was the last time we had these?

*(JENNY begins to fix a plate with a cookie, or two, for AMELIA and one for herself as well.)*

JENNY  
Probably a year ago? I brought them-

AMELIA  
Oh! We had them at my birthday dinner!

JENNY  
Yes! I brought them to celebrate!

AMELIA  
How many bottles of wine did we finish that night?

JENNY  
Oh that was the night I suffered from the infamous “purple teeth”.

AMELIA  
It’s not my fault our family’s blood is part pinot noir!

JENNY

You could have cut me off!

AMELIA

But what's the fun in that? It was a few glasses of wine. It's not like you spend your night with your head in the toilet.

JENNY

No, just 30 minutes brushing my teeth.

AMELIA

I bet your dentist was so proud.

JENNY

Honestly, you're right. It never hurts to spend more time on hygiene. My dentist did say my teeth were "perfect" at my last appointment. Now eat your cookie.

AMELIA

Yes ma'am.

*(They both take a bite at the same time. The cookie tastes incredible. They make that evident in their reaction to biting into it.)*

JENNY

So, I have some activities for us to do today.

AMELIA

Activities? Where am I? At summer camp?

JENNY

Yeah sure, what should we call it? "Granny camp"?

AMELIA

I take offense to that.

JENNY

Mom, you've been a Grandma for years now.

AMELIA

Yes, but I'm not "Granny". I'm a cool grandmother. I'm "Mimi".

JENNY

Ah yes. "Mimi Academy". "Academimi".

AMELIA

Only if you say it with an Italian accent.

JENNY

*(With an Italian accent)*

"Academimi"!

AMELIA

*(With an Italian accent)*

Molto bene!

JENNY

Well, to start we can...make our own clocks on paper!

AMELIA

Making clocks?

JENNY

Yes! Isn't that exciting?

AMELIA

On paper?

JENNY

Yes!

AMELIA

So you mean we're drawing clocks. On paper.

JENNY

You can color it if you want. But what you need to do is put the numbers where they're supposed to go.

AMELIA

Are you serious?

JENNY

Yes.

AMELIA

Do you think that I don't know what a clock looks like?

JENNY

That's not what I said.

AMELIA

I'm not stupid.

JENNY

I didn't say you were-

AMELIA

Even if you didn't explicitly say it, you were certainly implying it by making me do this "activity".

JENNY

Mom that's not what I-

AMELIA

Give me that paper. I can draw a clock. I grew up in the analog times. I'd be more concerned as to if you could draw a clock or not with all of this new technology.

*(AMELIA begins to draw a clock. She hesitates as to which numbers go where. But, she acts confident as to not appear confused in front of her daughter. JENNY observes subtly, but carefully.)*

JENNY

Hey! I'm not as bad as Michael and Mia. Their watches are practically mini phones on their wrists.

AMELIA

There. Done. Are you happy?

*(JENNY observes. She's done almost everything right, but her mom flipped*

*two numbers. She doesn't mention it. But JENNY's pause in responding to AMELIA spurs much anxiety in AMELIA.)*

JENNY

I think it would look a lot better if you colored it.

AMELIA

Ya, or with flowers instead of the clock hands.

JENNY

Now that I would put on my fridge.

*(Beat.)*

AMELIA

I didn't do it right, did I?

JENNY

What?

AMELIA

The clock. I messed up didn't I?

JENNY

Well it's not-

AMELIA

I wanna know, so I can fix my mistake.

JENNY

It's not a big deal, you don't need to worry about-

AMELIA

It's a big deal to me Jenny. Ok? I need to know what I can and can't do anymore. Don't you understand?

*(Beat.)*

JENNY

You switched the 10 and 11.

AMELIA

Oh.

JENNY

But it's ok. Again, it's not that big of a deal. You did everything else perfectly.

AMELIA

Let me see.

*(AMELIA looks at her clock. She notices her mistake.)*

Ah yes. I think I did it too fast.

JENNY

You know, I probably would have done the same thing.

AMELIA

I'm doing fine though, right? Just a careless error. That's an easy fix. I can still read a clock. Can't I?

JENNY

Absolutely. You have nothing to worry about.

AMELIA

Right.

*(Beat.)*

JENNY

Can you show me the new part to the song you've been working on?

AMELIA

Oh sure.

*(AMELIA sits at the piano and JENNY sits on the couch listening. AMELIA plays measures 20-25 from "Coda". It's the same tune as the A section, but some notes are missing and some aren't quite right. Parts sound off. Embrace the dissonance. JENNY gets a call while AMELIA plays. She walks off stage to take the call. Lights fade as*

*AMELIA finishes.)*

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 5**

*Lights up on AMELIA playing measures 26-31 of "Coda". This version sounds like the first section, but it's minor and notes are still wrong or missing. JENNY enters on the phone as AMELIA plays.*

JENNY

Sweetie, it's ok. It's just a scratch. Every new driver gets a scratch or two on their car... a small dent is ok Mia, no one got hurt that's what matters most. You're ok. It's fixable, don't worry...I'll pay for it. We'll take it to the shop when I get home... Don't cry! I'm not mad at you at all. I'm just glad you're ok...I'm with your grandma right now. I'll call you when I'm on the way home. I love you.

AMELIA

What are you doing here?

JENNY

What am I doing here? I'm here to see you! I'm seeing you like I do every day. I usually come around lunch, remember?

AMELIA

Oh right. Who were you talking to?

JENNY

Mia.

AMELIA

Mia...

JENNY

Yes, Mia. My daughter. Your granddaughter... Anyways, she hit a column in a parking lot and was panicking.

AMELIA

So you were putting out fires?

JENNY

Same as every day.



AMELIA

So what are you doing here?

JENNY

I just told you. I came here to see you. Like I do every single day. Don't you remember me saying that?

AMELIA

You never said that.

JENNY

Yes I did.

AMELIA

When did you say that?

JENNY

Just a second ago. Come on Mom, don't you listen?

AMELIA

Of course I listen! Why wouldn't I listen?

JENNY

It doesn't matter.

AMELIA

What doesn't matter?

JENNY

The fact that you don't listen to me!

AMELIA

Why would you think that I don't listen to you?

JENNY

Because most of the time I feel like it's my job to listen. I always listen. I listen to everyone's problems, their woes, their worries. I'm the one who makes sure that everyone else is heard. I'm the one who makes sure that everyone else is ok. That's my job. But whose job is it to listen to me?

AMELIA

Your mother's.

JENNY

Ha! That's funny.

AMELIA

Why would that be funny? It's supposed to be my job to be there for you and listen to you, isn't it?

JENNY

Yes, It's supposed to be. But these days, I'm always taking care of you. I'm always listening to you. But then again, it always seemed to be about you, didn't it? It always has been. But what about me? What about my family- YOUR family for crying out loud! It feels like you don't care about what's going on in my life, my husband's life, or your grandkids' lives.

AMELIA

I do care! I promise that I do.

JENNY

When was the last time you asked about them?

AMELIA

I want to ask about them all the time. I really do. I know they're there. I know that I have grandchildren. Two of them. I know they are lovely children. I know you and your husband did a great job at raising them. Far better than I could have ever done. And I know that I miss them. I miss knowing about them and knowing who they are. But their names are always just on the tip of my tongue. And I can't seem to reach them. But I know you did the "M" thing with your names.

JENNY

Good thing I was clever when naming them huh.

AMELIA

Believe me, if I could remember I'd ask. Just like I would ask about your husband, but even his name I can't seem to remember.

JENNY

Mark. His name is mark.

AMELIA

Right.

JENNY

But you still remember me. When was the last time you sat down and just listened to what's going on in my life?

AMELIA

I'm sure it was recently.

JENNY

You ask about my kids' live. About how Mark is. But aside from the surface level details, I'm not sure that you've asked about my life in months.

AMELIA

See, you don't know either.

JENNY

Well you know it's bad when even I can't remember huh.

*(Beat.)*

AMELIA

What do you want me to do? I know that my memory is a real inconvenience for you. So what would you like me to do? Magically make myself better for you?

JENNY

Is that what I said?

AMELIA

You seemed to imply it.

JENNY

What does it matter? You might not even know who I am tomorrow. You might not even know who you are tomorrow! How can we know? What are the odds you remember what I said just a second ago?

AMELIA

I'm sorry to inconvenience you with my problems.

JENNY

I never said you inconvenienced me. I only asked you to act like my mom again. I never signed up to your mother. I only ever wanted to be your daughter.

AMELIA

You know, I never asked for your help.

JENNY

Of course you didn't. You never do ask for help and you certainly never asked me. But you know who asked for my help?

AMELIA

Who?

JENNY

Do you know who practically begged for me to drop everything to take care of you?

AMELIA

Who?!

JENNY

Your husband.

AMELIA

Calvin?

JENNY

Yes. Dad. Before he died, he asked me if I would make sure you were ok and be there for you. He asked me to help you.

AMELIA

Why on earth would he think that I needed help?

JENNY

BECAUSE YOU DO MOM! How can you not see how much help you need?

AMELIA

I never felt like I needed help before.

JENNY

It's because Dad made it so you never felt like a burden. He made sure the world always revolved around you and only you. Didn't you ever see that? Didn't you ever see his effort? Do you understand how much he did for you?

AMELIA

He loved me.

JENNY

Yes he did. He loved you so much that you never had to lift a finger. He treated you so well you probably didn't even realize how bad your illness had gotten.

AMELIA

What?

JENNY

Did you even realize you were sick until he was gone?

AMELIA

What do you mean?

JENNY

Do you remember all those doctor's appointments? The meetings to discuss finances? Or how family members treated you with more caution? Or how you spent more time at home than traveling around the world? Did you ever stop to think that something might have been wrong?

AMELIA

I thought I was just getting old.

JENNY

You're old. But you're also sick.

AMELIA

I know I am! I don't want to be.

JENNY

I know.

AMELIA

How do I get better?

JENNY

I'm not quite sure. I definitely can't do it on my own.

AMELIA

Clearly, neither can I.

*(Beat.)*

JENNY

Do you think it's about time for us to get a nurse?

AMELIA

I don't want one.

JENNY

I don't think it's a matter of want anymore.

AMELIA

Really?

JENNY

I think now, it's a matter of need.

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 6**

*Lights up on AMELIA writing down notes on her sheet music. She is very focused. JENNY enters. She sees that AMELIA is deep in concentration so she sneaks in quietly with some bags of groceries. They both remain quiet for a few moments. As JENNY is putting groceries away, she drops a few oranges. JENNY bends down to pick them up. The couch shields her from AMELIA's sight. AMELIA, assuming that she was alone, whips her head around.*

AMELIA  
Hello?

JENNY  
Hey mom, it's me.

AMELIA  
Who?

*(JENNY stands up.)*

JENNY  
It's me, Jenny. Hey don't forget that the nurse we talked about getting is coming today-

*(AMELIA is startled. She stands up and backs away in fear.)*

AMELIA  
GET OUT OF MY HOUSE!

JENNY  
Mom, what's wrong?!

AMELIA  
GET OUT GET OUT GET OUT!

JENNY  
Did I do something?

AMELIA

Did you do something? YOU BROKE INTO MY HOME!

JENNY

I have a key. You gave me a key. Do you remember?

AMELIA

No no no no I couldn't have. The only person that has another key to my house is my husband. Where is my husband? CALVIN!

JENNY

Calm down, Mom. He's not here.

AMELIA

How do you know?

JENNY

Because he's dead, Mom.

AMELIA

Ha! That's funny. That's really funny. He was just here. I know for a fact that he was. He left this stain on my piano. See?

JENNY

Mom that was you. Not too long ago. It was the same day that you broke a glass and left the broken pieces in the kitchen. Remember?

AMELIA

No it wasn't, it couldn't have been! I would never do such a thing.

JENNY

It's ok, Mom.

AMELIA

I'm not your mother.

JENNY

Yes, you are. Yes you are! Look at me, do you not recognize me?



AMELIA

Not one bit.

JENNY

Do you not see yourself in me? Do you not see Dad in me?

AMELIA

I have no clue who you are, and don't you dare call my husband "Dad".

JENNY

But he is Mom! He is my Dad. Or he was my Dad. I promise. I promise! I come here every day. I bring you food. I clean your house. I take you to your doctor's appointments. I comfort you. I talk to you. I listen to you. I'm always here for you. I came just yesterday. Please tell me you remember.

AMELIA

I'll call the police! This is breaking and entering.

JENNY

You need to calm down. We're having a guest over soon. She'll be here any minute. I think that you'll really like her.

AMELIA

WE are having no one over. WE are not doing anything together. There is no WE here. You need to leave.

JENNY

Do you really not recognize me?

AMELIA

I've never seen you before in my life!

JENNY

*(Aside)*. I didn't think we'd get to this point this soon.

AMELIA

What point? The point where you break into my house? Are you some sort of crazy fan? Did you come to see me play?

JENNY

Mom, I've heard you play every single day of my life. Believe me, I don't need to break in to hear you play.

AMELIA

Aha! So you are a crazy fan!

JENNY

Can I prove it?

AMELIA

Prove what? How big of a fan you are?

JENNY

That I'm your daughter?

AMELIA

Ha! I'd like to see you try.

*(JENNY goes over to AMELIA's photo albums. She finds one of the more recent ones. She pulls out a picture of the two of them.)*

JENNY

This was us at your birthday last year.

AMELIA

That looks like you, but that doesn't look like me. I'm not that old.

JENNY

Take a look in the mirror.

AMELIA

I know what I look like.

JENNY

Look in the mirror and see if the reflection looks like the woman in this picture.

AMELIA

Fine! I'll go just to prove you wrong. And when I show that I'm right, you need to leave before I report you to the police.

*(AMELIA goes over to a mirror that hangs on one of the walls. She looks in and becomes speechless. She's in shock. She touches her face for a few moments, examines the wrinkles and the grey hairs. Then she begins to panic.)*

What kind of sick joke is this!

JENNY

What do you mean?

AMELIA

Who are you and what have you done to my house?

JENNY

I'm Jenny. I'm your daughter.

AMELIA

No no no no I don't have kids. I want kids. Sure, I want them some day. But I don't have them. Not yet anyways.

JENNY

You're panicking. It's ok. Just breathe.

AMELIA

DON'T TELL ME WHAT TO DO!

JENNY

Ok ok. I wont. But can I ask you a question?

AMELIA

What?!

JENNY

Did the person in the mirror look like the person in the picture?

AMELIA

I am not that old. I don't have wrinkles. I don't have grey hair. I'm not that old. It's not me. It's not me. It can't be.

JENNY

But it is. Look at the rest of these photos.

*(AMELIA starts looking through the photo albums. She is silent. There's a knock at the door. JENNY answers it. YOUNG AMELIA walks in, but this time she's dressed as a NURSE. JENNY walks over quietly so as to not disturb AMELIA.)*

You must be the nurse.

NURSE

Yes, it's so nice to see you.

JENNY

Wow, you look so much like my Mom did when she was younger.

NURSE

Really?

JENNY

Truly, it's a remarkable resemblance.

NURSE

I take that as a compliment.

JENNY

Oh, I'm sorry, I'm Jenny by the way.

NURSE

Yes, it's so good to see you.

JENNY

You too. We've been looking forward to meeting you. Um, unfortunately, right now, we're having a bit of a moment. You came in right in the middle of it. She didn't recognize me when I came in and it frightened her.

NURSE

It happens.

JENNY

Yeah, this is a first for us though.

NURSE

I see we're going through photo albums. That seems to be helping.

*(AMELIA starts to tear the photos out of the albums and throw them across the room.)*

JENNY

Mom! What are you doing?

AMELIA

These aren't me. They might look like me, but they aren't me.

NURSE

I understand how you feel. Some days I don't feel like myself.

*(AMELIA turns around and sees NURSE. She is shocked. What she sees is her younger self, what JENNY sees is a nurse who happens to look like her mother.)*

AMELIA

What is happening? What kind of dream is this?

NURSE

I'm just here to get to know you. Is that alright with you?

JENNY

Mom, how do you feel?

*(AMELIA, flabbergasted, runs to the piano. She can no longer express how she feels in words. Maybe music will. She plays measures 32-43 while JENNY and NURSE continue to talk.)*

NURSE

This part is always the most difficult.

JENNY

Every part of this feels difficult.

NURSE

I know. You never really think that you would need to care for parents in this capacity. In this, it always tends to fall to the daughters. It's almost cyclical in nature.

JENNY

I have never seen so much fear in her eyes. I have never seen her look at me as though I were a stranger.

NURSE

That's what's absolutely heartbreaking about this. It doesn't just take away what you know. It takes away who you are.

JENNY

How can I get her back?

NURSE

There's not much of what's lost that can be restored.

JENNY

I feel so... so powerless. Is there anything I can do?

NURSE

Just be here.

*(AMELIA finishes up what's left of this section. Lights fade as she lifts her hands off the keys and buries her head in them.)*

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 7**

*Lights up on AMELIA playing measures 44-55 of “Coda”. She is very calm and there is a somber tone in the room. YOUNG AMELIA enters as a nurse. Perhaps she is performing some household chores for AMELIA.*

NURSE

Good morning Miss Amelia. How are we today?

AMELIA

You look familiar.

NURSE

I’m an old friend of yours.

AMELIA

Oh well how wonderful it is to see you! How long have we known each other?

NURSE

Quite some time now.

AMELIA

Are you staying a while?

NURSE

I am. Would you like something to drink Miss Amelia?

AMELIA

How about a glass of wine?

NURSE

Oh, it’s nine in the morning, Miss Amelia.

AMELIA

Nine in the morning? It felt like four in the afternoon to me!

NURSE

How about some tea?

AMELIA

Tea would be lovely.

*(AMELIA goes back to playing the piano. YOUNG AMELIA comes back with a cup of tea.)*

NURSE

Be careful, it's hot.

AMELIA

You look familiar.

NURSE

I'm an old friend.

AMELIA

Oh well how wonderful it is to see you! How long have we known each other?

NURSE

For quite some time now.

AMELIA

Are you staying a while?

NURSE

I am. Would you like some tea?

AMELIA

Oh this is lovely, thank you.

NURSE

Be careful it's hot.

AMELIA

Have you seen my husband today? I wish to play him something.

NURSE

I haven't seen him today.



AMELIA

Oh.

NURSE

What do you want to play him?

AMELIA

A song that I wrote. Or I think I wrote it. Ha! Who knows. It could've been written by a famous composer. I just still have memory of it here.

*(AMELIA wiggles her fingers.)*

NURSE

Can you show me the song?

AMELIA

Oh sure. Why not?

*(AMELIA starts to play measures 44-55 of CODA. NURSE listens, but also performs household tasks. This is not the first time that she has heard this song. When AMELIA finishes, NURSE claps for her. But the sound frightens AMELIA a little.)*

NURSE

That was lovely Miss Amelia, thank you for sharing.

AMELIA

Goodness! You just scared me half to death!

NURSE

My apologies Miss Amelia.

AMELIA

Who are you?

NURSE

I'm an old friend.

AMELIA

Well then, stay a while, won't you?

NURSE

Of course.

*(JENNY enters with some groceries.)*

JENNY

Good morning!

AMELIA

Good morning.

JENNY

Do you recognize me?

AMELIA

I think so.

JENNY

I'm your daughter, Jenny.

AMELIA

Of course. Make yourself right at home. Are you thirsty? Can I get you something to drink? Water? Wine?

JENNY

Wine? Mom it's nine in the morning.

AMELIA

Nine in the morning? It felt like four in the afternoon to me!

NURSE

Perhaps some tea?

AMELIA

Tea! That's a wonderful idea. Can I have some too?

NURSE

I left a cup on the piano for you.

AMELIA

You even remembered a coaster. Thank you.

*(JENNY follows NURSE into the kitchen.)*

JENNY

How is she doing?

NURSE

She's in good spirits.

JENNY

How long can you talk to her before she repeats?

NURSE

Less than a minute.

JENNY

Wow.

NURSE

Luckily, this isn't out of the ordinary.

JENNY

You said less than a minute.

NURSE

Yes.

JENNY

Exactly how less?

NURSE

It fluctuates.

JENNY

I understand, but I need to know about how less?

NURSE

Well, certain stimuli can change the time and some days are better than others-

JENNY

JUST GIVE ME A NUMBER.

*(Beat.)*

NURSE

It's about 30 seconds on average. Sometimes it's more. Sometimes it's less.

JENNY

We were around a minute and fifteen seconds last week. What happened? What did we do to make it worse?

NURSE

It wasn't us that made it worse.

JENNY

It has to be. Nothing else has changed. We've kept her environment, her schedule, her meals, everything consistent. It has to be us.

NURSE

It's just the nature of her condition.

JENNY

Well what can we do? Surely there's something we can do to make her better.

NURSE

We can help to make her more comfortable, but there's little that we can do that will improve her condition if that's what you're implying.

JENNY

Right.

NURSE

You know, I've found that when she can't express with her words, she starts expressing with her music.

JENNY

Really?

NURSE

Yes. There seems to be many memories trapped inside her music.

JENNY

I mean, she played professionally for years. That's how she met my dad. It's how they fell in love.

NURSE

Why don't you put on a song that she might remember?

JENNY

That's a great idea.

*(They turn towards AMELIA who, perhaps, has spent the past few minutes browsing through sheet music and maybe plucking through some notes.)*

NURSE

Did you find any songs that tickled your fancy Miss Amelia?

AMELIA

I didn't think I had guests today.

JENNY

We wanted to spend some time with you today. Is that alright?

AMELIA

Absolutely! Can I grab you anything to drink?

JENNY

I already got some tea right here.

AMELIA

How lovely.

JENNY

Would you like to listen to some music?

AMELIA

Always.

NURSE

Are there any songs that you want to listen to?

AMELIA

Yes! It's... oh I know it. I know it's special to me. What's the name of it?

JENNY

Do you know where you know it from?

AMELIA

I do, I do... why can't I put my finger on it?

NURSE

How did you feel when you heard it?

AMELIA

I felt... how did I feel? I felt... how do I know you?

JENNY

I'm your daughter.

AMELIA

Oh yes. Of course.

JENNY

Would you like to listen to some music?

AMELIA

Always.

NURSE

Do you have any requests?

AMELIA

I know I do... I just can't... what was it called?

JENNY

I think I know what she might want.

*(Measures 1-12 of “Coda” play overhead. AMELIA visibly lightens up. Her entire demeanor shifts. She begins to mime playing the piano.)*

JENNY

Woah Mom! Where did this song take you?

AMELIA

I wrote this one! I used to play it all the time!

NURSE

You still do!

AMELIA

I was so, oh what’s the word? Oh, “cool” back then.

*(YOUNG CALVIN enters in and leans up against the wall on the side of the room. He is watching AMELIA in this moment. He lights a cigarette and begins to smoke it.)*

JENNY

I haven’t seen her this full of life in weeks!

NURSE

Music can do wonders on the brain.

JENNY

Mom, who used to listen to you play this?

AMELIA

Oh it surely had to be the club. They were always wowed by me. But this was nothing. He loved it most though.

NURSE

Who loved it most?

*(YOUNG CALVIN approaches AMELIA. He claps confidently.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

Wow. Just wow.

AMELIA

If you're gonna stare at me, you might as well get me a drink.

YOUNG CALVIN

For the star? Anything.

AMELIA

"The Star". I could get used to that.

YOUNG CALVIN

I could get used to watching and listening to you play young lady.

*(They stare at each other for a moment. The chemistry is still absolutely electric.)*

Let me grab that drink, I can let the star be parched.

AMELIA

Actually, how about one of your cigarettes first.

*(YOUNG CALVIN takes out a cigarette and puts it in her mouth. He lights it for her. This is an incredibly intimate moment.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

I'm sorry I just have to say, you have the most beautiful eyes.

AMELIA

Why thank you, but how many times have you used that line tonight alone?

YOUNG CALVIN

Honestly, I'm not sure if I've ever used that line.

AMELIA

Well lucky me then.

YOUNG CALVIN

Can I have the gift of knowing your name?

AMELIA

Amelia. And you?



*(YOUNG CALVIN goes to say his name, but doesn't. The song has stopped playing. YOUNG CALVIN starts walking off stage.)*

WAIT! Don't go! I know you. I know that I know you. You are so special. Tell me your name. Please. If you tell me then I'll know it.

*(YOUNG CALVIN walks off stage.)*

JENNY

Mom, do you know who you were talking to?

AMELIA

I... I don't know. Well I know that I know him. I just can't find his name.

JENNY

That's alright Mom. It happens.

AMELIA

But I do know that I was happy.

NURSE

He was something special wasn't he?

AMELIA

Oh yes. Yes, yes yes...

JENNY

He loved you Mom.

*(Beat.)*

AMELIA

You look familiar.

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 8**

*Lights up on NURSE vacuuming. AMELIA sits at the piano playing nothing. JENNY enters.*

JENNY  
Good morning.

NURSE  
Good morning.

JENNY  
How has she been?

NURSE  
Peaceful.

JENNY  
That's good, right?

NURSE  
For the state that she's in, it's the best we can ask for.

JENNY  
Has she been playing?

NURSE  
Lately, she only starts to play if there's sheet music in front of her.

JENNY  
She still can read it?

NURSE  
Yes, but she can only play a few measures before she repeats.

JENNY  
So she will just play the same thing over and over again?

NURSE  
Lately, yes.

JENNY

That could get annoying.

NURSE

It can, but it's the only time she seems to have life in her.

JENNY

I can take over from here, thank you for your help.

NURSE

Any time.

*(NURSE gathers her things and exits. JENNY grabs a basket of laundry and sits on the couch. AMELIA and JENNY are silent. JENNY begins to fold clothes. The silence is deafening. She stops folding when the silence is too loud. YOUNG CALVIN enters.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

How is she?

JENNY

How does she look?

YOUNG CALVIN

She's always looked beautiful.

JENNY

She's practically gone!

YOUNG CALVIN

She's still here.

JENNY

Not really. You don't know. You don't know what it's like to slowly watch your mother lose who she is. You left too soon to see this. You weren't here to see how bad it's been.

YOUNG CALVIN

I'm here now, aren't I?

JENNY

You can't do anything. You're gone. She's gone. Everyday I wonder what will be gone next. First it was little things. Numbers were hard. Names were hard. Then tasks were hard. Then it was memories. All the while, her spirit faded. I can pull out pictures or old sheet music to help jog her memory. But I don't know where I can find her spirit.

YOUNG CALVIN

Some things that you lose can't be found here.

JENNY

What happens when you're gone? I mean fully gone?

YOUNG CALVIN

That is an excellent question. I'm not sure if I can answer in a way that makes sense to you.

JENNY

Will she be her full self when she's gone?

YOUNG CALVIN

No.

JENNY

No?

YOUNG CALVIN

She'll be a far better version of herself than you could even imagine.

JENNY

How?

YOUNG CALVIN

"How?" is a loaded question.

JENNY

Will she be happy?

YOUNG CALVIN

Yes. She will lack nothing.

JENNY

She won't lose anything again?

YOUNG CALVIN

Only the things that she doesn't need. Shame, pity, guilt, anger. She won't need those.

JENNY

Will there be music?

YOUNG CALVIN

Better than any music you've ever heard.

JENNY

It will be a good thing for her to go. Right?

YOUNG CALVIN

Only when she's ready.

JENNY

Right.

YOUNG CALVIN

Are you ready?

JENNY

For what?

YOUNG CALVIN

For her to go?

JENNY

I'm not sure yet.

YOUNG CALVIN

That's ok.

*(JENNY's phone rings.)*

JENNY

I have to take this. It's Michael.

YOUNG CALVIN

Go ahead.

JENNY

Thank you. I'm glad to know that whether she's here or there, she will always have music.

*(JENNY exits. As she leaves, YOUNG CALVIN looks at AMELIA staring at the empty music stand on her piano. He pulls out sheet music and places it in front of her. AMELIA starts to vamp measure 63.)*

YOUNG CALVIN

There you are.

*BLACKOUT.*

**SCENE 9**

*Lights up on AMELIA playing measures 56-62 of "Coda". She is very calm and there is a somber tone in the room. After she finishes those measures, she vamps measure 63 as JENNY enters. AMELIA is at the piano, but JENNY cannot see her.*

JENNY

Hi Mom, sorry I'm late.

*(BEAT.)*

I had to drop Mia off at school later because she has a dentist appointment. Which reminds me, we need to schedule yours soon. How does next Tuesday sound?

*(BEAT.)*

Has your nurse stopped by yet? She's going to be with you this morning. I was wondering if I would beat her here.

*(BEAT.)*

Mom?

*(No answer. AMELIA keeps vamping measure 63. JENNY goes off stage to where we assume AMELIA's room is.)*

Mom. Hey, it's me. Mom it's time to get up....no no no no no no. Mom!

*(JENNY emerges frantically from AMELIA's room. It is clear the AMELIA is lying lifeless on her bed. As she begins to panic and attempt to dial 911 on her phone, YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE enters. She has some nurse clothing items on, perhaps a hat and a coat, but underneath she has on her YOUNG AMELIA costume.)*

YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE

Good morning.

*(YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE begins to take off her nurse's coat.)*

JENNY

I just walked in and....I went in to check on her but she's.... I tried waking her up but she just... She won't....

*(JENNY begins to break down on the couch. YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE goes to comfort her.)*

YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry you had to see me like that.

*(JENNY lifts her head to see that the NURSE is actually YOUNG AMELIA. YOUNG AMELIA/NURSE takes off her hat.)*

JENNY

Mom?

YOUNG AMELIA

I'm sorry I wasn't there enough for you. Maybe now, I can be.

JENNY

You look so...

YOUNG AMELIA

Alive?

JENNY

In there, I couldn't tell you were gone by just looking at you. You've looked like that for a while now.

YOUNG AMELIA

What a shame, I am gorgeous!

JENNY

That you are!

YOUNG AMELIA

Lucky for you, you got my genes.



JENNY

I've missed you.

YOUNG AMELIA

I know. You've watched me slowly lose my life for a while.

JENNY

I can't believe you're gone.

YOUNG AMELIA

I was gone for a long while.

JENNY

I know.

YOUNG AMELIA

I'm sorry I wasn't much of a mother to you.

JENNY

I'm sorry I couldn't save you.

YOUNG AMELIA

There are some things in life that can't be saved. There are also some things in life that can only be saved by letting go.

JENNY

What do you mean?

YOUNG AMELIA

Why look at me now! I know who you are. I know who I am. Jenny, I remember! It's amazing! There's no more pain anymore!

JENNY

You're finally free.

*(AMELIA finishes out the rest of the song on the piano. YOUNG CALVIN enters)*

YOUNG CALVIN

Care to dance?

## YOUNG AMELIA

It's about time!

*(YOUNG AMELIA and CALVIN begin to dance. JENNY watches them as the song finishes. The lights dim as AMELIA holds out the last note.)*

*BLACKOUT.*

*END OF PLAY.*