

MY WAY

A Play in Two Acts

by

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CHARACTERS

HE A young, solitary, reflexive guy. Reading and writing enthusiast. He likes cinema and theater. He works for a travel agency to earn a living. He lives in London, England. He's about 30-35 years old.

SHE A spontaneous, impulsive, passionate girl. Music enthusiast. She has played the piano since she was very young. She works in a gym. She lives in New York. She's about 30-35 years old.

PLACE

The first act takes place in London and New York simultaneously (the protagonists communicate with each other by internet from their respective places). In the second act, the action takes place in an apartment in New York.

TIME

Present day.

COSTUMES

In the first act both characters wear plain clothes of the same color (grey or something similar). In the second act they wear colorful and stylish modern clothes.

MY WAY

By Marc Egea

ACT I

Dark stage. Spotlight up on a chair where HE is seated.

HE

Hi'ya. You there?

(No answer)

Hello, are you there?

A few seconds later, just meters away, spotlight up on a chair where SHE is seated.

SHE

Yeah, I'm here. Hey.

HE

Oh, I thought you had gone.

SHE

Sorry, I left for a sec, but now I'm back.

They speak facing the front. They never look at each other.

HE

As I was saying, I prefer communicating through writing. Because the fact that you're writing and not speaking means you must take more care with your sentences. You've got to focus a bit more. Does that not happen to you?

SHE

Um, no. I try to write fast, just like I talk. It's just that I'm a fast person; you might call me nervous even. And I don't like writing that much. You see? A mistake! I spelled nervous with a "b"!

HE

That's a typo.

SHE

It's not a mistake?

HE

No.

SHE

What's the difference?

HE

Typos are keyboard errors. The "b" and the "v" are next to each other; you can hit one when you've meant to hit the other. It's normal when you type quickly.

SHE

That would have been a good excuse when I was in school.

HE

Didn't you hand write your assignments?

SHE

And for the "s" and the "z"... NO! The "s" is above the "z". Jeez. Hey, by the way, you don't make mistakes when you type.

HE

I took a typing course.

SHE

And that means you don't make typos. No, wait, I mean mistakes.

HE

I make those too.

SHE

No you don't! You don't make any. You write perfectly.

HE

I don't know why. It must be because I like writing so I'm very careful. Hey, if you can see that I spell the words correctly, then why do you spell them incorrectly?

SHE

You mean the b's and the v's? They aren't mistakes, they're typos. And keep in mind the time change. Here in New York it's really early and I'm still a little sleepy.

HE

It's not day yet?

SHE

Sun just came up.

HE

It's been a week since we've seen the sun here. It hasn't stopped bloody raining.

SHE

You're not really giving me any good reasons to move to London.

HE

Don't do it. There must be a million reasons to stay in New York.

SHE

(Sweetly begging)

Why don't we speak I mean like on an internet call?

HE

I can't... I already told you yesterday. I'm at work...

SHE

Me too, but I mean later, from somewhere else. There's an internet place by my house... we could use a web camera and send each other a photo...

HE

Camera with -era, not -ara...

SHE

Oops.

HE

Don't worry, I won't tell anyone. Nobody's around there, right?

SHE smiles.

SHE

"There"...

HE

What?

SHE

You wrote there with -ier. How cute.

HE

Sorry?

SHE

"There". You spelled it with -eir instead of -ere.
"Nobody's around there"?

HE

Nevermind. One mistake.

SHE

You did it on purpose, to lower yourself to my level. You always start the same: "Hi'ya, you there?", "Hello, are

you there?" You spelled it right before.

HE

Before?

SHE

Yeah, at the beginning.

HE

That's not true.

SHE

It's in writing.

HE

What?

SHE

Look back. You said:

(Reading)

"Hi'ya. You there? Hello..."

HE

Oh.

SHE

And I answered:

(Reading)

"Yeah, I'm here, hey". "Sorry, I left for a sec but now I'm back". So, what do you say?

HE

(Reading)

"As I was saying, I prefer communicating through writing. Because the fact that you're writing and not speaking means you must take more care with your sentences. You've got to focus a bit more. Does that not happen to you?"

SHE

"Um, no. I try to write fast, just like I talk..."

They repeat the dialogue from before. They begin to speak more quickly, as if they were competing to have the last word. At the end of the last sentence - "Don't worry, I won't tell anyone. Nobody's around...?", HE stops speaking right before the word "There". He breathes deeply and instead of reading he says:

HE

You?

(SHE smiles)

It was a typo.

SHE

You took a typing course.

HE

How do you know that?

SHE

You told me.

HE

I told you?

SHE

You want to check?

(All of a sudden she is startled and looks
to the side)

Wowzer, danger. I have to go, ok? Talk to you tomorrow.

HE

See you.

SHE

Ciao.

Lights down.

*After a few seconds, lights up on HE. The boy
appears, the same as before, seated in a chair
facing the front.*

HE

Good morning!

(HE waits for an answer)

Hi'ya...

(No answer)

Are you there - spelled correctly?

(HE waits)

You're not. Well, I'll leave you a note. You'll read it soon enough. It's just that I have something to tell you: I've seen the most beautiful scene. It was this morning when I was on my way to work. I'm walking down the street when, suddenly, a bus stops. The doors open and the driver comes running out. He goes towards a girl who's walking on the pavement, he delicately caresses her face with his hands and he gives her a kiss, straight out of a film. Nothing else. He smiles at her, gets back on the bus, closes the door and drives away. What do you think? Beautiful, right?

(HE waits a few more seconds expectantly.)

Yeah, all right. They knew each other. I'm certain she was his girlfriend, that it wasn't just any girl. But seeing it like that, so unexpected, it seemed that they didn't know each other, that the driver had kissed the first girl that passed by, because... yes... because he felt like it. And that has made me think. This is what I really wanted to

tell you: Why don't these things happen to me?

(Pensive)

Imagine the perfect scene: One day I'm walking down the street and somebody sees me and falls in love with me. Someone who doesn't know me. Then, she runs towards me, stops me, takes me in her arms, kisses me, smiles at me, and goes on her way, leaving behind an unforgettable memory. The same as today. The same... if I imagine.

Lights down on HE.

Lights up on SHE. The girl appears, the same as before, seated in a chair facing the front.

SHE

Hey!

(SHE waits for an answer)

Damn. Hello?

(No answer)

You're not there. Well, I have an answer for you: I just read your message. Your scene about the bus driver is very romantic, but you're right: they had to be a couple. The thing about a stranger stopping a girl in the middle of the street to passionately kiss her only happens in commercials or movies. It's better that way because if a guy came running towards me in the middle of the street I swear I don't know how I would react. Don't be impatient. If someday someone chooses you, it will be someone who already knows you; it will be because they already know you.

Lights down on SHE.

Lights up on HE.

HE

Hi'ya, you there?

(No answer)

Hello, are you there?

Lights up on SHE.

SHE

YES!

HE

At last!

SHE

Lunchtime. I can talk.

HE

Aren't you eating?

SHE

I'm not going out. I brought a salad; I wanted to take my time to respond to you. What about you?

HE

I've already had my supper.

SHE

Right, in London it's already nighttime. Lucky. So, let's take advantage of the time since I've got a bit.

HE

Well, I wanted to tell you that you're a bit of a pessimist.

SHE

Why?

HE

For what you said before.

SHE

What did I say?

HE

That a person can only kiss their boyfriend or girlfriend.

(HE reminds her)

The thing about the girl on the bus.

SHE

Oh.

(Remembering)

No. I only said that in this case, the way you told it, they could only be a couple. It's not normal for a bus driver to get off the bus to kiss a stranger - it's not even normal for a guy to kiss his girlfriend like that. I'm not a pessimist. I'm a realist. Look around. These things don't happen.

HE

So a bloke can't fall in love with a stranger and kiss her in the middle of the street?

SHE

That's what I'm saying. It's not normal. The girl wouldn't trust him. Don't you see the world we live in? It's a real shame. If all girls were as trusting as you, you'd see how we would end up. Guys are like that. I see it everyday in the gym - I work in a gym, I told you that, right?

HE

From Monday to Friday. Aerobics instructor.

SHE

(Remembering)

I told you the other day...

HE

And whenever you have a moment to spare you're in the reception on the computer...

SHE

Good memory.

(She continues)

As I was saying. Here in the gym I see it everyday. The girls go to exercise but the guys... the guys only go to gawk. They've got no shame. And for some of them it's not enough to just look. Some go all out. They leave me alone because I'm the "prof"; if not they would hit on me too. Although I'm not exactly safe from their stares.

HE

What are the gyms *like* in New York?!?!

SHE

Just like everywhere.

HE

Doesn't seem like it to me.

SHE

Well, you must see it through rose-colored glasses. Or is it that in London you're so civilized?

HE

(After thinking for a moment)

I must see it through rose-coloured glasses.

SHE

And it's worse in the bars. You must have seen it in the bars? What do you think about the bars?

HE

The bars?

SHE

The bars are the best for the chase. I work at a bar and I'm sick of seeing...

HE

(Interrupting)

You work at a bar?

SHE

Haven't we talked about the bar?

HE

No.

SHE

On the weekends I work at a bar as a cocktail waitress. A piano bar. And it's a free-for-all. I'm not safe at the bar, just like the gym, but even worse. I serve drinks and I go up to the tables so some customers think I'm there to sleep with them..

HE

(Joking)

And that's not the case...

SHE

(With a smile)

It's not the case. And you? What do you do?

HE

What?

SHE

Where do you work? You haven't told me.

HE

I haven't told you?

SHE

I don't remember.

HE

I work... making trips.

SHE

Shut up.

HE

It's true.

SHE

Don't you mean taking trips? What are you? A sales agent or something?

HE

Not like you think.

SHE

But, you travel.

HE

Not exactly. *I make trips:*

(HE explains)

It's easy. A client comes in - or maybe a couple of them. First you show them a catalogue of photos; then you make ten thousand phone calls in front of them, book their flights and hotels, cancel their flights and hotels, give explanations, complain, do business - a bit theatrical,

really - you speak with the clients, they ask you things, you respond, they think about it, they argue, they think more about it, they decide, you book flights and hotels, you find day-trips, they smile, you print the documents, they pay by credit card, you smile at them, you say goodbye - "Have a good trip!" - and that's all. I make trips, like those who make doughnuts. Passionately. Right now you're sharing a screen with a booking to Cancun. Would you like to go to Cancun?

(In a mocking tone)

One of those all-inclusive resorts with a wrist band for the open bar?

SHE

No. I would prefer to go anywhere else...

HE

Me too. All day long without moving from this chair. Luckily I've got the computer and, as you know, I can escape.

SHE

Your situation is worse than mine.

HE

I can't complain. You've always got to make yourself feel better. Travelling isn't everything. Let me ask you something: Which of your jobs is the the good one?

SHE

The good one?

HE

Yeah. You said you've got two jobs. One's got to be the good one and the other one, the bad one.

SHE

Oh, really?

HE

It's always like that. We always put up with a bad job because somewhere there's another one that we like.

SHE

Another one that we like...

HE

Hobbies.

SHE

Oh.

HE

We've got hobbies to escape from work. But, if you take a good look, hobbies are work too. It's just *another* job.

The "good" job. There are only a few fortunate ones who turn their hobby into their *only* job and make a living out of it. The rest have got to live with the ambiguity. You've got two jobs. Which is the good one, the one you like?

SHE

Neither. In my case, neither.

HE

Neither?

SHE

Neither.

HE

So, it's that you don't earn enough at the gym and you've got to supplement your salary by working in a bar?

SHE

Nope, not that either. Hey, what are you, a detective? Do you analyze everything people tell you?

HE

I observe. I suppose. I imagine.

SHE

Is that your hobby?

HE

Yes, in a sense.

SHE

Tell me about it.

HE

First, you.

SHE

First me, what?

HE

Tell me what your hobby is?

SHE

No. You first.

HE

You first.

SHE

You first.

HE

You first.

SHE

No.

HE

Come on. I asked you first. Your turn. You tell me about your hobby and I promise that later I'll...

SHE

(Giving in)

Fiiine. I'll tell you. I don't need two jobs. I earn enough at the gym. My hobby is at the bar.

HE

You see?

SHE

My hobby is at the bar, but it's not the bar, not the waitressing job...

HE

Care to elaborate?

SHE

Wait, let me finish. I can't type that fast.

HE

Sorry. Continue. Over.
(Like a walkie-talkie.)

SHE

My hobby is playing the piano.

HE

(Admiring)

You play the piano?

SHE

Yeah. And you're right. I play the piano to escape from work. I would love to play the piano as my job. What am I saying? I would love to play the piano as my *only* job.

HE

Go on.

SHE

I've always wanted to be a pianist. Not a concert pianist. No. Something more... intimate, more bohemian: play somewhere at night, to a crowd, on my own terms... and to have the chance to sing...

HE

You sing as well?

SHE

Forget it.

HE

Forget what?

SHE

Singing.

HE

Why?

SHE

Forget it.

HE

But you sing?

SHE

No, I don't sing.

HE

You've just said it.

SHE

That's off the record.

HE

Why?

SHE

It's different. Sing; I sing for myself, in the shower, like the rest of the world. Nothing serious.

HE

In the shower.

SHE

Yeah. It doesn't matter. Forget it. What I would really love is to play the piano. That's what I would love. That's why I'm at the bar.

HE

For the piano...

SHE

Yeah. I started working there because of the piano. It's one of those bars with a pianist. I discovered it one night by accident when I was out for some drinks with friends. They took me there and... as soon as I went in... well, imagine: there was a grand piano, white, enormous, and all these little tables with little lamps. It was beautiful. And you'd have to hear how this piano sounds to know what I'm talking about. I was mesmerized. I spent the

whole night listening as if I were hypnotized. And then I thought: why not me? So, in a fit of passion I went in the next day and asked if I could work there. There was an opening for a waitress and I accepted. Weekends.

(Remembering)

But I didn't say that I played the piano. In the end, I got scared. I thought I probably didn't know enough to play there. Yeah, I know, it seems stupid. It's not being very proactive. But, I don't know. I feel like if I'm there, someday something might happen.

HE

A big opportunity?

SHE

I don't know. Something like that.

HE

A miracle?

SHE

No.

(SHE confesses)

In reality... well... the pianist is thinking about leaving. I know because they told me. He wants to leave so maybe...

HE

But if they don't know that you play the piano...

SHE

Not officially, but...:

(SHE explains)

One night I was closing and I was the last one to leave. I was alone so I sat down at the piano... and I played. What a feeling! I played my favorite songs, Sinatra songs - I love Frank Sinatra, I haven't told you that either, have I? - and on this piano they sounded so good. So, while I was playing, Michael, the pianist, came in. I kept playing as if I hadn't seen him. He didn't say a word. He went to the back and stayed out of sight, listening. And so, after a little while, when I turned around, he wasn't there. He had gone.

(Suddenly discovering)

He probably didn't like it.

HE

Do you think so?

SHE

Yeah. If not he would have waited to say something. He didn't like how I played, I'm sure.

HE

Maybe he didn't like Frank Sinatra.

SHE

It's impossible for someone to not like Frank Sinatra.

HE

I don't...

SHE

You don't like Frank Sinatra?

HE

Well, I'm not that familiar with him. I know who he is, of course. But I've not listened to him much.

SHE

That's a sin. You don't know what you're missing.

HE

Are you referring to yourself, for not having told them that you play the piano?

SHE

I don't need to now. They know. Michael knows, he saw me playing.

HE

But for the moment you're still a waitress.

SHE

Yeah. Bummer.

(Sincerely)

I'd like it so much, but... for the moment, Michael is still there. And, besides, I'm still scared. I don't think I'd be good enough. One thing is playing at home and another thing is playing at a bar full of people.

HE

You mean to say you won't do anything.

SHE

What am I gonna do? Wait, and wait, and wait...

HE

What's the bar called?

SHE

It's called Rick's.

HE

Right.

SHE

You know it?

HE

I know another bar called Rick's.

SHE

In London?

HE

In *Casablanca*.

(SHE doesn't react)

The film... *Casablanca*...

SHE

Casablanca.

HE

Haven't you seen *Casablanca*?

SHE

No. Should I have?

HE

No, it's just that... You've just said a line from *Casablanca*. "Wait, and wait, and wait". Minute... two from the film:

(HE recites)

"The fortunate ones, through money or influence or luck might obtain exit visas and scurry to Lisbon. And from Lisbon to the New World. But the others wait in *Casablanca*. And wait, and wait, and wait..."

SHE

Well I didn't do it on purpose.

HE

So you probably don't know that your bar is called Rick's because of the film.

SHE

No. The bar is called Rick's because the owner's name is Richard and he calls himself Rick. Very original.

HE

I don't think so. Ask him, you'll see...

SHE

I will.

HE

You've really never seen *Casablanca*?

SHE

Nope.

HE

You'll have to sort that out.

SHE

(Joking)

Ok. Plan me one of your trips to Casablanca.

HE

(Smiling)

Don't go. Casablanca is awful. It's nothing like the film.

SHE

"Nothing like the film". It's better in the film than in reality?

HE

Infinitely. Hollywood's Casablanca is much better than the real one.

SHE

Ok, fine. I'll accept a trip to Hollywood.

HE

You laugh.

SHE

Is *Casablanca* so good?

HE

Yes. It's fantastic. The story is beautiful. The script is... perfect; the dialogues... always say more than what they seem to... so full of intention...

SHE

You *do* know it well.

HE

I've seen it so many times that I know it off by heart. I could repeat the whole thing, minute by minute.

SHE

Wow.

HE

Everything is in *Casablanca*. It's simply full of life lessons.

SHE

"Life lessons". Aren't you exaggerating?

HE

You can always find a line from *Casablanca* that could be apropos at any given moment.

SHE

That IS good. I'll have to see it.

HE

You must.

SHE

Yeah, but not now. Before I forget. My turn: What's your hobby outside of planning trips?

HE

My hobby...

SHE

Yeah.

HE

(Blowing off the question a little)
Nevermind.

SHE

No. No. You have to tell me.

HE

Is it compulsory?

SHE

I told you mine. Besides, you promised.

HE

I promised? Are you sure?

SHE

Very. You said: "Tell me about your hobby first and I promise that later I'll tell you about mine."

HE

I don't think so.

SHE

Should we check?

HE

(HE challenges her)
Let's see.

SHE

Look back.

(SHE starts to read quickly to herself. SHE finds what she's looking for.)

Here:

(Reading)

"You tell me about your hobby and I promise that later I'll..." Dot dot dot! Oh! You didn't finish the sentence!

HE

(Satisfied)
See? I made no promise.

SHE

Yeah, I can see you've chosen your words carefully.

HE

That's my hobby.

SHE

That's your hobby? Choosing your words carefully?

HE

Well, let's call it *writing*.

SHE

Don't tell me. You write? What do you write? Novels?
Poetry?

HE

No. I write films. And theatre.

SHE

You write films?

HE

Yep.

SHE

You're a screenwriter?

HE

Not exactly. Well, that's the plan. Screenwriter and
playwright. But for the moment it's only a dream. There's
still a long way to go.

SHE

Why?

HE

It's not that easy.

SHE

It's not that easy.
(Trying to understand)
But, you write regularly...

HE

Yes, daily.

SHE

Then, why is it only a dream? It's already a reality.

HE

No, not yet.

SHE

If you're already writing, you're already a writer. It's no dream. Sorry, but yours is different. It's not like my dream to be a pianist. In my case you have to have a place to play, for an audience. You already write, just like any other professional. As soon as you produce something good, you'll be well on your way.

HE

Well, that must be the problem: I don't write anything good.

SHE

That surprises me because I can assure you that you write well - you don't even make mistakes or typos - and your capacity to observe is out of this world.

HE

(Confessing)

I don't know how to invent stories. That's my problem. I'm lacking...

SHE

...Imagination

HE

In some way, but not entirely. I've got imagination because... when someone tells me a story a thousand things occur to me. My problem is that I need someone to give me an idea so that I can start writing. If I don't have anything, I can't write. So, in the meantime, I do this: I take stories that are already done, stories that are already started and I finish them my way.

SHE

Well, that's one way to practice. After all, I didn't learn to play the piano in a day.

HE

That's where I am.

SHE

And it's very interesting. How did it occur to you to do this?

HE

When you're in the cinema or the theatre, isn't there a moment when you would like to stop the story and finish it your way, put the ending that you like the most? Well, it started like that. That's how I started writing.

SHE

Can't be easy.

HE

The most difficult thing for me is to sit in front of a blank sheet. Everytime I try...

SHE

(Trying to encourage him)

Tell me, how does it work, this changing the ending to a movie? How do you do it?

HE

It's easy. You're in the cinema - or in the theatre. And as soon as you notice your imagination wandering from the scene that you're watching, you've got to pay attention to it. You've got to let it take you. It happens to everyone. We've all had that feeling sometime, but people go against it. They think: "stupid thoughts" and they go back to following the story. Well, not me. You've got to resist. I leave the film and I trust my imagination. I begin writing and I follow the path of my own story until the ending.

SHE

And do you usually change much?

HE

Depends when my mind starts to wander... after an hour, after three quarters of an hour, half an hour. Sometimes I rewrite the last half an hour, sometimes only ten minutes, a quarter of an hour, five minutes... depends on the story. I haven't always got to change much. You know, you can change the meaning of a story simply by changing just one line, even just one word?

SHE

Yeah, right.

HE

Don't you believe me?

SHE

It seems a little exaggerated.

HE

You yourself have just done it.

SHE

Me?

HE

Yes. You've changed the meaning of a sentence by adding just one word.

SHE

I have?

HE

Yes. And you haven't just changed it a wee bit. You've changed it quite a lot and given it a much clearer meaning.

SHE

Did I do it on purpose?

HE

Consciously.

SHE

All right, let's hear it.

HE

I'll show you. Follow me.

(HE looks)

Let's go back. Look. Here it is. When you began talking about your hobby, about your "good" job, you said that you played the piano to escape from work. Right? And then later you said:

(reading)

"I would love to play the piano as my job". You see? Instantly you corrected what you said: "I would love to play the piano as my *only* job". "Only". You added "only". One word. And the meaning changes: I deduce that... not only do you want to play the piano as your job but you also want to leave the gym job, meaning: it would be a risk to leave your job to try to earn a living playing the piano... Am I wrong?

SHE

If from one word you can take all that, imagine what you could do with more words.

HE

I'm not lacking words, I'm lacking stories...

SHE

And why do you have to invent them?

HE

What?

SHE

Why don't you write about yourself, about your own life? You don't have to invent stories.

HE

I can't do that.

SHE

A lot of people do that. Take any novel, or movie, or play and then look at the biography of the author and tell me that they're not similar.

HE

It's never the same.

SHE

Therein lies the art of it. It's about transforming reality a little, changing a few things, but the stories, in essence, are always true.

HE

Yeah. And you think it's a good idea for someone to tell you about the things that happen to them?

SHE

You don't?

HE

I'm not so sure.

SHE

Why not?

HE

I'm not sure it's appropriate.

SHE

Oh, big deal. What isn't appropriate about that? What's more appropriate than talking about oneself? It's the only thing that we know well. Once I heard someone say that the work of a writer is like the work of a translator. That we all carry a book inside us and the only thing we have to do is translate it.

HE

That's lovely and all, but it's a bit dangerous.

SHE

Dangerous, how?

HE

Because there are more people implicated apart from oneself. Nobody lives alone. I can talk about myself, fine, but... thers? Would they like it if I talk about them?

SHE

If you're honest, yes.

HE

Do you think so?

SHE

Yeah.

HE

Not me.

SHE

Why not?

HE

Because I would tell personal things that affect other people and everyone has the right to keep their personal things private.

SHE

Ok, so, you could talk about things that have happened which are already out there in the open. Now they're not so personal. They're part of the facts, of the reality.

HE

Would you like it if someone talked about you in a fictional story?

SHE

If they talked about me?

HE

If someone told a story that you were in.

SHE

If deep down there was some truth to what they told, then yes.

HE

Some truth.

SHE

Yeah, some truth. There's always some truth.

HE

Do you think so?

SHE

Yeah. There's some truth in all stories. Some truth that...
(Changing the tone hastily, after looking to the side)
Jeez, I gotta go. They're back already.

HE

Eaten already, have they?

SHE

Look at the time.

HE

Already? That was fast. Time flies.

SHE

If I can't get on the internet this afternoon, I'll try tomorrow, ok?

HE

Whenever. I'll leave the screen here, next to the Carribbean offer.

SHE

(SHE smiles)

Big hug.

HE

Bye.

SHE

Ciao.

Lights down on both.

Lights up on HE.

HE

Hi'ya, you there? Hello, are you there? One last thing. You're not there, are you? Read it when you're online again: You said that I'm already in the "good" job because I already write. Maybe I've never wanted to see it like that but I suppose you're right. The truth is: I don't like to admit it but, I'm working a lot. Writing is very important to me. From the outside it seems daft. But for me it's very important. I don't know why. I sometimes wonder if it's worth all this effort and... if it's worth all this effort... You see? A line from *Casablanca*. Minute... 85 from the film. Rick asks: "Don't you sometimes wonder if it's worth all this? I mean, what you're fighting for." And Victor Lazslo responds: "We might as well question why we breathe. We stop breathing, we'll die." If the piano is so important for you, keep going. You say that someday you want to be a pianist. Well, for the moment the piano is already your job, maybe not the only one, but it's your job. You're on your way. You're starting to do it your way.

That's all. Big hug.

Lights down.

Lights up on SHE. Now she's standing. Visibly nervous. She's almost shouting.

SHE

HEEEY! Big news! I'm playing at the bar tomorrow! I'm playing the piano! It was so unexpected: Michael, the pianist, called me a little while ago. He's got a really important audition tomorrow night. And he asked me - hold on - if... I could substitute him at the bar! If I could play!! He wouldn't take no for an answer. He'll let Rick know. He'll tell him at the last minute so that Rick doesn't have time to look for someone else. How scary! He

said that he really liked how I played the day that he saw me but I'm so scared. Playing at Rick's... I can't. I'm so nervous! I'll sound terrible... What should I do? Tell me what to do! I just came down to tell you that. I'm so nervous! Help me. Hey, what time is it in London? When you wake up or before you go to bed I hope you read this and tell me what you think. Ok? Ciao. *Big big hug back at ya.* Good night.

Lights down.

Lights up on HE.

HE

Good morning, you there? Hello, are you there? What a surprise! I've just read your message. You don't know how happy that makes me. You're not there, are you? You're not awake with anticipation? No, I guess not. Well, well. Read this when you wake up. Today is your big day. Let's see if I can imagine the scene. You say that Michael is going to let Rick know, but that he won't do it until the last minute, tonight, so that Rick has got to accept on blind faith. But there's one thing you haven't told me: will he tell Rick that you're the substitute or will he only say there's a substitute, without specifying who it is? I suppose that he'll have done the former - tell him that it will be you - but what if he doesn't and you get up there as a pianist without anyone knowing? I can see it now:

(Explaining the scene to her)

The curtain opens. On the set, there is a big bar. On one side of the bar, an enormous white piano. Around it, tables in a dimly lit room. They haven't opened yet. Only RICK and a BUS BOY are there. The BUS BOY is doing the washing up while RICK, leaning on the bar, leafs through the orders. The phone rings. It's RICK'S mobile.

[HE with RICK'S voice]: Hello? (...) Oh, hi Michael. What's going on? (...) What? (...) Jesus (...) But, a high fever? (...) Damn it. (...) Someone's gonna come? (...) Ok. Does she know how to get here and what she has to do. Does she know everything? (...) Can she be trusted? (...) No, Michael, you already know how I am. (...) If you say so. (...) All right... (...) Take care of yourself. (...) Ok, see you tomorrow.

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: What's wrong? - asks the bus boy - .

[HE with RICK'S voice]: It's Michael. He can't come.

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: So?

[HE with RICK'S voice]: He's already got a substitute.

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: Who?

[HE with RICKS'S voice]: "Someone who can be trusted".
Lights down. In another spot on the stage the lights go up
in a small room.

(Lights up on SHE).

It's a very messy bathroom. There are towels, shirts and
other articles of clothing strewn about. YOU are in this
bathroom in front of the mirror.

(SHE gets up).

You are doing your hair. There is music.

(SHE combs her hair with the rhythm of the
music).

You are wearing a beautiful evening gown. You finish
doing your hair. You get closer to the mirror. Everything
looks all right: color in the cheeks, eyes done, lips full
of life. You're ready. You're a confident woman. You look
at yourself. You kiss yourself. And you go, with a smile,
leaving the mark of the proof of your own love behind in
the mirror.

(SHE leaves the scene).

Lights down in the bathroom along with the music. We
return to the bar scene. A bright white light illuminates
the piano. There are small lamps on the tables. People are
beginning to arrive. The waiters are serving drinks. There
are only a few empty tables. We overhear the conversation
of RICK and the BUS BOY. They can't stop staring at the
empty piano.

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice] (to RICK): If you want, I know
how to pound out Happy Birthday.

[HE with RICK'S voice]: That's not funny.

RICK gets out his mobile and rings someone. He waits a few
seconds. He switches off the phone.

[HE with RICK'S voice]: He's got his phone turned off!

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: Who?

[HE with RICK'S voice]: Michael. He's got his phone turned
off. Damnit!

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: He assured you that someone
would come, right Rick?

[HE with RICK'S voice]: Yeah. And that someone should have
been here half an hour ago.

And then... Big entrance. YOU enter the bar in your brilliant
dress.

(SHE enters the scene).

RICK and the BUS BOY see you. You go towards them.

[SHE]: Hey!

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: Hey! What a surprise.

[SHE]: I felt like hearing some good music.

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: Well, you picked a good day to come as a customer...

[SHE]: What's going on?

[HE with RICK'S voice]: Nothing.

[SHE] (*to the BUS BOY*): What's wrong with him?

[HE with BUS BOY'S voice]: Nothing, "problems".

[HE with RICK'S voice]: Problems. (*Changing the subject*)
Do you want to be seated or do you want to seat yourself?

[SHE] (*smiling*): I'll seat myself. There's a place where I've always wanted to sit. Ciao.

You begin to walk between the tables. Suddenly, you stop. You turn around. You smile at RICK and the BUS BOY. And you tell them with the look of a mischievous little girl:

[SHE]: Sorry for the delay.

RICK and the BUS BOY give each other puzzled looks. You continue walking.

(SHE disappears from the stage)

You walk between the tables. You approach the piano. You sit down. And... you begin to play. End scene.

Lights down.

Lights up on SHE.

SHE appears, seated in the chair exactly as before.

SHE

Hey!

(SHE waits for a response)

Hi, are you there?

(SHE waits)

Hello?

(Waving)

Can you see me? I'm here, near the Caribbean offer.

(SHE waits for a response. Nothing. There's no answer)

Heeey! You're not there. Ok. I'll tell you: I just read

your scene. It's fabulous! I loved it! Listen: do you really think it could be like that? It would be incredible. I read the scene and, as I read it, it was like I was actually living it... By the way, I have to ask you something. Do you know me by any chance? I'm sort of shocked. I'm asking because there are a few things that surprised me:

One: My bathroom is tiny and before I go to work, as I'm always in a hurry, the shirts and towels are strewn about.

Two: I always get ready with music on. Three: Rick's always on his cell phone. And four: I'm always late. I really liked the scene. But it's not going to happen like that. Michael will tell Rick that I'm the substitute. I don't work on Thursdays, so he prefers to let him know that it'll be me.

(SHE stops suddenly. She starts to think aloud to herself)

Of course... I could call Michael and tell him not...

(With sudden enthusiasm)

I have to go! Wish me luck tonight. If I can't get on the internet later, I'll tell you everything tomorrow. Big hug. Ciao.

Lights down.

Lights up on HE.

HE

Hi'ya, you there? Hello, are you there? I swear I don't know you! Well, I know what you've told me these last few days and... yes. Do you remember what I told you? The thing about "observe"... "suppose"... "imagine"... and ultimately, "writing". I think that's why I know who you are. You know, we're a lot alike. Hey, there's something I've got to tell you. You're not there, right? We can't lose more time. When you're there I want to explain something to you. But I want you to be there to speak about it because...

Lights up on SHE.

SHE

(Interrupting)

Hey!

HE

Hi! You're here.

SHE

Yeah, I'm here, under a palm tree! Don't you see me?

HE

I was writing. I didn't see you.

SHE

I'm between classes. I've got a minute. Can you chat?

HE

Yes.

SHE

I want to talk now because later I won't be able to get online. I'll be really busy. So, you don't know me?

HE

Nope. I really don't know you. Well, yeah I do know you. As much as you've told me these last few days, I feel like I know you.

SHE

Me too.

(Enthusiastic)

Hey, I want to thank you!

HE

No.

SHE

Yeah, I want to thank you. I think that in these... how many days have we been chatting?

HE

Four.

SHE

I think that in these four days my life has started to change. It seems like an exaggeration, right? But it's not. I was paralyzed. I was resigned and then you came along and well... I don't know if I'll be lucky tonight, if it will be the beginning of something. But, it doesn't matter. I'm finally starting to have confidence in myself. I now know exactly what I want. And that's thanks to you.

(Suddenly)

Four days? Only four days?

HE

Yes. With the time change it's a bit confusing but it's only been four. Seems like more, doesn't it?

SHE

Seems like months.

HE

Well it's only been four days. Since Monday.

SHE

Since Monday.

(Remembering)

Jeez, the chat room. Do you remember the chat room?

HE

Yep.

SHE

Wow. If we hadn't found each other in that chat room, now...
(Remembering)

Your thing was so funny, your user profile, do you remember? "Shy, introverted girl". And I told you I was a very talkative, extroverted girl but...

HE

(Finishing her sentence)

..."But not as much now".

SHE

That's right: "But not as much now". And that's how we started chatting. And we had to get out of that chat room. Do you remember the others? - what vultures! - they wouldn't stop bothering us.

HE

Yeah.

SHE

But it didn't surprise me with a profile like yours. "Shy", "Introverted girl", of course, you were everyone's prey.

HE

It was all very... confusing. I thought it would be clearer.

SHE

Was that your first time?

HE

In that chat room?

SHE

Yeah.

HE

Yes. The first and the last. I only went in on Monday.

SHE

I went in twice, but don't think I'm a veteran, I was pretty thrown off too.

HE

That doesn't surprise me. It was extremely confusing.
(Trying to begin an explanation)
I've got to tell you something.

SHE

I've got to tell you something too!! Let me go first, ok? My turn. Let's see, it's kind of stupid. I'm sure it's

what you're thinking.

(Not very clearly explaining herself)

So actually I don't really like those chat rooms. You said they're confusing, it's true. I'm not a big fan. Actually, I've always criticized them. And, of course, we met in a chat room and I wouldn't want you to think that, well, that I'm like those girls from the chat room, and well, no...

HE

(Interrupting)

You've proved to me that you're not.

SHE

What a relief.

HE

Seriously. I was worried - and I'm still worried - that you could have had, and that you still might have, a false idea of who I am. Not at first because I didn't know you and you were like anyone else there, but as soon as we left the chat room and we began to write to one another, well... I always tried - I've always tried - to speak the truth, with total honesty despite...

SHE

(Interrupting)

Let's deny that we met in a chat room!! We'll say that... I don't know, that we met... Yes!

(Suddenly standing)

That I was on the bus and I saw you on the street. And I got off the bus. And I went running towards you. What do you think?

HE

According to you this could never happen in real life. You said that...

SHE

I said that the girl wouldn't trust... But you trust me...

SHE sits down again.

HE

If that had happened - if you got off the bus and came running towards me, and you stopped me, and you looked at me, and without any explanation, you kissed me - like I saw the other day, like that guy kissed that girl - I'm sure that I would let you, because in our case it wouldn't have been so different... because... because...

SHE

Because we already know each other.

HE

You already know me? You think so?

SHE

Yeah. That way I wouldn't hesitate for a second about getting off the bus.

HE

You don't know everything yet.

SHE

But I know what I need to.

HE

You might not know things that could change your opinion of me.

SHE

Are you a bank robber? Or worse, are you addicted to traveling to Cancun? Or to the Dominican Republic? No, really. Have you been honest about everything you've told me in the last four days?

(Long silence without reponse)

Have you been honest?

HE

(Carefully choosing his words after a short pause)

About what I've told you...yes.

SHE

(Certain about her guess)

It's your first time.

HE

Sorry?

SHE

I know why you're nervous and that it's a little scary to tell me: you've never been with a girl. Is that it?

HE

No.

SHE

But you had never been in an all girls chat room.

HE

No, never.

SHE

So, you've really been with girls before? Be honest.

HE

Yes, I've been with girls before... always.

SHE

So it's me who has to confess: I've only been with a girl once. Yeah, it's enough to be in the chat room, but in there everyone is so... well, you saw. You tell me that you're also... um, know what? I thought you were *new*. That it was your first time. Not in the chat room, but... and as it turns out I'm newer than you. But, listen to me: don't think that it's just a fleeting thing...

HE

I know that it's not.

SHE

Let me finish.

HE

You don't have to.

SHE

I want to tell you. I had only been with guys before. I had two long-term relationships. The last one ended really badly. I was crushed. The guy was a jerk to me. And suddenly I notice this girl. My boyfriends and the other guys I had been with were always pretty feminine, very ambiguous. You know what I'm gonna say? Sensitive types with certain inclinations... and this girl was just like that... totally ambiguous. And now I don't know if I like men as much as women or only some men and some women with a certain type of personality. I don't know.

HE

What happened with the girl?

SHE

We ended it. Just like everything ends. But she wasn't a jerk. And, in the end, I felt like I had learned new things about myself, about my boundaries, at least in that respect. I don't know. It's just a feeling. One thing I know is that I'm sick of guys.

(Confused)

What do you think?

HE

What I told you yesterday when we spoke about the piano, about wanting to play. I'll say it again. If you know what you want, if there's something that you really like, you've got to fight for it until you get it - it doesn't matter if it's black or white.

SHE

The same thing with writing...

HE

The same principle applies to everything...

SHE

(Confessing)

Know what? I've thought about it: if it goes well tonight, if I play well I mean, maybe I'll quit Rick's. Maybe I'll quit and look for another job... playing the piano. Because of course Michael's still at Rick's. I don't know. I'll let you know.

HE

Brilliant.

SHE

(With sudden vigor)

I got it! Let's make a deal! I'm proposing a deal. You're trying to make it with your theater and movie scripts and me with my piano, right? So the first one to make it, when one of us has something big, we have to show it to the other one! What do you say? If I get a job as a pianist somewhere, I'll record a performance one day and show it to you... I'll bring it to London. If you write a screenplay or a script, you have to bring it to New York to show me. What do you think? Wanna make a deal?

HE

(Sarcastically)

Great deal.

SHE

That way we're committed to each other. What do you say?

HE

It's just that... You don't have to make the commitment to me. It has to be to your...

SHE

Yeah, to myself.

HE

That's right.

SHE

Yeah, ok. But I've already made the commitment to myself. I hadn't before, but now I have.

HE

So?

SHE

So I want to make it to you too. Let's do it for friendship. Because I want you to see my work and I want you to show me yours. Don't you?

HE

Yes.

SHE

So, that's it. Let's promise.

(HE thinks for a moment. SHE waits.)

HE

Ok.

SHE

No. But you have to promise, I know how you are.

HE

I promise.

SHE

What do you promise?

HE

I promise that if I write a film or a play I'll bring it to New York to show you.

SHE

Great! And I promise that if I become a pianist I'll record a performance and come running to show you in London. Ok?

HE

Ok...

SHE

Ok. Print this as proof.

HE

Do what?

SHE

(Enunciating the words as if they had more than one syllable)

Pa-rint this as pa-ro-of. I'll do it. Or maybe you're a little hesitant?

HE

No... but I don't think it'll be very soon, at least on my end.

SHE

Why?

HE

Because of what I told you. I don't know how to begin stories.

SHE

Oh. But you have to keep trying, right? Keep doing what you're doing. There's no other way: work, work and work.

HE

This much is clear.

SHE

And if it's still difficult you can always remember a friend's advice...

(HE listens)

...and look for the story inside you.

HE

That's one way.

SHE

And I have a good beginning. Listen to this. It sounds good: "Two people meet in an...

(looking for the word)

...unhospitable place."

HE

It's *inhospitable*.

(SHE acts mad)

SHE

"Two people meet in an *inhospitable* place. They help each other. They speak but they can't see each other. They become friends." What do you think?

HE

That's all? And what happens next?

SHE

Next you have to write. It's a beginning. You have to find an ending.

HE

An ending.

SHE

You know how to do that. You'll see. Open that book that you have inside you and translate it.

HE

(Pensive)

What ending would you like me to write?

SHE

It's your story.

HE

There's someone else in my story.

SHE

(Smiling)

Then I would love to read it.

(Suddenly looking to the side)

No! I have to go.

HE

Ok. All right. Now I've got to do some writing.

SHE

That's what I like to hear. And today I'll start playing at Rick's.

HE

Rick's. Right.

SHE

I'll play my Sinatra songs - promise me that you'll listen to Sinatra too.

HE

Of course.

SHE

Tomorrow I'll buy *Casablanca*. I'm thinking about memorizing it, like you.

HE

Fantastic.

SHE

Awesome.

HE

I wish you the best of luck tonight.

SHE

Thanks a lot.

HE

(Trying to imagine)

It will be an unforgettable night, you'll see.

SHE

And it's already here. I can't wait. Ya know... I don't think it will be long before we see each other. Remember the promise. I intend to keep mine. I'm printing it as proof.

HE

Jolly good.

SHE

And finally I'll be able to see you.

(SHE has to go)

Woohoo! I'm outta here!

HE

Right, then.

SHE

Big hug.

HE

Bye now.

SHE

Ciao.

HE

Hey!

(HE stops her)

SHE

Yeah?

HE

(After thinking for a moment)

When you return from playing tonight will you be able to get online for a bit? You'll have something to read.

SHE

Something to read. Really?

HE

Yes.

SHE

The ending to the story?

HE

The ending to the story? Who knows. Read it. Let me know.

Lights down. The melody of a background piano gets louder. It's "My Way" by Sinatra and it plays during the scene change.

ACT TWO

Fade in lights. On the set, a young person's apartment; the melody of "My Way" can be heard throughout. There is a large sofa in the living room. HE is in one corner of the apartment, standing, pensive, with a bottle of beer in his hand. SHE enters right away, happy, also with a beer in hand. SHE takes him by the waist and makes him dance to the music. They dance clumsily, having fun, almost playfully. SHE is drunk - they hug, stop and look at each other and... just before kissing HE pulls back. HE runs to the sofa, takes the remote control, aims it at a stereo that the audience can't see and stops the song.

HE, still standing, is uncomfortable. SHE looks at him surprised, open, amused, waiting for him to say something.

HE

(Starting a conversation awkwardly)

It sounds great.

(HE takes a quick drink of his beer)

SHE

Thanks. Well, you've seen, it always sounds better live.

HE

I like both ways.

SHE

It's always better live. Today was great; there was a nice atmosphere.

SHE sits down on the sofa.

HE

That makes a difference...

SHE

It makes a huge difference.

HE

To be able to...

SHE

Yeah, of course. When Rick's is full, like today, uh, it helps a lot. You feel more connected and you give it your all. Your voice comes out from deep within...

(HE has finished his beer. SHE quickly gets up and takes it from his hand.)

Are you done? Do you want another?

SHE goes towards the kitchen.

HE

No.

SHE

(Stopping)

There are more in the fridge.

HE

No. No. Really.

(SHE looks at him half-surprised half-joking. HE gets uncomfortable again)

SHE

(Returning)

Ok, if you want, let me know.

SHE tosses the empty bottle back at him, flops on the sofa and lets out a sigh.

HE

Ok.

A new silence fills the room. SHE lies on the sofa and looks at him. SHE sighs. She seems to be amused that he is uncomfortable. SHE sighs again.

HE

(Trying to start a conversation again)

Is it difficult to sing at the same time?

SHE

At the same time as playing the piano?

HE

Yeah.

SHE

A little. It's all about... throwing yourself into it. If you know how to play the piano, and you know how to sing, it's about putting the two things together. At first it's a little difficult but not that much.

HE has gotten closer to the sofa.

HE

(Sitting down)
Which did you learn first?

SHE

Which did I learn first? You mean singing or playing the piano?

HE

Yeah.

SHE

I started studying piano - my parents made me - at nine or tens years old. But singing... well, I've been singing since I was a little squirt. But it's not the same. I never took classes.

HE

Oh no?

SHE

No.

HE

Why not?

SHE

I learned on my own. I've *been* learning on my own. By myself.

HE

Why?

SHE

Because I used to be awful.

(Laughing at herself)

I was so bad that I never even dared to take classes. I was so embarrassed. I had a bad experience at school - I sang at a festival and it was a disaster - and I said, "Enough, this is not my thing". I focused on the piano instead. But, well, I kept singing, on my own accord, without taking it too seriously.

HE

Without taking it too seriously.

SHE

Without *telling* anyone... on my own terms. Without pressure. Nobody knew that I was practicing... so nobody could make me do anything I didn't want to. The important thing was the piano.

HE

How long have you been singing at Rick's?

SHE

At Rick's? Not very long.
(SHE does the math)
Almost two months.

HE

Two months.

SHE

It's that I've haven't been playing piano very long at Rick's. Just a year. And at Rick's, well, you don't know because you're not from here but, no one ever sang at Rick's before. There was only piano, nothing else. And so being the first one to sing..

HE

Well, you sing quite well. It's brilliant.

SHE

I'm really happy singing and playing there, but... well, you wouldn't believe it but a year ago, just one year, I was working at Rick's... but as a waitress. I went to Rick's to be a pianist and I ended up as a waitress. What do you think about that?

HE

Nobody could have guessed it.

SHE goes to take a sip but notices that the beer in her hand has not been opened yet. SHE didn't realize.

SHE

(Laughing at herself)
But you're closed!
(SHE jokes with the beer. SHE gets up and goes to the kitchen).
So I was working as a waitress for a long time. I had a kind of "surprise audition" a year ago, it went well, and since then they wanted me to play permanently at Rick's. And, of course, that was a big deal for me. I didn't dare to sing though. At first I didn't want to say anything. But now I'm really happy.

SHE disappears through the kitchen door.

HE

(Looking at a CD case on the sofa)
Play one with you singing.

SHE

(From the kitchen)
No. There aren't any.
(SHE sticks her head out the kitchen door)
It's all piano. I recorded it before I was a singer.

HE

(Looking at a CD case)
Sinatra songs.

SHE

They're all Sinatra.
(Suddenly laughing)
You like Sinatra... of course.

HE

I don't know very many of his songs.

SHE

(Incredulous)
Really?
(SHE disappears again through the kitchen door)

HE

(Standing up)
No. I'm becoming more familiar with him though. I haven't been listening to him for very long. One year. Someone turned me on to him, someone that I never heard from..

SHE reappears, drinking a beer. It seems that she hasn't heard what HE has said.

SHE

(Lighthearted, coming back to the conversation)
So before, at the bar, I was going to ask you about Sinatra. I was convinced that you had to be a fan.
(HE doesn't respond)
Because of the title of your play.

HE

Right, of course. "Strangers in the night".

SHE

(Singing)
"Strangers in the night"
(Then SHE hums the melody for a moment longer.)
"Strangers in the night" is one of the prettiest Sinatra songs.
(SHE looks at him)
Didn't you realize when you gave it that title?

HE

(Agreeing)
Yes. Yes, I realised. It wasn't by chance. I did it on purpose. It was the perfect title for the play, the Sinatra song.
(Returning his attention to the CD case)
Look, it's the next one. Why don't you play it?

SHE

(Reluctant)

No, no more piano, please. I've have enough for today.

SHE returns to the sofa.

HE

Not me.

SHE

I have.

HE

Do you play much?

SHE

All day. When I'm not at Rick's I'm at some other venue or giving classes or rehearsing..

HE

That's a lot of piano.

(Returning to the sofa)

SHE

Yep.

HE

Don't you get tired of it?

SHE

(Satisfied)

Nope. I would get tired of doing something else but not piano.

HE

(Looking at the CD case)

When did you record this? Is it in the shops?

SHE

No, no. This was a demo copy. It's not in stores.

(Stopping to reveal a secret)

But if all goes well, I'll record an album with lyrics, which would be...

HE

When?

SHE

Soon.

HE

That's fantastic.

SHE

Yeah.

HE

How did you do it? I mean, how does one come to record a disc?

SHE

You've got to be lucky. I have a friend named Michael - he was the pianist before me at Rick's. Now he works for a record label as an instrumentalist. He's really into it. He knows his stuff. So, he brought me in to do an audition at his label - that's when I recorded this demo - and... well, I guess they liked it and now they want me to record an album with lyrics, this time for real.

HE

That's great!

SHE

Yeah. I'm telling you what, I was really lucky.

HE

I don't think that's luck.

SHE

Yeah, it's luck. And, well, it's taking advantage of the luck.

(Thinking)

It's a question of... confidence.

HE

Confidence.

SHE

Yeah.

(Thinking)

Because there are always opportunities, don't you think? Doors always open, sooner or later. The problem is you only jump at the chance if you have confidence.

HE

And you jumped at the chance.

SHE

Yeah.

(Remembering, opening up)

And I sure as hell didn't have confidence a year ago. I was working at a gym - you didn't know that - so, I was working at a gym, waitressing at Rick's and I played piano at home for myself. The worst thing is that it was enough for me.

(Remembering)

It seems like a lie...

HE

So what happened?

SHE

The opportunity knocked...

(Trying to remember)

...and, luckily, my confidence had come along just before.
Without confidence I wouldn't have been able to do it.

HE

How did it come about?

SHE

The opportunity? It was really nice. Want me to tell you?

HE

Yeah.

SHE

It was straight out of a movie; you're not going to believe it...

HE

Tell me, please.

SHE

It was all so fast. Michael, the pianist, had an audition - for the record label. He asked me to substitute him. He knew that I played the piano. So I went. Nobody at Rick's knew that it was me who was going to play. In theory, they're supposed to know but I asked Michael not to say anything. Imagine... the bar was full. I walked in very nonchalantly.

(SHE stands up, acting out the story)

I said "hi" to everyone, to Rick. They were nervous because I was running late. But, of course, they didn't know they were waiting for me. So, I acted like I was going to sit down at a table, acting like I didn't know anything, like a normal customer, but when I was amongst the tables, I stopped, turned around and I told them...

(SHE can't remember what she said)

Now I don't remember what I said but, whatever, I let them know that I was the pianist. Imagine their faces. They didn't even say a word. I did a 180, kept walking, and I sat down at the piano...

(SHE sits down)

...and I began to play.

HE

Straight out of a film. And did it go well?

SHE

It went perfectly.

HE

Nice one. And where did you gain this confidence that allowed you to do so well? You said that at the time you had no confidence...

SHE

Right.

(Trying to remember)

I gained the confidence from I don't know where, right before, just in time for that night.

HE

From you don't know where?

SHE

(A little uncomfortable)

I vaguely remember. It was a strange few days. In just a few days everything changed. I don't really want to think about it. I don't remember very well. The important thing is that, without knowing how - it doesn't matter - I began to believe in myself and I gained confidence. And when the chance came, I was so sure of myself that I was convinced that it would go well.

(Changing the subject back to the beer)

Are you sure you don't want another?

SHE stands up and goes towards the kitchen.

HE

No, no. Really, thanks. I've already had... five.

SHE

Five?

HE

Yeah. This one, two at Rick's and two at the bar from before...

SHE

Ahh, you liked that bar?

(Going to the window)

HE

Yeah, but there were a lot of people.

SHE

(Looking through the window at the bar in the street below)

There are always people in New York, everywhere. A city that never sleeps.

(Humming the tune to New York New York)

(Suddenly remembering something)

Oh well. Now we're in my house. There's no noise here...

HE

(Not understanding)

And?

(Suddenly he gets it)

Oh, ok. Now I've got to speak...

SHE

...About your play. Yes.

HE

Right then. My play. Tell me, what would you like to know?

SHE sits on the sofa next to him.

SHE

What I wanted to tell you before. Let's see, it's probably ridiculous, I don't know, but, now that I've got you...

HE

Ask.

SHE is bothered by the empty bottle in her hand and goes to take it to the kitchen.

SHE

(Walking)

No. It's not a question. It's a criticism.

HE

Oh, a criticism.

SHE

Time for the harsh critic. I'm sure you didn't have harsh critics in London...

HE

No, actually. I was lucky.

SHE

Lucky?

HE

Incredibly lucky. It was straight out of a film.

SHE

Oh really? Tell me, go on!

SHE runs and jumps on the sofa.

HE

Yeah. I had the script in my pocket. And one day some actors that were working in a West End theatre went to an audition - the entire cast. I arrived - because I was working as an usher - but when I arrived there were no actors.

(HE stands up and acts out the story
theatrically)

The director was desperate. There was meant to be a performance that night and he didn't have any actors or play. I took out the play from my pocket and I showed it to the director and, of course, by chance I had rehearsed my play with a couple of other ushers that wanted to be actors, and the director really liked it. And so, it was all very fast. The actors went backstage and came back onstage. The doors opened, the audience arrived - without ushers, of course. The theatre was full. The lights went down and...

SHE

(Laughing)

You don't believe my story, do you?

SHE gets up and playfully hits him with a cushion.

HE

You don't believe MINE!

(They laugh)

Ok, so it wasn't out of a film. I don't even think it was luck. It was... natural.

SHE

How so?

HE

It was quite nice as well.

(Remembering)

I was confident, it's true. But I'm just the opposite of you. I know where I got the confidence, but, well, nobody wanted to produce my play. So I put it together with two friends, the actors. We did it with very few resources, imagine, in a tiny theatre. And hardly anybody went to see it. But one day a newspaper critic came by - not a harsh one - and one thing led to another and the seats began to fill up. And then a producer got word of the play and the rest is history.

SHE

I know. It was a huge success. It was a phenomenon. It even came here. It's true. That's not luck, you've got to look for that. That's... confidence.

HE

Confidence. And after that everything was perfect. Just a bit ago they called us from New York to see if they could put it on Broadway. And so it's what you saw. They put it on. And now I've here come to see it.

HE sits on the sofa.

SHE

And what did you think?

HE

Perfect.

SHE

How are the critics here?

HE

Not bad so far. It's only been here two weeks. No harsh critics.

SHE

Well I'll tell you mine.

HE

Ok. The praises from before in the bar, they were all a lie...

SHE

(Sitting next to him)

No, they were true. I really liked it. But since it's an above average play, I'll go out on a limb and tell you something.

HE

Ok.

SHE

It's something that I didn't like. May I?

HE

Go on then.

SHE

I saw it last week, so I don't remember everything, but well...

HE

Don't be shy.

(SHE takes a breath and prepares herself)

SHE

I really liked the story but... I didn't like the ending.

HE

You didn't like the ending.

SHE

No. It's not that I didn't like it. It's that it didn't seem right.

HE

No?

SHE

No. It seemed so harsh. It seemed unfair, cruel.

HE

(Repeating her words)

"Harsh", "unfair", "cruel".

SHE

Harsh, unfair, cruel... when you say it like that it sounds so... The story was really good. Very human. I agree with everything. It was all very believable. A soldier saves another in the middle of the night. Great. And it's so dark they almost can't see each other. Perfect. And they have to spend the night together until help arrives, the two of them alone. Fine. And they begin to talk... they spend the whole night talking in the dark - I loved all that- actually that's the whole play, that's the beauty of it: everything they say to each other, how they are alike, how they talk, how they become friends throughout the course of the night - excellent.

HE

So?

SHE

So at the end when the truth is revealed, when they discover that they're from different sides...

HE

Yeah...?

SHE

It doesn't make sense that they would forget everything and suddenly try to kill each other.

(HE doesn't respond)

Right?

HE

You're right: it's harsh.

SHE

(Softening)

No, no, don't take it the wrong way.

HE

No. The ending.

SHE

You think so?

HE

Yes.

SHE

So, you agree with me?

HE

Harsh... unfair... cruel... But in a story you don't always write what you want but rather what you must.

(SHE doesn't have a reply)

SHE

Yeah.

(Softening)

Michael liked it. I went to see it with Michael, my friend. Maybe I'm wrong. Don't pay too much attention to me. It's not important.

HE

Yes, it is.

SHE

No, listen. Everything else - I mean, I'm telling you - I liked the play; I even love the title "Strangers in the night". It's only... that.

HE

I'm happy you didn't like the ending, that it affected you.

SHE

(Opening up to him)

It pissed me off.

HE

Good. We've accomplished something then. It was meant to be that way. It was a... strong ending. Shocking.

SHE

That's how it seemed to me. Although, I prefer happy endings.

HE

Me too.

(A strange silence fills the room)

SHE

(Trying to start the conversation again)

You know what? Michael told me something about the ending? Can I ask you something?

HE

Sure.

SHE

How did you come up with it?

HE

How did I come up with it?

(HE thinks for a moment before answering,
like a confession)

I think it was because of the music.

SHE

That's what Michael said. He said that the music gave it that harshness. That tinny background music.

HE

Yeah. Some people think there shouldn't be music in the theatre. But I think that's ridiculous. The words and the music aren't mutually exclusive. They can compliment each other. And the ending is the perfect moment for the music and the words to unite and discover together... the truth behind the whole story.

SHE

The truth behind the whole story? Do you think there's truth in all stories?

HE

Always, although sometimes it's difficult to find. That's why plays are written. To tell the truth. And for someone to listen.

SHE

(Thinking)

Wow. Wow. You know a lot of things. Where did you learn all that? Did someone teach you? Did you learn it somewhere?

HE

It's in *Casablanca*

(Pregnant pause)

It's all in *Casablanca*.

(Chilling silence. SHE doesn't answer; HE continues, slowly, seriously)

Minute 50 of the film: the two find each other in *Casablanca* after a long time. One of them tries to justify what happened in the past, how he behaved. And he tells a story. "That's very pretty", says the other after hearing it, "I heard a story once. I've heard a lot of stories in my time. They went along with the sound of a tinny piano." A tinny piano... It's all in *Casablanca*.

SHE can't move. HE doesn't say anything. Neither one says anything. A moment of tension. SHE seems affected. HE waits. SHE is finally able to say something.

SHE

Casablanca.

HE

Casablanca is full of life lessons.

SHE stands up suddenly and walks away. HE doesn't say anything. SHE stops in a corner. SHE doesn't speak. HE doesn't do anything. HE doesn't say anything. The situation is crucial. SHE seems very affected. No one speaks. The silence continues. HE keeps waiting. It goes on like this for several moments.

HE

(Trying to finally break the silence)

Hi'ya, you there?

SHE

(Exploding)

You had to come here and make this all dramatic, didn't you!!!

HE

I didn't plan it.

SHE

(Shouting)

Please leave!

HE

You're angry.

SHE

GO!

HE

You're still angry.

SHE

Leave, please!

HE

After a year you're still angry.

SHE

I asked you to leave!

HE

As you wish. I'm leaving.

HE gets up. HE goes towards the exit. Before leaving, however, he stops. HE looks at her.

HE

Just let me say one thing...

SHE

You've come here to play with me.

HE

No. No, I haven't come here to play with you.

SHE

You've come to New York to toy with me.

HE

That's not true.

SHE

Don't lie to me. You've come from London to toy with me.

HE

Why don't you believe me?

SHE

You had everything planned.

HE

And how would I have done that?

SHE

And what about the invitations?

HE

What invitations?

SHE

The invitations to your play, so I would go see it.

HE

That wasn't my idea.

SHE

Yeah right.

HE

I had no idea they were going to send invitations to Rick's.

SHE

(Not believing him)
You knew nothing?

HE

I found out once they had already sent them.

SHE

Right.

HE

It wasn't me. It was the theatre. I was still in London.

SHE

And I'm supposed to believe you. I'm supposed to think that you didn't come looking for me.

HE

Don't theatres swap tickets? Don't they do that here in New York? I don't know. That's what they told me.

SHE

And why did you go to Rick's tonight? Because you knew that I had seen your play.

HE

I didn't even know if you were still at Rick's.

SHE

(Not listening)

Right. Like I wouldn't go see it with a title like that? "Strangers in the night". Sure. Now I understand. It was perfect.

HE

I didn't know if you would still be at Rick's. I didn't know if you still worked there. The girl who I last wrote to wasn't a pianist, she had a lot of dreams, yes, but she wasn't a pianist yet. She was a waitress at Rick's and was planning to leave if they didn't let her play.

SHE

The *girl* who I last wrote to... always chose her words very carefully.

Long silence.

SHE turns her back to him. HE, after remaining immobile for a moment, decides to end the argument and leave. HE crosses the living room. HE arrives at the door. HE turns around to say goodbye...but HE changes his mind. HE doesn't say goodbye. HE stays still. HE looks at her. HE seems pensive. HE observes her. HE reflects for a moment. Finally, HE goes back to the sofa and sits down.

HE

(From the sofa, slowly, as if thinking aloud)

I didn't plan it this way. A year ago... everything... ended so suddenly. Those four days were fantastic and you ended them so abruptly. I wanted to find out what had become of you. Just find out.

(SHE doesn't seem willing to believe him)

Yesterday, at the theatre, they showed me the guest list and I saw that they had sent invitations to Rick's last

week and I guessed that you would have gone to see the play... if you still worked at Rick's, which I didn't know.

SHE

And why did you go to Rick's then? To not find me?

HE

(Standing up)

To find out. You see? That would have pleased me. To see that you weren't a waitress, that you had become a pianist. That's what you said. But I was afraid that you would have taken a step back. That in the end that day you wouldn't have gone to the "surprise audition".

SHE

And when got there you didn't see that the pianist wasn't a guy, that it was a girl?

HE

Yes.

SHE

And you couldn't have guessed anything, you who always guesses everything?

HE

Yeah. I guessed that the pianist... plus the four girls who served drinks made five girls working at Rick's. All strangers to me.

(SHE is left without words for a moment, but then continues)

SHE

And the Sinatra songs didn't suggest anything to you?

HE

Yeah, but I didn't expect my pianist to sing.

SHE

And, so, to clarify things you came to talk to me.

HE

Yes.

SHE

But you didn't want to tell me who you were.

HE

I told you my name.

SHE

I wouldn't make the connection from your name. We never told each other our names. Your name made me think of the play I saw last week. Your name is famous, didn't you know?

HE

What did you want - me to lie? Did you want me to invent some name to be able to speak to you, like in the chat room?

SHE doesn't know what to say, she stays quiet. SHE seems confused, angry. SHE goes to the sofa and sits down. SHE thinks.

SHE

(Without looking at him, from the sofa, after thinking, angry)
Why did you talk to me?

HE

I wanted to know if it was you. That's all - to know that you were the pianist. And then I was going to leave. I wasn't going to say who I was. I was going to leave. I didn't want to remember the past. But it was you who remembered.

SHE

Didn't you have enough? Didn't you do enough damage?

HE

Just a moment ago you weren't speaking about me like this.

SHE

When?

HE

When you were speaking about me.

SHE

(Tense)
I wasn't speaking about you.

HE

You were speaking about me. Although you didn't realise it. Just now, when you were telling me about that night when you played for the first time at Rick's one year ago - that beautiful scene - in a certain way, you were speaking about me.

(SHE doesn't answer)

When you were speaking about confidence, that confidence that came from you don't know where, even though you don't see it, you were speaking a bit about me. "Those strange days that changed your life".

SHE

(Bothered, standing up and walking away from the sofa)
Something that I hardly remember. I told you.

HE

And it's such a shame because it was such a lovely thing. It was the beginning of something beautiful: you began to live your way. Hopeful, confident.

SHE

And I owe it all to you?

HE

No. Not to me.

(HE looks at the sofa again. HE goes toward the sofa and takes the CD case)

I don't deserve the merit. The credit belongs to this girl here, seated at the piano, smiling, confident.

(Pointing to the CD case)

She did it herself. She's the one who plays, she's the one who sings at Rick's - don't you realise, I didn't even know that you could sing. This girl deserves the credit. A very different girl from the girl I met a year ago, a girl who at the time wouldn't even dare to get off a bus.

HE sits down.

SHE

But what did you think would happen? You really hurt me, you know?

HE

I know.

SHE

(Remembering resentfully from a corner)

It hurt me.

(SHE remembers)

I trusted that girl. I opened up completely. She gave me hope... that night - that night was great, you saw - and when I finished playing I went running from Rick's. Everyone wanted to congratulate me. But I didn't want people. I wanted to talk to her. I wanted to tell her everything. I wanted to tell her how happy I was. I wanted to thank her... And instead all I found was deception. It was very hard for me.

(HE doesn't respond. SHE continues talking, sorrowfully)

I've never had a friend, a real friend. A person that was important to me, that was special. I thought that I had found her. I started to love you. You don't know the pain you caused me by lying.

HE

I was afraid that would happen, that you would take it that way. But, I hoped that it wouldn't happen...

SHE

How did you expect me to react?

HE

Like you did. I guess it was just wishful thinking that you'd react differently.

SHE

So.

HE

But you were very harsh.

SHE

Me?

(Furious)

HE

Yes.

SHE

I don't believe this.

(Indignantly)

HE

You were unfair. You called me a fraud, a cheater.

SHE

I don't remember. That's what I thought.

HE

You were very cruel.

SHE

I said how I felt in the moment.

HE

You said really strong things.

SHE

I don't even remember what I said.

HE

(Standing up)

Well, I do. I checked my email that morning. In your message you said that I had tricked you. You said: "Once again I feel cheated", that's what your email said, and it hurt me a lot, not for me, but because I had hurt you and that's the last thing I wanted. You said: "There's only one thing I can't forgive and that's lying". I read it over and over again. You see, I know it off by heart. You said that you were surprised to have found someone so similar to yourself. "Someone like me", you said. "Someone I can trust". "But no", you said. "You aren't like me at all. My best quality is honesty and that's what I value most in people". Can you remember? And then you called me "cheater", "fraud" and I don't know what else. And then

you signed off. "I only hope you don't do it again to some other dupe. I never want to hear from you again. Forget about me forever. Ciao".

SHE

And you didn't do it.

HE

I couldn't do it. You weren't fair.

SHE

I wasn't fair?

HE

No. Do you remember my email?

SHE

What email?

HE

The one I sent you that day.

SHE

My first day at Rick's? How could I not remember?

HE

You remember?

SHE

Yeah, perfectly.

HE

Really?

SHE

How am I not going to remember the worst thing that anyone has ever written to me in my whole life?

HE

And could you remember it now, like I've remembered yours?

SHE

Was I supposed to memorize it?

HE

No, of course not. You can read it, if you've got it.

SHE

What do you think, that I still have it?

HE

Did you at least read it once?

SHE

Yes.

HE

How much of it did you read?

SHE

How much did I read?

HE

Yeah, how much did you read?

SHE

I read enough to know that I never wanted to hear from you again.

HE

You didn't read the whole thing. How far did you read?

SHE

I read enough.

HE

How far?

SHE

I read to the part where you told me the truth. What else did you want me to read?

HE

What about on a different day? Did you read the rest of the email?

SHE

I didn't have to. What did it say? Something about trust? Honesty? Hopes? No. I had enough. I deleted it. And with it, I deleted you.

HE

You deleted it without reading it. Fine, I'm gone. But first let me ask you a favor.

(SHE doesn't answer)

Can I ask you a favor?

(SHE doesn't answer. SHE ignores him deliberately. HE waits.)

I've brought it with me. Could you just read it once?

SHE

For what?

HE

Because I would tell you a million things to say goodbye. But I've already told you in this letter.

(SHE doesn't want to. SHE doesn't answer. HE waits. SHE doesn't pay attention)

Could you read it?

HE waits.
SHE ignores him. A few moments go by.

SHE

(Turning around)

Now?

HE

Yes.

SHE

No.

HE

Why not?

SHE

I don't want to think.

HE

That's the problem.

SHE

Leave. You said you were leaving.

HE

I only ask this. And then I'll go.

SHE

I don't want to.

HE

Please.

SHE

What do we have to gain?

HE

Me, nothing. You, to find out if you were wrong.

SHE

I wasn't wrong.

HE

How can you be so certain?

SHE

I know.

HE

Can you remember the letter?

(SHE doesn't have an answer)

You don't know what it said. You deleted those four days.

How will you know if you were wrong?

SHE doesn't answer. SHE doesn't want to accept. But he won't back down. HE waits. After waiting a bit, after thinking a bit, SHE, finally, against her will, makes a gesture to take the letter. HE takes out a paper from his wallet. HE unfolds it and goes towards her.

SHE

You brought it?

HE stops.

HE

I always carry it.

HE gives her the paper. SHE finishes unfolding it and looks at it.

HE

Does it look familiar to you?

SHE

Yeah.

HE

You recognise it?

SHE

Yes. It's the email you sent me that night.

HE

Good. Can you read all of it, please?

(SHE, reluctantly, begins to read to herself).

Aloud?

SHE

(Reading aloud, reluctantly)

"Congratulations on your first night at Rick's. I'm sending you an enormous kiss through the computer. Look. We've met each other thanks to our computers. Who would have thought as neither of us likes chat rooms? You proposed denying everything and saying that our first encounter was straight out of a film: that you were riding the bus, you saw me on the street, got off the bus, came running to me... you know? It sounds fantastic but... I want to stick to the real story. I hope that you have chosen me because you know me and not for what I look like. I know that you don't care about what I look like, that it doesn't matter to you. But there is something about my looks that you should know so that you have a clearer idea of who I am. I'll tell you now. I can't put it off any longer. I'm a bloke."

(SHE stops reading. SHE faces him)

Sounded like a joke, don't you think?

HE

(Guessing)

You didn't read more.

(SHE doesn't answer. Her silence confirms his suspicions.)

Please.

(HE asks her to keep reading.)

SHE doesn't want to but she sees that he is totally determined and inflexible so she ends up continuing, reluctantly.

SHE

(Reading aloud)

I don't know how you will take this. I hope that you understand it like this, like something that has to do with my looks. Only that.

Because if we forget about that time I lied to get into the chat room, I've always told you the truth. I've always spoken sincerely to the person I met there, that person who listened to me and who I listened to, that person who understood me and who I understood, that person who encouraged me and who I encouraged. I owe you the strength I needed to really fight for what I wanted, to take risks and live my way. And because I know how much you've helped me, I think that probably, from all this, you will have gained some strength to fight for what you want, to live your way.

But, you know what? Because I think I already know you, I'm afraid you won't react how I want you to. Before dating girls you dated blokes and, because a bloke hurt you, you renounced all men. That's your personality.

After reading this letter, if you still feel cheated, please, don't stop. Keep doing your thing, go on with your life and look forward. Live like you want to live. Live your way.

And one day, when you're happy with your life, when you're the strong and confident person you've always wanted to be, open a drawer and look for this letter. Because someday, maybe a long time from now, for the same reason you might discover you still like men despite a bad experience, you might also feel you should reconsider those four days we shared. You'll only have to look around, see how you're life is in that moment, see what you've come to be, and honestly evaluate if becoming that person had anything to do with those four days.

(SHE slowly sits down and continues reading)

Now I only ask one thing. Keep this letter. Don't delete it. Print it out - like we've just printed our promises - and keep it. Because after a long time when you've forgotten our four days, only this letter will be able to unlock the memory of those moments that will have been left behind. Keep it. I'll do it too. I'll carry it with me always.

This afternoon we wrote to each other for the last time. You from your work, me from mine. You suggested a story to me. The beginning of a beautiful story. I wished you luck. When I arrived home, I began to write. Earlier you asked me if I was going to write the ending to the story. I told you, "Who knows?" What I was going to write was this letter. Is it the ending to our story? I don't know. It's in your hands. Big hug.

Signed: Someone who loves you for who you are.

(SHE finishes reading)

HE

(Without looking at her)

I'm glad everything turned out for you. Things have gone well for me too. I wrote my first play. The play you saw, the one about the soldiers. I translated it from the book I had inside me. I opened it up and it said: "Two people meet in an *inhospitable* place. They help each other. They speak but they can't see each other. They become friends". The ending was already written. An ending - like you said - "harsh", "unfair", "cruel". An ending that could have been so different.

SHE

Why did you come to Rick's tonight? Did you come to fulfill your promise?

HE

What promise?

SHE

Showing me your play.

HE

(Remembering)

"I promise that if I write a film or a play that I'll bring it to New York to show you". That was it, right?

(HE shakes his head)

You saw it without me showing it to you.

SHE

But I saw it. And you came to Rick's so that I could fulfill my end of the deal.

HE

"I promise that if I become a pianist, I'll record a performance and I'll come running to show you in London". No. We haven't fulfilled our promises. I already told you. You had to make the commitment to yourself, not to me. The promise fell apart that day. But everything else went on as normal.

(Turning towards her)

I've told you the truth. I went to Rick's today because I wanted to know what became of you, to find out if you had become a pianist. I wasn't going to say anything to you. I

wasn't going to convince you of anything. But after hearing you play, after hearing you sing, when I knew it was you, after listening to everything you've told me, I've realised how important those four days were for you, how they were for me. And, *because* I know how those four days have had a lot to do with what we've achieved in life, it upsets me to see that you've blocked them out of your memory. Anyway. At least we've got something. You've got your performances and I've got my stories.

SHE waits silently, seated on the sofa, with a lost look.

HE

(Concluding)

If this were *Casablanca* we'd be at the airport now. A plane has just taken off. There's someone on the runway, with a lost look. The love of his life has just gone forever. But there's someone else there. Renault, the police prefect, is there. "There's a free French garrison at Brazzaville", he says, nonchalantly; and they begin to speak about what they think is going to be a beautiful friendship. Minute... blah. Nevermind. What do you care about *Casablanca* if you didn't *memorise it* - like you said - if you haven't even seen it. Because those four days left you with nothing.

(HE's going to leave. But first he adds one more thing)

Why have I been at Rick's tonight?

(HE shrugs his shoulders)

I guess it would have been the same if I had gone to another bar. Bye.

HE goes toward the exit.

SHE

But... "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world... you walk into mine."

HE stops.

HE

(Without turning around, after thinking for a moment)

Would you have preferred it if I didn't come in?

SHE

(Carefully choosing her words)

"Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow..."

HE

"But soon..."

SHE

"...For the rest of your life." Minute 95 of the movie.

It's the ending. Music. Last words. And fade to black.

SHE waits in silence. HE doesn't leave. His face is less tense than a moment ago. HE can't move; HE's pensive.

HE

(Repeating for himself)

Minute 95... it's the ending... music... last words...

HE slowly goes back to her.

HE

Can you play your piano CD - the next song?

SHE, without trying to guess why, takes the remote control. She aims it towards the stereo and plays the CD. A piano version of "Strangers in the Night" begins to play. She puts the remote down.

HE

(Pronouncing his words slowly, with feeling, as if they were the whole truth to the story)

Know what? There was a time when we were friends. We couldn't see each other but we had met. And it was after meeting face to face, as soon as we had seen each other that we became strangers again. I don't know. Maybe, if we started all over again, without judgment, as if we had never seen each other...

(HE looks straight ahead)

I can see it now. The curtain opens. The stage is dark. The lights go up. A bloke. A bloke appears. He's alone. He looks straight ahead and says: "Hi'ya, you there?"

(Nobody responds)

"Hello?" He waits. He doesn't know if he's going to get an answer. He doesn't know if they girl is still there... "Hey, are you there? Hello?"

SHE

(Standing up, looking ahead)

Yeah, I'm here. Hey.

*Lights down. The music stays on loud.
END.*

MY WAY
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