





HEITOR DE MORAES

**A
SYMPHONY
FOR
CEZANNE**

Romance

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To Wilfrido and Amália
A love story for music

SYMPHONY

Special genre musical piece
divided into two, three or four parts
and written for orchestra.

Source: Michaelis Dictionary

PART ONE
A famous pianist



I

William Prochmann

William Prochmann is a great pianist. Famous in your country and abroad. He maintained a residence where the war had not reached, and traveled the world living the life of an adventurous artist, always looking for something or someone that could keep him to the ground.

– I remember the girl who took me to piano lessons. In fact, it was her dedication that convinced me to swap playing with friends for the piano. My parents didn't care much. For them, I wouldn't have studied music. They thought I was still too young. But that girl felt that I had talent and stopped taking advantage of part of her youth to accompany me.

The Second World War had ended, he had returned to performing on stage and was in a new love affair. He had met the girl when he met up with some friends who took her with one of them so that no one would be left without a date. William met them after their performance and, after half an hour of conversation, his friend felt that he had lost the girl to the pianist.

On their second meeting, William told the story that he had already repeated to many other girls. The story of his initiation to the piano and love. He made this story the initiation to the next conquest, and it almost always worked. He knew that people liked to hear about artists' lives. The reasons that led them to choose that life. It was a good conversation starter. William dramatized a little and emphasized the participation of the girl who said she was responsible for his studies. Without her, he always said, he would not have studied music. The technique worked. With a little charm and the help of places and situations created by him, they ended up giving themselves away. This girl was one of them.

– At first, I didn't want to. – William continued – It was natural. Furthermore, there was a boyfriend of the teacher who met her right around my schedule. While my companion wasn't around, he and the teacher were grabbing each other behind me and I saw everything through a mirror that was on a wall next to the piano. That's why I didn't get the exercises right and I only received criticism... But it was all very easy.

– I think the girl liked me a lot. She must have been about sixteen years old at that time. We grew up together. When I was seven or eight years old, I was already showing off at parties and everyone said I would be a great pianist. I believed it and so did the girl. Later, I changed teachers. They took me to an old man who paid more attention to the girl when she was around than to my exercises. But he was very good.

– So you can see that I didn't have friends like other kids my age or girlfriends. My constant companion was the girl. Today I think it was she who taught me the art of love. I remember, vaguely, that she kissed me once. I was already more... older. Maybe it just wasn't my first sexual experience because she was afraid. It was she who suggested that I should leave there and go to a conservatory. I was already good and everyone could see that. My parents were a little reluctant, but ended up agreeing. The satisfaction of having a concert-playing son must have influenced the old people. I ended up winning a scholarship which helped with the decision as well.

– I went to a conservatory far from home. I studied at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt. For the first year, it was fine. Every month they came to visit me. Sometimes the girl went too. When I left the country for a place where I would improve myself more, my parents went with me to arrange

everything. This time at the Geneva Conservatory of Music. The girl didn't come this time and since then I've never seen her again. Since music was my own life, I didn't give much importance to the fact that they would stay away from me. I only saw them one more time. They died months later... in a fire.

– I gave myself even more to music. And this is what happened. You are in the company of a somewhat frustrated composer, a pianist who knows success and a... “good life”.

As a composer he wasn't very successful. Some works and some rehearsals did not give him the same projection as when he played in concerts. He recorded some albums with famous orchestras, others alone, and appeared on other radio programs. His concert appearances were his biggest success.

William Prochmann, in fact, was not just passionate about music or his adventures. He liked what he considered beautiful. A woman's face that attracted his attention had already made him stop playing during a recital. He apologized moments later and gently explained that a beautiful woman in the audience had made him forget the song. Some laughed, others perhaps didn't like it. Soon after, he started playing again and in the end he made up for everyone with two extra numbers. Therefore, beauty left the pianist without his own controls. Whether it was a woman's face, or a song, a painting or just an instant created by nature.

When he played, William transported himself to another world, some critics said. In fact, he transported himself to the beauty he was looking so much. For the perfection that he sought in everything and that he found in music. He tried to compose, as he said, but he couldn't create what he considered the most beautiful music he would ever hear. Therefore, he had not achieved success with his compositions. He performed very well because the great masters had managed to achieve perfection, he said, but he had not. And it seemed that this was really true because what he played was truly the most beautiful thing that had ever been composed. His repertoire was beautiful and very well chosen. He lived for music, but he was looking for something else that could be perfect too.

William had dark hair, with some prematurely gray strands, and maintained a somewhat unfashionable hairstyle. He was tall, had a good physique, and what caught people's attention most was his smile. Captivating and sincere. Who knows, in this smile – which he knew how to use very well –

was all the strength of his power to win over women. Some social columnists said that William won over through music when he played and with his smile when he was away from the piano. In his concerts he attracted a very large number of women who seemed to transport themselves into his hands while he caressed the piano keys.

William almost didn't get married. He got engaged, but the romance didn't have the ending the girl wanted. He felt that the time had not come and she was still too young, and she would not be able to live his life. He claimed that the career he had chosen required his partner to understand that music came first in his life, followed by love for whoever was chosen.

His insistence on looking for the perfect woman, a friend said, had become an obsession. The ideal woman does not exist, the friend insisted, and the years would not stop for him until she appeared.

But William was never alone. When he didn't have the company of those he had conquered, he had music, and he felt happy like that. He only tormented himself when he tried to compose the song he had started and couldn't finish, but which he considered his dose of perfection that he would leave for humanity.

– So, you already know how it all started. I started living when they put me in front of a piano. I quickly learned to exchange games for exercise. With the girl who took me to classes, I learned love. Today I live with music and some romances, like the one I intend to have with you. I can't promise you how long it will be, but I can guarantee you that I will play just for you, even if there is an audience, for as long as our concert lasts.

It wasn't William's pretension or overconfidence in his ability to win over women, or that girl on that occasion. He had already felt that she was about to give herself up and this perception is normal for artists. And William was a born artist. Therefore, as usual, he played just for her and she relented until he left that place.

II

The Gottiebs

The C. Gottieb Textile Industry had no foreign capital. It did not need government institutions or financial support from banks to survive. Throughout its existence, its CEO never failed to be aware of everything that happened within the factory, in its offices or with its representatives spread across the country. He faced difficult situations, when complicated financial maneuvers on the part of the government or his competitors forced him to practically move within his headquarters. But he did well. He had come to take advantage of the war and, when it ended, his industry returned to manufacturing what was intended.

The family understood all of his efforts and gave him all the support they could. His wife was a beautiful woman who knew how to keep in shape with gym classes and everything else she was allowed. As heir, there was only one daughter who he discreetly tried to guide to his place in the industry in due time.

The Gottiebs maintained an intense social life. They were present at major artistic events in the city and the country. They constantly traveled to other capitals to attend plays, operas and concerts. The daughter tried ballet, but didn't take it very seriously. She really liked riding. She loved horses and said they kept her in shape. She reached her twenties in all the plenitude of what may be called a very rare feminine beauty. She didn't need resources like beauty products to highlight her beauty. Cleyton Gottieb's daughter was beautiful by nature.

In an attempt to expand his business, the industry president launched a new line of products onto the market that required a large investment. Tablecloths/curtains/upholstery covers, making combined sets, in a wide range of models, types and patterns. All with the advantage of the housewife being able to change the pieces herself and very easily.

Completing the launch, Cleyton offered for sale a colorless liquid that, once applied to the tissue, made it waterproof and free from the danger of stains that required washing the item completely. The fabric did not lose any of this

and maintained its new appearance. A large budget was invested in advertising and success quickly arrived, pouring a lot of money into Cleyton's industry.

All of this required more attention from him. He distanced himself from his family, and continued trips were made with advisors and no longer with his wife, as was customary. She and her daughter felt this, but they tolerated it without any comment. The boost given to the industry was worth the sacrifice. Soon, he would be back to normal and they would make up for lost time. But the impact of the launch wore off and the euphoria with the sales results diminished without them realizing it immediately. Cleyton postponed his vacation to be closer to the market, which was showing signs that the products were not serving their intended purpose and people were still trying to recover from the effects of the war.

The factory was in Calais, France, where the Gottiebs also lived. Calais had a very important port and an airport, which meant that C. Gottieb's products could be quickly moved to other cities in France and throughout Europe. The city had suffered greatly from the war, but recovered quickly.

III

Katharina

Passing through one of the cities where C. Gottlieb Industry was promoting its representatives, Cleyton met Katharina, who was hired to lead the teams demonstrating the new products. She was born in the interior of Germany and had been in France for about five years.

In one of the physical qualifications we make of women, we find two types: those who, when dressed, seem to have little to show. Maybe too thin for their height, maybe without a waist or little bust underneath their clothes. And also those that are very well distributed when dressed, with the fat well hidden and the clothes shaping the right places. The first ones are completely deceiving when undressed. The clothes hide details, well-placed curves and ideal volumes for many. The second ones disappoint when they take off their clothes. The body doesn't look the same.

Katharina was a woman of the first type. No one, not very observant, could bet that, beneath her clothes – always of good quality – she hid almost perfect shapes for a married woman, without children and approaching twenty-seven years. She didn't intend to attract people with what she wore, even though she always looked elegant. Maybe because she had already conquered the man of her life and was disillusioned. Now she had no interest in any other conquest.

She had already worked in several jobs that demanded a lot of her willpower and intelligence. She was an expert in organizing groups of girls for product demonstrations and participation in fairs and promotions. It was a growing market. Although she seems happily married, her relationship with her husband – Spanish – made her commit to her work and gain financial independence. Because they couldn't have children, they kept moving away after every fight that happened, usually out of jealousy on his part. Nothing else gave Katharina a reason to continue her married life, other than mutual respect and the memories that they had once been happy.

– I know you like music, Mister Cleyton. I met one boy who had a lot of talent and today I know that, thanks to my insistence, he became a famous artist. He is a great pianist.

The two were talking after dinner at a restaurant near the hotel where he was staying.

– He didn't want to study... Poor thing. – she continued – He was losing out on playing with his friends because of piano lessons. His mother didn't care if he went to class or not, but I realized he had talent and living a dilemma. He wanted to play and learn music at the same time. I insisted and became his friend. Sometimes I think: How did I have that hunch he would win? I was young and without much preparation...

Katharina paused, took a sip of coffee from a very fine and delicate porcelain cup, and continued.

– You must have heard of him or heard him play. Today he is very well known. And I'm proud of what I did for him. You should go to one of his concerts. Don't miss the opportunity. He was a child prodigy.

– Who is he? – asked Cleyton, who felt a different pleasure listening to Katharina speak.

– William Prochmann. I consider him the greatest in the world. I wanted him like a brother. No. I think I was in love with him. My dedication, accompanying him to classes, meant that I didn't have much time for my youth either. Who knows, I was looking for the boyfriend in him that it took me a while to have, despite being a little older.

– I've heard him on the radio – she continued – and the strange thing is that I've never been able to go to one of his recitals. It's interesting. Whenever he's around, something happens and I can't go see him. It feels like something is stopping me. I haven't seen him since he went abroad to study. How ironic... I liked him so much, and what I did was precisely something that took him away from me and his parents.

Cleyton watched Katharina's eyes moisten with tears that she wanted to escape. He didn't say anything.

– I lived with his parents for a long time. Since he was about four years old. The mother, Mrs. Lilian, was a very good friend of my mother and, when she and my father died in a bombing, Mrs. Lilian took me in exchange for

services in the house, or even to take care of her son. I've never met anyone with a heart as kind as that woman. I lived, who knows, the best years of my life with that family. Until the boy went to study in another city. Then, I met a guy and got engaged. I left that house to get married. I wasn't very fair to them. She warned me before. It seemed like she was right about my fiancé.

Cleyton, with a gesture, asked for the bill and after she paid, the two left the place and walked towards the hotel. The night was a pleasant temperature and it seemed to help Katharina to talk about her life.

– I was a young girl and, without the boy, I felt that I needed to live my life. It was fine with them, but I couldn't stay there my whole life. When the first boyfriend appeared, I thought the time had come. And, as there is always a “but”, my case was no different. My boyfriend wanted to get engaged because he was going to be transferred. He was a military man. A German army officer. But he didn't want to get married right away. He said I should go with him and live with a couple of friends until the war ended. Then we would get married. However, what he really wanted was to take advantage of me. For the first few months, everything was fine. Then you can imagine. He... he got what he wanted and got tired, I guess. So, we dismantled everything. He was transferred and I never saw him again.

– Didn't you go back to the house where you lived? – asked Cleyton.

– I didn't have the courage to go back. I wanted to, because I loved Miss Lilian and her husband very much, but I was ashamed. I moved to a place even further away. Until Garcia came along, and I married him. He's a lawyer. He is a foreigner. We don't have children because of me... – she paused as if looking for an order in what she said.

– One day, I met a girl who was a good friend of the pianist's family with whom I lived, and she recognized me. I was already married. She didn't know with whom. She thought my husband was the military. No one knew I had undone everything. She said that the family was very sorry about the lack of news from me and that I didn't even send them an invitation to the wedding with the military. She told me they died tragically. The boy never came back... Today, he won't recognize me.

– The marriage was good while it lasted. We respect each other, we use each other and we live waiting for the next fight. I don't know why everything

is ending. Do not ask me. Who knows, maybe one day I'll ask myself. Maybe when he finds out why too.

Katharina stopped talking about her life when they arrived at the hotel. She looked at Cleyton and said it was better for her to go up alone. Cleyton understood, because he saw her as a fragile woman at that moment. He said he would still have a drink at the bar and wished her good night. The next day, they were to go to another city.

William Prochmann will play in the city where Cleyton and Katharina went days later. They spent a few days finalizing details with representatives from that area. She was to stay during the promotion period at points of sale, supporting the representatives themselves. He was trying to correct some errors that occurred when the products were launched.

Through the intercom of the hotel where they were, Cleyton spoke to Katharina. He told her he had a surprise for her that night. Something she would never have imagined and that she would be happy to see. Katharina was overcome by an emotion that began to grow uncontrollably within her, as if she herself already knew what it was. Cleyton maintained his expectations until after dinner, and insisted that she accompany him. During the meal, she insisted a little. It was even childish, which made Cleyton happy with that behavior. She made gestures, things he wasn't used to seeing or feeling. Dessert came and also the time when Cleyton would tell her where they were going.

Once again, he created suspense. He asked her to try to get it right. She smiled and didn't venture any guesses. He then asked her what she would like to do on a calm night like that. Again she said nothing, limiting herself to making a graceful gesture with her head. He insisted and she mumbled something and was embarrassed when she spoke a little seriously, about the possibility of a malicious thought on Cleyton's part, which made him laugh. Finally, he took her to the hotel entrance, where they caught a taxi. He ordered them to go to the theater.

Katharina trembled, unable to hide her distress. She asked him to please tell her where they were going and what they were going to see. He became more serious and told her that what he had heard from her during their last trips together had moved him greatly, and that morning when he was reading the newspapers, he stopped at an advertisement about a show that would take place

that night, and he remembered what she had told him. He bought the tickets without consulting her to, precisely, surprise her.

She held her breath as if she guessed everything. A huge poster in front of the theater revealed his surprise and Cleyton looked deep into her eyes, and saw sprouts two tears well up. Without needing to say anything, he just nodded and waited for what he wanted so much to happen: a hug from her. She almost hugged him. With one hand she stopped the tear that had escaped from her eye and swallowed the emotion.

William would play Chopin just a few meters from Katharina. On the program, two Nocturnes, some Studies, the Berceuse, one of the Polonaises and, closing the recital, the Fantasy-Improvisation in C Sharp Minor, Opus 66. For Katharina, perhaps, it was the most beautiful and happiest night she had ever lived.

He played masterfully, concentrated and beautiful – as Katharina said to Cleyton at the beginning. The theater was full and, at each end of Chopin's music that William played, the audience applauded for a long time. Cleyton felt Katharina's emotion taking over him too. It seemed like he could hear his heart beating louder than the music coming from that young artist's piano.

“The Fantasy-Improvisation was found among Chopin’s manuscripts after his death. It is believed that he composed it around 1835, but this is not certain. Chopin didn't like it and felt a certain contempt for the work. He told his friends, who he asked never to publish it, that the work had details similar to a Study by Ignaz Moscheles. He didn't want to come across as a plagiarist. But when she was found and executed, everyone ignored the fact and the composer's request. The whole world applauded her.”

Katharina cried. She seemed to remember the whole past with the boy who didn't want to go to piano lessons. She felt him playing the exercises every afternoon. She knew that music made him forget about his toys and his friends. She saw that fragile little hand playing the piano keys with ease. She realized that the music seemed to come from his little fingers and that it would never leave them. She was sure that William would spend his life playing. She had loved that piano-playing boy. And she loved the concert-man at that moment too. Her music had already enveloped her in a whirlwind of dreams, memories, love and passion. Katharina wanted to love at that moment who she had always

wanted throughout her life. Cleyton felt emotional too, and almost cried with her.

William, once again, received great applause. Standing, Katharina clapped completely out of her mind, and, in a very quick instant, she noticed that his eyes stopped a little on hers, while she thanked him for the applause. Then, he doubled an excerpt from Fantasia and, after another ovation, he left the stage.

Cleyton asked Katharina if she would like to go to the dressing room to see him. She almost said yes without thinking. She reflected quickly and replied no. William wouldn't recognize her and that would be a very painful disappointment for her. Cleyton imagined this and understood her desire. They sat for a few minutes looking at the empty stage like the life that existed inside Katharina. Like the first time, he left without saying goodbye to her. Katharina wanted to remember everything as she always had.

Both returned to the hotel without exchanging a single word. The emotion had been too strong. Katharina needed to get herself together. Cleyton invited her to go to the hotel bar and she accepted. She felt immensely grateful to that man who had given her the greatest emotion of her life – seeing William play again.

That night, Cleyton insinuated that he desired her. Katharina accepted his invitation to sleep in his apartment and also the love that he said was born inside him, for her. She sought refuge with Cleyton and felt happy.

William no longer played in that city. He left and Katharina didn't find him. A few more days later than expected, and Cleyton left her to her task. However, now there were new people who discovered themselves listening to William play Chopin. Mainly the Fantasia-Improvisation for piano, Opus 66.

IV

Cezanne

The beauty of Cleyton's daughter disturbed those who tried to court her. The many admirers she had did everything they could to keep the brief courtships going for a little longer. Not that Cezanne snubbed or made light of any of them. No. Her beauty was internal too. Cezanne was sincere and radiated a lot of sympathy, which made her even more beautiful. She took what she felt seriously and knew that she had not found the romance that destiny had prepared for her. She studied business administration, practiced horse riding, went out with friends, went to parties, cinemas and the theater. She enjoyed her youth intensely. She tried not to deceive those who said they were in love with her and kept them at a distance that wouldn't hurt anyone.

Her father was returning from the trip, which Cezanne and her mother considered the longest absence since the new releases were made. He asked for a little more patience, however, there was a great doubt within him. How long could he resist being away from Katharina? How long would he be able to deceive his family about the fact that he had fallen in love at the end of his life?

A week later, Cezanne asked her father to buy tickets for a concert by a pianist she had long wanted to see play. He would be in town in a few days and she wanted to stay somewhere very close to the stage.

– They say he gets emotional when he plays. – Cezanne said to his father.

Cleyton knew how much. He arranged the tickets and he, his wife and Cezanne went to the concert. William would perform at the Calais Municipal Theatre, on Place Albert avenue.

On the program, Rhapsody in Blue, by George Gershwin. It was the first time Cezanne had seen William and, like everyone else, she was moved. For Cleyton, the show was a total disaster. Only memories of Katharina came to his mind. He missed her and wanted her to be there, by her side. He became restless and attracted Mirna's attention. She would later ask what had happened, as Cleyton seemed nervous in the theater. He said it was the business that was going through his head while he was listening to the song. Cezanne, in turn, she

was delighted with the concert. It was no exception. She also felt mesmerized by William's music. Exactly as if she had found love, she told her mother later.

At William's second performance, she went too. This time, with friends, and there, during one of the breaks, she decided that she would meet the pianist to get to know him up close. She had heard a comment about him. William, they said, didn't fall in love with anyone and his romances didn't last long. He was a conqueror and adventurer. He took advantage of his talent, which facilitated his conquests, until, looking like a brief Study, he finished with the girls and “closed the piano”. Cezanne didn't care and would like to challenge him.

The show ended and she and a friend, went backstage to try to get closer to the artist. Many people also did this and it became difficult to reach William. The only thing she managed to find out was where he was staying and that he was supposed to stay in the city for a few days. Cezanne didn't try to get to him, after all there were other people. What to say to William that she could impress him? Everything must have already been said. She decided to wait for the next day. Her friend, Rosemary, agreed with her and would help her if necessary.

William, before lunch, left the hotel and the city, and Cezanne missed the opportunity to meet him. Later, she tried to find out where and when his next performance would be and mentioned to her father her desire to go and see him. Cleyton told her that he had already heard that pianist play once, trying to bring out some of the longing he felt for Katharina. He promised his daughter that at William's next concert he would take her – wherever it was. But that didn't happen anytime soon. William was an emotion that passed through Cezanne and a happy reminder of what happened to Cleyton.

In one of the reports from the representatives who periodically arrived at Cleyton, he read that the girl supervising promotions had been absent for a few days and had left her role. Cleyton called the representative and wanted to know what had happened. Days later, he flew to where Katharina was. Again, Mirna and Cezanne did not accompany him and his behavior in those days had been strange, which worried his wife. He claimed that business was not going well, – which was true – but that he would be back soon. Mirna felt something more. Cezanne forgot his father's promise and was left with William only in his thoughts.

Cleyton returned to Katharina and convinced her to stay at her job. He promised a lot of things, but he knew that she was not a person who let herself be carried away by promises. She completed the promotion in that city and they both went to another capital, and all the work began again.

Cleyton no longer spent what little time he had available with his family. He would return home, get down to business and then travel. They were not short trips and he distanced himself from his daughter and wife more and more. Cezanne felt that her mother was already showing a lot of concern. She did not rule out the possibility that Cleyton had found a lover. And she suffered from it, significantly.

During one of Cleyton's absences, Mirna went to the office and looked for Carlo Joseph, the president's right-hand man in the industry. She didn't know how to get into the subject and invented several pretexts to spend more time with him and learn something that he could possibly know. She didn't achieve her intention. Carlo didn't know about Cleyton's private life, but he said something that made her think later. The industry's finances were not in good shape. The product had a serious defect, and a wrong strategy in supporting its advertising caused more expenses without bringing satisfactory results. The debts contracted were beginning to mature and the resources to pay them could not support the new expenses already authorized.

What she heard from Carlo allowed her to come to the conclusion that Cleyton was no longer dedicated to business and his constant traveling left many important things undefined.

Mirna decided to find out completely about the situation and met with the board. A financial/administrative survey of the business was carried out by an auditor and the result showed that the C. Gottlieb industry was heading towards bankruptcy. To prevent this from happening, the best thing would be to look for resources elsewhere. Perhaps, he concluded, he, Mister Cleyton, was doing that at that very moment. It was necessary to wait a little longer.

V

The forbidden love

Cleyton discovered that the situation was not good, but his passion for Katharina was completely out of control. He decided he would look for capital elsewhere to save the business and began a trip that looked like a honeymoon with his lover. Katharina made this decision a little easier. When he met with her again, he learned that she and her husband were divorcing. She said that she loved him and that a pianist had been the cause of that romance. She didn't want to be separated from him anymore and demanded a definition. The two left the country. Cleyton was looking for money to recover the industry and had Katharina by his side, whom he loved madly.

In the first capital they stopped at, they found William performing there and the trip was no longer the one that would bring the solution to Cleyton's business. The two began to accompany William to various places. This time, they met. They spoke to him and became friends. They traveled together, stayed in the same hotels and William, for a few moments, thought he already knew Katharina. Something seemed to bring back memories of his childhood and the girl who accompanied him to piano lessons. He wasn't sure, it had been a long time, and he didn't want to force an unpleasant situation on them. He felt great sympathy for the couple. After all, they were at all of his presentations.

The competence of those who ran the businesses prevented bankruptcy. Filing for bankruptcy would be a solution. They managed to keep playing, waiting for the president, who now gave no more news. The wait was agonizing for Mirna and Cezanne. Finally, a letter arrived. It came from abroad and was from Cleyton. The two were together when they received it and both read in silence what he said after so long without news:

“ (...) I looked for the words that would make you understand the attitude I took towards the industry and towards you. I didn't find it. Decisive moments didn't allow me to think twice and made it impossible for me to tell everything. At this moment, everyone close to me and the business must have felt and discovered that we could not handle what was about to happen. I was lucky to find out first and look for someone to guide me about it. So, what I did was the best solution. The person just can't tell me what I should do with my own life. And with you (...)”

“(...) I was ashamed to face you and Cezanne. I couldn't see myself failing in front of you and losing everything we had built. Therefore, I took from our name what we love and what we will never lose. I can't say who you're with, but don't worry. We won't lose anything.”

“(...) don't try to fix anything. It will not be possible. I'm trying to find a way out here, where I am. We are not going to sell the industry because I will find a solution to save it.”

“(...) I can't send for you. Do not ask me why. But try to understand, please. I'll come back so we can fix all this together.”

As predicted, Cleyton had discovered what would happen before anyone else. He saw that there was no way out and, at the same time, he also discovered a love within himself that rejuvenated him. The price of this novel was the stigma of failure. Those who were waiting for him remained hopeful that he would bring a solution. One day, without any warning, Cleyton arrived in the city.

His meeting with the family was a mixture of tears, disagreements, unanswered questions and half-baked arguments. Mirna didn't know what to believe or even feel. Cezanne was happy to see her father and gave him time to tell everything. She left her parents alone and retired to her room.

– Can you imagine what we went through, Cleyton? – said Mirna upon hearing part of the report that her husband had made – Being without news from you for many months. Trying hard not to believe what they were saying? Having to admit that you were actually with another woman. I heard everything. I tried to hide what I could from Cezanne. What was possible. And finally, laying my head on the pillow every night without finding meaning in everything that was happening. I don't know what to feel about you now. Whether it's pity, hatred or a little bit of longing for the person you once were. Should I believe what you tell me, or look for evidence that will lead me to the truth and understand everything?

Mirna heard her husband's version. She listened sadly and calmly with great attention. But she found no cause to give him any shadow of reason. Financial and administrative moves were not of much interest to her. It was all very confusing and, as always, she didn't make much effort to understand

Cleyton's business. Along with that cold data, she knew something else had happened. Her intuition insisted on trying to get the whole truth out of Cleyton.

The next day, Cleyton went to the office and met with the directors. He trusted them and would study the plans they had put in place, in his absence, to attempt a recovery. He would have to take them forward and asked each person in charge of the different departments to bring, to the next meeting, results and positions from each sector.

Back home, Cleyton tried to convince Mirna that the attitude he had taken was the best. Nothing justified his silence, the wife claimed, and there was still a lot to be clarified.

Mirna was from a traditional family in that city. She met love when she met Cleyton. She has been by his side since the beginning of the industry, but has never actively participated in the business. This left Cleyton with some frustration, as he liked to talk about the decisions he made and the ideas he had. He just didn't do this with his wife because she stayed away.

Cezanne was born a year after they got married. Mirna had some problems with the pregnancy and childbirth, and was unable to have any more children. This brought some disappointment to Cleyton, who wanted a child. Later, his relationships became scarcer and comfort and money replaced affection and loving attention from him. Mirna devoted herself unusually to her daughter, afraid of losing her. She took care of her every minute of her life. She became friends with her when she grew up and no one else would take up the space of all that dedication. So, what united them – she and Cleyton – was Cezanne and, thinking about her once again, is that Mirna listened to Cleyton and put up with what she thought was a lie and illusion.

– I tried not to think about anything you're telling me, Cleyton. I never wanted to admit that you could be with another woman. Cezanne told me that too. At least you try to give me an explanation now. But how can I believe it's all over?

– Mirna, let's leave this to be resolved when everything goes back to normal... – Cleyton didn't know what to say.

– Tell me who she is. I know her? She must be smart. Can you make love to her? She must have cured your impotence. Will she give you the son I couldn't give you?

– Mirna...

– Do you want me to forgive you? I don't know. I don't even know if I love you yet... Actually, Cleyton, do we love each other? Was it love or convenience... We were practical for each other, don't you think? You joined the elegant social scene, marrying me, the most columnist girl in town. I freed myself from the control of my parents who were very strict...

– You are very upset. We still...

– Do you want me to give you one more chance? You didn't give us any. You thought about our possessions. Big Deal. I have my jewelry. We would not go hungry.

– We didn't lose...

– I need time, Cleyton. Try it with your daughter. Did you know she was willing to sell the farm and her horses to help save everything? – Mirna walked to the door of the room where they were arguing and spoke before leaving:

– Go fix what you messed up. Then we'll see if we can still live together.

Cleyton told Mirna almost everything. He said he thought he was in love with another woman, but that had nothing to do with what had happened with the business. He just chose one of the exits, always hoping to recover everything, bringing in capital from outside.

By chance, he met another woman while he was away. It was all just a passion, nothing more. He didn't say who she was or what she did. He just let it be known that everything was over. He tried to be honest as much as he could. He hoped his wife would understand, but he didn't force the situation. He agreed to wait a little. Taking a break while he needed to turn his attention to business. His romance with Katharina would be very difficult, almost impossible, under those conditions. She knew this too and ended up making things easier for him. They returned together, but left the plane as if they were strangers. At the

bottom of his thoughts were only memories of pleasant moments, filled with music. Who knows, when the two said goodbye to William, all the elixir that kept them loving went with him. It was as if the music had come to an end and there was nothing left to be heard.

VI

The Tchaikovisky Concerto

Concerto No. 1 in Bb Minor, Opus 23, for piano and orchestra, by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, was performed by William Prochmann in a surprising way.

Some music critics dared to say, with complete confidence, that no one until then had performed the work as masterfully as this great keyboard virtuoso. William used to always leave Concerto No. 1 until the end, when he included it in his programs, because he knew that the audience's delirium was so great that it was necessary to always repeat the theme of that work by one of the greatest composers who ever lived, according to the William's own opinion. This Concerto was included in a collection of records that a record company released onto the market containing Tchaikovsky's music. One of his best-known works, performed by his greatest interpreter, could not be missing from the collection.

Listening to the recording, Cezanne reconnected with William's music. She found out about the launch of the collection and bought it immediately. She placed one of the discs in her sound equipment – precisely the one that contained the complete Concerto – removed the sound from the speakers and readied the individual headphones. She closed her eyes and imagined herself in the audience listening to William play. But no one else was present besides her, the pianist and the orchestra that accompanied him. She followed the concertist's attention to the maestro who was conducting the musicians and who turned his eyes to the keys along with her eyes, and found the hands from which all the beauty of the music flowed. Firm movements, sometimes graceful, always precise, seemed to know like no one else what the composer had wanted to say when conceiving that music.

Tchaikovsky tried to put into music, in the first movement of Concerto No. 1, a chorus that he heard, sung by blind beggars in a village. The fact, the master could never have imagined, would happen again when William started the Concert. People seemed to lose their vision when they heard the first chords and became so poor, such blind beggars, begging for the eternity of the moment.

That was exactly how Cezanne felt at that moment too. Begging for the presence of the master and the interpreter of his great work. Cezanne clearly remembered William's features, his gestures and his smile when she almost

managed to get close to him once. She felt enveloped by the pianist's music and wanted to get to know him more. She wanted to hold his magical hands, but some of her self-confidence had caused her to miss the opportunity. Now, she had to be content with just listening to him. And wait until when?

She started listening to the recording almost every day. Sometimes she would play on the equipment with the speakers on, at deafening volume. She filled the house with the sounds that came from William's piano. Later, she went to a record store and ordered everything he had ever recorded. She had to wait some time to receive what was possible from the record company. Something was already sold out. She reached out to friends who used to buy classic records and gathered more recordings. Every night, Cezanne listened to William and she couldn't choose the most beautiful music. This way, she thought, she could be with him. She felt her hands and the vibration with which she touched invade her body. With every applause she imagined for William, she dreamed of him coming back to her. Cezanne created an intimate obsession and fell in love with William and his music. Each note was her word. Each theme, a kiss. Each concert, a way of possessing her.

Cleyton heard the music played by William several times at night, coming from his daughter's room, and realized right from the beginning that he was the one playing. How many memories those beautiful songs brought to them. Many of them he had the opportunity to hear the pianist play right in front of him. His relationship with Mirna had not improved and Cleyton felt sad when he heard the music coming from far away, as far away as his and Katharina's thoughts were.

One day, Cleyton knew that a friend had brought from abroad an album that William had recently recorded. He asked him to make a tape and took it to his daughter. Tape recorders were new and Cleyton had to buy one for her.

– I brought you a gift, dear Cezanne. I bet you don't have this one yet... The composer used Verdi's work and the piece is called Concert Paraphrase on the opera “Rigoletto” and you can already imagine who performs it..

– Yeah... William... – she said excitedly.

– I have noticed that you listen to this pianist a lot. William. A friend arrived from Germany with a new album of his. I thought you would be pleased to have this recording.

Cezanne was overjoyed with his father's gift. It couldn't be more beautiful, she said. It was the third act of "The Rigoletto"... Beautiful daughter of Love... – which seemed to have been composed for Cezanne when William played it. He said he always played for the most beautiful women, but he could never think that, recording that piece with an arrangement by Liszt, a beautiful daughter of love would hear it thinking about him, about the pianist who was already loved without even knowing the girl who loved him.

Cleyton told her daughter that he had gone to a William recital while he was away. He went back to making the promise he had once made. Once he found out where the pianist was performing, he would take her to hear and meet him. She did not imagine that Cezanne intimately thought: "I want to go wherever he is, playing or not, my father".

William was not characterized by performing works by the same composer. He played the music of many of them, with the same mastery and virtuosity. Among the songs that Cezanne liked most was Chopin's Berceuse in D flat major. This piece – a lullaby – was considered by critics in general as one of the best composed of the musician's last years. William brought back all the simplicity and romanticism that Chopin lived with during his existence.

There were other works by this composer in Cezanne's collection, played by William. Among them, he really liked the Opus 10 Studies and listened to them constantly. One of the nights, she even cried because the music was so beautiful and it moved her so much, perhaps because he was so far away from the pianist. She just couldn't imagine that your father was listening too and also crying inside, especially when the next song on that album was "The Fantasie-Impromptu". The same one that had brought him closer to Katharina. In fact, William's songs brought escape to those people in that house. Cleyton listened to them and was transported to the recent past. Not finding what he always looked for in his wife, he preferred to dream, with divine music as a background. Cezanne, in turn, found an escape from her desires and dilemmas regarding the men who loved her.

The truth is that William's music brought inner peace to Cezanne and her father. It was the calm that existed in the 18th variation of the Rhapsody on

a theme by Paganini. They listened to it, dreamed and felt happy that there was music so beautiful and performed with so much love, with so much life and hope. Also by Rachmaninoff, Cezanne listened to Excerpts from Concerto No. 2. This music left her lost. It was vibrant and William imposed a strange force when he performed it, which Cezanne seemed to only exist for that life. She wasn't there, just listening. She was loving with all the love she could ever imagine feeling. And no one was more perfect to receive this love than the very interpreter of the songs that cherished her and transported her to his side in an endless dream. The strength of Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 2 overcame Cezanne's inner resistance and she felt a great embrace from the man she was loving and who didn't even know her.

– Cezanne, I heard that William Prochmann, this “your” pianist, who you listen to so much, is expected to arrive in the city for some performances in about... Three months. The Foreign Trade Center managed to bring it back. Good news, right? – said Cleyton when he arrived home.

– My father! That is true? But... still three months.

– Do you think it's a long time? It's already good that he comes... You can wait a little longer. I'm the one who thinks you're very excited about this artist. Be careful with this little heart...

The news was given and Cezanne began to count the days until the date set for William's presentation. But someone else also knew he was coming and felt their chest tighten. It was Katharina. Since she came back, she hasn't seen Cleyton anymore. He didn't look for her either. They agreed that, if one of them felt that feelings revealed when they were together returned, they would try to meet. The two knew that momentary situations would prevent their reunion. They were adults, and would have to endure unpleasant conditions for both of them if it all happened again. But they had to know how to wait. Cleyton promised her nothing, other than the thankless role of lover. She understood, and her coldness toward feelings helped her to be without him. It helped to tell her that she wasn't hurting and that she could live without him. She had already been through this and knew how to face loneliness and longing. Now, upon learning of William's arrival, Katharina releases, within herself, a small memory of the days when she was loved and of her own youth alongside the pianist.

Finally, the news about William's coming for two performances in Calais, Cezanne's city, reached her definitively. Just two performances, she thought. But he should stay a few more days, or even arrive much earlier, as he would be playing with the local symphony and it would be necessary to rehearse. She looked for news every day in the newspapers. She mentioned to her father that he needed to buy tickets in advance, as she wanted a seat very close to the stage. Very close to William.

One Sunday, Cleyton took her to the garden and, alone with his daughter, put his arm around her shoulder and told her that he knew William. He had gone to one of his concerts – as he had already said – but now he claimed that he met him at the hotel where he was staying too. He congratulated him on his performance that night and they both talked a lot at the time. Then, in a happy coincidence, they met in another city where he would play and, again, Cleyton went to the show. Once again, they started talking again. Cleyton told Cezanne that the pianist, in fact, had a very strong charisma. He won people over very easily. Cleyton himself had a strong admiration for him. He was not surprised by what Cezanne said she felt. She considered him an idol and was his fan, not to mention that she felt a secret love kept inside her. Now, she loved him.

VII

“Do, Re, Mi, - Make Someone Happy”

The first chords came from William's piano. The song, “Olwen's Dream”, by Charles Williams, written for the score of the film “As Long as I Live”. William put on one of the rare shows he did. He played a lighter, more popular repertoire. Mixing it with light classical music, he included in the program his own arrangement of a Fantasy by Chopin, then the Warsaw Concerto by Addinsell and the Concerto in A Minor by Grieg. In the second part, he played “Star in the Moonlight”, – also written for a film – and Laura, from the play of the same name. He performed Spellbound Concerto, by Rozsa, and closed the audition with the theme from Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No.1

As always, William received a standing ovation from people filling the Calais Municipal Theater on Place Albert. He performed twice with two shorter works and promised that he would speak to his manager to give one more audition, besides the one scheduled for the following day. It was necessary to get the details only. The audience was not satisfied with the artist's words when he returned to the stage to thank him. They applauded incessantly. He was smiling and didn't know what to do. There was no more music rehearsed with the orchestra. William loved that success, that applause, how he liked to play. He tried to leave the stage, but some students in the audience were shouting “stay, stay”. Then, he went to the maestro, who was also applauding from his seat, and asked him for permission to play once again, alone. It was a very beautiful song, as he said to the audience. From the play “Dó, Ré, Mi, - Make Someone Happy”. He sat down at the piano and silence invaded the theater. Seconds later, William played a beautiful and simple melody that should talk about love and happiness. It was not known, but those who heard it for the first time, at that moment, were dazzled by the magic of the music that came from William's piano. Again, he received a lot of applause, however, this time, he bowed just once, to thank, and left the stage permanently that night.

As Cleyton had promised to his daughter, he would take her to the dressing room to introduce her to William. He just asked her and her mother to wait for him in the theater lobby until he located the pianist and arranged the meeting. After all, a lot of people were waiting for him at the exit. On these occasions, William usually took a while to leave and then welcomed those who

waited longer. Cleyton alerted them to this fact and went to try to be received by the artist before the others. He knew that William should remember him. And that happened. William was glad to see him. Cleyton said he needed to talk to him, but the pianist interrupted him to ask about “Katia”. It was her he wanted to talk about. The friend said he was fine, everything was fine, but it wasn't possible to say anything there. He stated that some people wanted to meet him, but that he needed to say something to him first. Naturally, he would understand.

– I'm at the *Hotel Charlemagne*, Cleyton. Let's meet there at around one o'clock, okay?

Cleyton said yes, in the midst of other people arriving at the dressing rooms. He then returned to the two women who were waiting for him anxiously and still involved in William's music.

Cezanne didn't know what to say. She had lived every moment of those moments of music while watching William play, with an emotion she had never felt before. If the excitement of the first concert had been great, that night, Cezanne felt even more attracted to him. They were no longer dreams where she heard his music. She was there, waiting for his great passion in life. It was necessary to do everything to win him over now. She trembled thinking about it. Just another hour or two that would feel like an eternity.

One detail was not in the plans of Cleyton, Cezanne and William himself. There was someone else in the theater who also wanted to see him. Someone who wanted to reveal something to him. Someone who waited longer than other people until they left and left them alone. When this happened, she knocked on his dressing room door.

– Katia! My friend Katia! You over here. Cleyton was already here... Weren't you with him? I told you... Are you alone? – William was surprised by that visit.

Katharina was alone. She smiled at William, kissed his cheek and held out her hand. Another person walked by and asked him for an autograph. He gave and left with her.

– I'm alone, William – she said.

William felt that something was wrong and quickly painted a picture of those days they spent together and he heard from her what he imagined. They were not married. Now, they were both there, watching William play, and far from each other. That wasn't how William wanted to see them, she said. But it had to be this way. She said that she had a beautiful romance with him because that pianist's music had involved them in such a way that they had no other choice but to be involved with each other. They loved while listening to him play, and then separated when the song ended. She said that when he left, in the last appearance sitting in that country where they were, their feelings were fading and the physical attraction, which also united them, became increasingly weaker. Cleyton's problems helped that novel's sad outcome. She didn't know if she loved him or if she loved someone very important to her, but was afraid to meet one day.

Katharina was talking about Cleyton. Slowly, she told him a little piece of her life, especially her youth. Then, small revelations that must have been in William's memory revealed Katharina. And the main one – her real name – led him to the conclusion she had longed for and which in those meetings she had to hide from him.

– Katharina... How I looked for you... in vain. As I couldn't notice... – he said in surprise – I felt that there was something...

– A lot of time has passed for us... – she interrupted him before he finished speaking.

William forgot that Cleyton was waiting for him. He walked with Katharina for several hours. He wanted to know everything. Of your loves, of your life. He wanted to remember the past, know where she had been and thank her for the dedication she had towards him. She, in turn, declared that only when he was gone did she realize how much she loved the pianist boy. Her absence had made her lose her charm in life.

He was fascinated by his reunion with Katharina. He wanted her forever. Then, he remembered that Cleyton was waiting for him.

- My God! I forgot that Cleyton is waiting for me... What a mistake! Now it's too late to meet him. – She smiled at the situation and he continued.

– Did he know that you knew me as a child? Did you tell him? Why didn't you reveal yourself at the beginning?

– I was embarrassed. I didn't know what to say. I thought...

– I always dreamed of this moment, Katharina. There are songs that I play that bring to my mind the childhood and the days I spent with you. I never thought I would lose you...

William and Katharina ended the tour in front of the building where she lived. The broken commitment to Cleyton no longer bothered him. He was dazzled by his old friend. In those moments, they brought all the past back. There were happy and sad memories. He also talked about his adult life. He said he lived intensely, but he missed his parents and his little friend who always understood him. But he was happy, he said. He had music as a faithful companion. Perhaps, life had given him music to comfort him in the absence of loved ones. She felt proud hearing those confessions, and was happy when she learned that his parents recognized that she was largely responsible for him studying music when William told her about it.

– In the last letter my mother wrote to me she said that you left without saying anything, but that she had forgiven you and that she had no right to interrupt your life. For what you had done for me, she was very grateful.

Katharina looked at the clock and turned her eyes to William as if to show that time was up for them that night. William noticed and brought one of his hands to her face, making a caress that immediately made her shiver. His eyes went to Katharina's infinity and he told her he wanted to be with her. The years without her were long, he continued softly. This time he wouldn't let her go so suddenly. She held his hand and walked towards the entrance of the building. William followed her in silence. Nothing more needed to be said. They went up to her apartment floor. Katharina looked for her keys in the small bag she was carrying and opened the door.

They both entered and William closed the door behind him. Katharina turned to him and felt the panting beat of his heart. She was very close to him. Weak lighting from outside entered the room. William placed his hands around her head and slowly moved towards her lips. She was motionless. William hugged her body tightly as if he was afraid it would disappear from her face. Then he kissed her neck, her face, her forehead. She still had her eyes closed.

She was beautiful, William noticed, feeling close to him the one he had searched for so long. Katharina seemed to be dreaming and begged not to wake up at that moment. William lifted her with his arms and carried her slowly to the center of the room. There, he kissed her on the lips and tried to get his bearings. She noticed and looked at him delicately. She turned her eyes towards one of the doors that were closed. He walked over to it and opened it with Katharina still on his lap.

Inside the room, a small light was on, as she left it that way every time she went out at night. He put her down and kissed her again. During the kiss, he began to take off her long, thin dress. He felt her smooth, soft skin in his hands. The dress fell at her feet. Katharina separated from him and took a few steps towards the bed. He unbuttoned his silk shirt and took it off along with the jacket he was wearing. She lifted the bed sheets and felt him close to her body, which no longer received her commands. Gently, William made her lie down. He laughed and went down her body while he kissed her. He kissed her sex for a long time and felt her hands squeeze hers. Then, responding to her pleas, he went close to her face and, looking firmly at Katharina, possessed her uncontrollably. Both reached a violent climax like a vibrant passage from the concertos he performed. They knew how to make love in all its forms, but in those moments, William and Katharina discovered pleasures they had never felt before.

VIII

The meeting

– This is Chopin's Nocturne, isn't it, Cezanne? – Mirna asked when she saw her daughter sitting on the bed, disappointed with what had happened and listening to one of the records she owned. Once again, she was unable to meet William.

– You can't forget him... – continued his mother – You know who I'm referring to. My daughter, sometimes the people we think exist only for us are very far away, so far away that we will never be able to reach them. Life plays tricks on us that make us sad. You always had boys who would kiss the place you stepped on, baby. Now I know that you would give anything to at least try to love a man who is close to you, but who, in reality, lives in another world. Be patient. Don't give in to the first setback. I know you're not one to give up so easily. You are young, you have a lot ahead of you. Live all the moments that destiny prepares for you. I don't have time anymore, but you still have it, you can be sure of that, another opportunity will come.

Mirna tried to console her daughter the next day, in her room. She was listening to Chopin's Nocturne – perhaps the best known – and William was playing. The night before, she, her mother and father waited two hours for him in the hotel's nightclub. He didn't show up to meet his friend. Cezanne felt frustrated and disappointed. Just when she most thought her meeting with the pianist would happen, he didn't show up. Cleyton was very sorry too, as he said that William had assured him that he would join them that night. He had really enjoyed seeing him and showed sincerity in it. Cezanne's father, also trying to console her, said that William's gesture was typical of artists. They don't care much about normal people, he added.

Cezanne went back to listening to the records with the songs played by William to convince himself of how she felt about him. She wanted to know if she still loved him intimately, or if a disappointment had ended her dream. It was difficult to feel a definition within yourself. William's magic was there, present, with her. She couldn't forget him easily just because he hadn't gone to meet her father. After all, she thought, he didn't know she was waiting for him. A beautiful woman always attracted William, as everyone said, and he knew she was a beautiful woman. So, she decided that, at this night she would go to the artist's second performance. She needed to buy a ticket to the show. By now,

they should all have been sold, but she would perhaps try with the scalpers. But this time, she thought, she would do it her way.

William spent the whole morning with Katharina. They had lunch together and in the afternoon he went to the theater to meet the manager. He had left a message for him at the hotel in the morning. It was necessary to see if they could schedule an additional presentation, as he had promised the night before. William was willing and wanted to play in that city again. He said he would play there forever if he could. The manager soon realized that the pianist had already found a new love... After everything was arranged, William preferred to walk a little to the hotel and left the theater alone.

– William Prochmann. Can you give me an autograph...?

These were Cezanne's first words to William. He was on the sidewalk and she was buying tickets for that night. When she saw him heading across the street, she hurried after him and called out to him when he was very close. William heard someone calling him and turned around. He looked at the girl and smiled. However, he didn't notice her expression froze in front of that beautiful face. Cezanne gave him a pen and the entries printed side down. He could autograph the back. William spent a few seconds looking at her, and instinctively caught what she was giving to him. She blushed slightly and looked down at his hands. William seemed to return from space.

– If I sign it here you will have to buy another ticket or... – he hesitated
– you will be left without my autograph when you leave the ticket at the theater.

– I... buy another ticket. – she said delicately.

– I heard there is no more.

– With the money changers...

– No. You will not buy tickets from scalpers. I can get you a place. Do you want?

– That's very kind of you, but...

– I insist. Let's go to the entrance there. My manager should still be there and will find a way.

– I do not want to bother you...

William smiled at Cezanne. He placed a hand on her arm and walked with her to the theater lobby. He asked her to wait a little and went to where some men were talking. Cezanne noticed that as soon as William said anything, one of them – the one who seemed to be his manager – turned and looked at her. Afterwards, he patted William on the back and smiled. He said goodbye to everyone and returned to where she was.

– Ready. Everything arranged. You will watch from a special place! – She exclaimed happily.

– There was no need to bother.

– Absolutely. It wasn't uncomfortable. Furthermore, where you are going to sit, just stay madams and politicians. You will beautify the counter.

– Oh! Where will I stay?

– Yes. Look over there. When you arrive, go to that little door. The man who will take you to the balcony, will be waiting for you. Now, tell me your name so I can autograph your tickets.

– Cezanne.

– Cezanne. A name as beautiful as you.

Cezanne's cheeks turned slightly red again. William autographed the tickets she had bought, said he was sorry he couldn't stay with her a little longer because he had an appointment, but he hoped she wouldn't miss the show. Certainly, she would like it. Afterwards, he said goodbye to her and took a taxi that was stopped. The car drove away and Cezanne headed towards her car, beaming.

Of course William wouldn't pass up the opportunity to do a kindness to a beautiful woman. It was an addiction of his that he didn't make a point of

correcting. He didn't need to know who the kindness was for, it was enough that the girl had attracted his attention. And this happened in the first moment he saw Cezanne.

At home, Mirna noticed that her daughter was different. She was not the same person who had woken up that morning and needed to be comforted. She wanted to know what had happened and Cezanne just showed William's autograph and said she would go to his performance that night. Afterwards, she hugged her mother as if she wanted to share her joy. Later, Mirna commented on what happened to Cleyton. He looked a little worried. What would have happened? He asked, during dinner, who Cezanne would go to the theater with. She replied that she would go with Rosemary, her friend. Everything was already arranged. She didn't tell him, however, that the place where she would sit was special.

To Rosemary, Cezanne told her what had happened that afternoon as they headed to the theater minutes after picking her up at home. They should look for an employee who was waiting for them at a side entrance. He was there. They approached and she said that William asked her to look for him in that place.

Before she could finish, the man opened the door and let them in. Then he took them to one of the theater's balconies. There, one of the seats was different from the others. It seemed to be Cezanne's. The employee excused himself and said he would bring another seat soon. Once that was done, he closed the door to that special place and left Cezanne and Rosemary to wait for the show to begin. Soon after, some couples arrived at the counter and one of the ladies recognized Cezanne and greeted her. The theater quickly began to fill up with all its seats and it was time for William's second performance in the city of Cezanne to begin.

A huge curtain opened and the orchestra was ready. Moments of anticipation, and William appeared. Everyone applauded and he thanked them lightly. He sat at the piano and his magic invaded the place. The program was the same as the previous night, however, Cezanne was now almost in front of him. She could see him better. William was focused, involved. Transported into the music. Cezanne seemed to have lost track of time and couldn't even feel his own breathing. During the break, she noticed that William, from backstage, was looking at her. He waved his hands and smiled. She responded to him with a

smile too and a slight movement of her head. Then he withdrew. Inside, another woman was listening to William too, in a very special place. It was Katharina who went with him to the theater.

Again, William finished the last song and had to perform an encore. Then, as expected, he announced that the night before he had promised the public that he would do one more performance. Thanks to the splendid manager he had, he said, and who let him play as he pleased, he would put on another show. He received great applause again and said goodbye. In one of his references, William turned to where Cezanne was and his eyes met hers. Cezanne continued applauding and kept her expression immobile as if daring those eyes to remain fixed on hers. Finally, William left the stage and everyone started to leave. In the corridor leading to the exit, the employee who had taken Cezanne and Rosemary to the place where they had watched William play, appeared in front of them and said that the artist had invited them to the concert the following day. Same place, same time. Unfortunately, the same program concluded the boy as if he had memorized everything William had told him.

– We will come, won't we? How kind of him. He could have forgotten us. Did you notice how he looked at us? How charming... – Cezanne said radiantly to her friend.

There was no room for so much enthusiasm within Cezanne. Her heart was filled with joy and hope to meet William again. After all, he made his intention to see her.

That night, she didn't hear any recordings of him. She was left with the music that came from within her and the image of the artist in front of her, playing just for her.

In Katharina's apartment, William was holding her in his arms, lying in a huge armchair and the two were talking about the audition that had ended hours before. Katharina stroked his hair like she did when he was still a child and kissed her forehead. She felt like the happiest woman in the world. He must have felt the same way, but for William, only one face disturbed his attention on Katharina. A face that, as he realized, didn't take his eyes off the entire time during his performance. Who was she? What mysterious beauty had provoked William just when he had met a passion he had harbored for many years? And now he was living this passion without having to play to dream about it.

William turned to face Katharina and kissed her once again. He said he loved her. He didn't know whether, as before, as a child, or as an insatiable lover, which was exactly what he felt at that moment. But he loved her. She got better comfortable in the armchair and made love to him as if it were the last time.

IX

Reflection

– First love is the enchanted dawn of the heart. I think my first love was you, Katharina. This love taught me to love music. Now I see that I was looking for you in every woman I had. I expected to meet you at every concert I gave. Intimately, it was you I was looking for. And I found you just as I once imagined. Playing the piano, this same piano that took me away from you.

William and Katharina were happy together. She responded to that youthful crush of William's just as much as if she had been looking for him all along too. They forgot to think about the future. They lived those moments and the past. The past because they often remembered the days they lived together – their childhood and her adolescence. The present because they enjoyed what William said was that union, the passion between two people who sought each other out.

Later, William asked Katharina to talk a little about her. From her marriage, her romances and, mainly, her affair with Cleyton. He still didn't understand why she didn't tell him on the first date who she was and why she hadn't looked for him. Katharina felt embarrassed, she said, and Cleyton had appeared at a time when she was very alone, very much in need of company and affection. She admired Cleyton. She knew his strong presence and all the dynamism he contained in that already well-lived body. Therefore, at the exact moment, when she heard William play, her youth came to the fore in his thoughts. She remembered the family she didn't know how to maintain and Cleyton felt that it was attention and affection that she needed in those moments. At the first opportunity, he took her to listen to William and she easily surrendered, thinking about the pianist she had loved for a long time. Then, she came back to reality, she felt that Cleyton was also looking for refuge. She allowed him to lodge in her heart, but she knew it wouldn't be a lasting love.

When he needed to return to his city, to his industry, to his family, she did not create obstacles that would make her decision difficult. He assured her of help, if she needed it, and stated that, if one day, she intended to return to him, subject to certain conditions, he would be waiting for her. Katharina said that she ruled out this possibility and did not ask him for anything. She just thanked him for the happy moments she had spent with him and with the musical background of what William was playing. She wanted peace, now.

– Now I'm with you, William. I feel that happiness overflows from within my heart. I've waited for these moments for so long, but I never imagined them so beautiful. I had no reason to continue living. You make me live again.

– But, deep down, there is still a small shadow, William. – She continued as if she knew that her happiness was about to end.

– It's as if there was a specter that hovered over this happiness and in it I noticed that all the years I waited for you were too long and that life is now too short for me. There is very little left for me to make up for the wait and the days I lived without you.

Katharina actually felt that the years had passed for her and that William still had a lot of youth ahead of him. She was sure that the possibility of losing him to a younger woman was very high. William was a conqueror. A lover of the unbridled passions that dwell in artists. He lived intensely every moment of his, every song he performed, every woman he owned. These thoughts made her sad. She tried to hide this sadness from him, but she knew perfectly well that in the next instant she could become just another romance for him, just another love, another conquest.

The next day, the day of William's third and last concert in that city, he decided to look for Cleyton and apologize for not having met as he had agreed on the night of the premiere. He didn't say anything to Katharina and didn't want to take her to meet him either. He thought it would be embarrassing for both of them. Deep down, William seemed to want to take anything away from his friend, regarding her and what he could still feel for her. Just as William was fickle with his loves, he had a very sensitive and good heart. He hadn't yet thought about the separation between him and Katharina, and he would soon have to leave, but he wanted to know, told by someone else, what her life had been like up until those days. Maybe someone like Cleyton would be the right person to tell her what she didn't. Furthermore, he needed to know if there were still any feelings on Cleyton's part towards her.

William left Katharina while she got ready to go to work. She was employed at an advertising agency. She no longer aimed for any success in her career and settled for the first proposal that appeared. After their separation, her husband left her a small monthly pension. She was satisfied with that.

Soon after she left, William went to a bookstore and bought a book. He sought Cleyton's home number was found in a phone book and called there. A girl answered and said that Cleyton had already left. She gave him his office phone number and hung up. She didn't ask who wanted to speak to him and she also didn't tell him that it was his daughter who was answering the phone. William thanked her and called again, this time to Cleyton's office. He found him and told him who was talking. Cleyton was happy with the surprise and invited William to have lunch at a restaurant with him.

– I hope you haven't read this novel yet. I really liked it when I read it... – William said after greeting his friend and apologizing for his absence – That night, – he continued – incredible things happened when leaving the theater. It took me a long time to get back to the hotel. I hope you forgive me. And your family too. It was inelegant of me. Please convey my apologies to them. I do even more. I invite you to my last performance here. It will be today. I would really like them to be. I hope this makes up for my lack...

– My daughter went to the show yesterday. Again...

– Oh! Did your daughter go to the theater yesterday? So I see they weren't mad at me at all...

Quickly, Cleyton said that the woman he had been with in previous meetings was not his wife, and diverted the subject.

William and Cleyton talked about music and shows. He didn't tell her about his daughter. Maybe he forgot that she listened to his recordings every day. He preferred to talk about his business, which was improving, and about some investments on which William asked him for advice. They ordered lunch right after some appetizers and moved on to other topics. William tried to lead Cleyton to what he most wanted to talk to: Katharina.

Cleyton diverted attention and managed to change the conversation. Dessert and coffee arrived, and Cleyton was already worried about the time. William insisted on the invitation to the evening concert. He didn't promise. He said he would talk to his wife first, but he was sure his daughter would go. Maybe he already had the tickets, he commented. Finally, they both left the restaurant.

Cleyton offered William a ride and he accepted. He said he would stay at the theater. A few moments in the car, and William couldn't take it anymore. He asked for Katia as he had done at the beginning and was not satisfied with the simple answer he received. It was clearer then. He wanted to hear from Cleyton about their affair. Cleyton remained silent for a while, as if searching for a memory in his mind, or even the desire to say her real name. Instead of an answer, he asked why William wanted to know about them. He didn't get a real answer. He just said that he had liked her very much and that he thought they were very happy at the time. Cleyton then, already standing in front of the theater, told a little about them. The little William already knew. He just said differently that he felt sorry for her. Not before, when he won her over, but after, when he got to know her better. He had felt a huge emptiness inside her. This pity almost tied him to her, but he realized that it wouldn't be fair for both of them to maintain a relationship like that. She understood very well the role she played in those days, he added. She knew there was no future.

– Life wasn't very honest for Katia, William. She is an extraordinary woman. She didn't deserve it, who knows. I know she's in town. She never looked for me nor I for her. I told her if she ever needs me... I'm sure she went to see you play. She considers you the greatest pianist in the world.

At that moment, Cleyton felt like telling William that he knew that Katharina had been the girl who helped him study the piano, and not the Katia who had been introduced to him. He thought for a while about the promise he had made to her never to tell anyone anything, and decided not to break this promise. With that, William didn't know if he, Cleyton, knew this or not.

Cleyton said goodbye to William saying that he was likely to attend his presentation soon. He also stated that he was trying to win his wife back and that as William's songs helped... William smiled and wished him luck. He agreed with him that he would meet after the show, in the same place as the previous time and that, this time, he would appear – he assured. He felt like he wouldn't take anything else from Cleyton. Maybe Katharina hadn't left scars, he thought. But William was mistaken. Cleyton still loved her.

At dinner, William and Katharina felt the charm of love again. They looked like two young people enjoying every moment of their youth, as if, later, adults arrived and prevented them from loving. He didn't say anything to her about her meeting with Cleyton that afternoon. He didn't need to, as it wouldn't

lead to anything. Later, in the apartment, William began to prepare for the concert. Katharina would not accompany him this time.

X

Surprise!

In the same place as the day before, were the two girls. They came back to see him play and William was happy about it. One of the girls had really attracted him and now he would play for her. With Katharina's absence, he thought, that night the concert would be for his guest. He was sure that he would talk to her after the show and discover the mystery that seemed to surround her and that helped to increase her fascination. He had never met such a beautiful woman, he thought.

There were a few minutes left before the show started, the same theater employee who took Cezanne and Rosemary to the counter, knocked on the door and then entered with a small bouquet of violets and a card. He handed it to Cezanne, saying that William Prochmann was sending him the flowers and that he was waiting for a signal from the girl backstage. He indicated with a gesture the place where she could see the artist before entering the stage. She understood and looked at the stage. Next to the curtain, hidden, was William like a child who had just done something naughty and was awaiting his mother's reprimand. The employee turned and left. Cezanne, who had picked up the flowers, held them close to his face, smelling the discreet perfume, and kept his gaze on William. He rubbed his hands together impatiently and waited for a gesture of agreement for the invitation he made on the card. She hadn't opened the envelope yet. She was thrilled. Nothing else existed around her, just a path of very intense light towards William. He noticed that she wasn't opening the envelope and made a mischievous little sign indicating the card. She didn't react. Then, following everything that was happening very closely, Rosemary told him...

– The card, Cezanne! The card!

She seemed to wake up in surprise and leave the stars. She found, in one hand, crumpled, the small envelope. She lowered the violets onto her lap and opened the envelope delicately.

“The first concert of this short season was to look for her. The second to meet her. The latter will be in honor of the incredible beauty you radiate. I have to meet some friends after the show. I would like you to do me the honor

of accompanying me. I'll be at this counter as soon as I finish playing. - William.”

Cezanne's heart beat wildly, fast and very strong. The entire theater seemed to hear the knocks. She felt a very intense emotion and was shaking. She picked up the violets again, raised them to her lips and made a light and delicate gesture towards William, showing that she accepted the invitation.

He smiled and winked at her left eye. Then he disappeared behind the curtains. Fifteen minutes passed and the curtain opened. Applause invaded the theater space.

It was never too much to hear the same songs played by William. On the program, again what Cezanne had heard two days in a row. And, once again, the audience went crazy when they started applauding. The songs followed each other and time passed quickly. One after another, Cezanne felt more and more attracted to the pianist. Now that she had managed to communicate with him, what she felt when listening to him was quite different. She seemed to believe that there was nothing magical or electronic that brought William close to her. What happened was that he was playing there, right in front of her and just for her. In truth.

At the end of the last song, William was forced to play the theme from Tchaikovsky's Concerto No. 1 again. More applause and more requests for an encore. He didn't want to stay on stage too long. This time, he wanted to finish quickly, however, standing up and thanking once again, he looked at the balcony and saw Cezanne applauding very vibrantly and emotionally. Then something crossed her mind and she turned to the audience. He made a sign with his hands as if asking for silence. Little by little, people stopped clapping and he went to the maestro, as usual, and asked him for permission to play alone. He took a few steps towards the grand piano that was in the foreground of the stage and, when there was complete silence, he said, in a confident and clear voice, that he was trying to compose a piece, but he hadn't finished it yet, but that, he would feel I would be honored if that audience would let him play an excerpt from the work. The applause showed that everyone agreed, he thanked them and sat down at the piano.

Silence suddenly took over time and space again. William seemed to concentrate as if searching, deep within, for the notes of his music. He looked at the piano keys for help and rubbed his hands. He raised his head to where

Cezanne was and looked down at the keyboard again. His hands were lightly touching the white and black keys and a song began to emerge in the air. Still insecure notes, as if something was missing to complete them, but the melody that could be heard was beautiful and soft. It seemed to speak of love, infinite beauty and great tenderness.

William continued and, at a certain moment, he faltered a little. His fingers went to the highest part of the piano and left the keyboard. Music no longer existed from then on. Silence returned to the theater for a few harrowing seconds and someone began to slowly applaud. The others followed, and again William received a delirious ovation. This time, he didn't thank. He stood for a moment in front of the piano, motionless, while people applauded standing up. Then, he got up and left the stage quickly, never to return that night. The applause died down and many understood the artist's desperation as he tried to find the notes that would make his work come to an end, and he was unable to do so. Cezanne also noticed this and from deep within her feelings came a tiny tear that, as it ran down her face, found the violets that William had sent.

– Goodnight. I hope I didn't take too long. – he said as he entered the counter.

– No, no. We were still listening to what you had started there.

– And it wasn't finished. – He said.

– But it will end, right? It's a very beautiful song. You must finish.

– I hope... to make it one day.

William had doubt in his voice. He knew that he hadn't composed for a long time and, that fantasy he had tried to play at that moment followed him closely sometimes very clearly, and then, it fled his mind far away, taking a long time to return. He was somewhat depressed by this, but sought comfort in other works.

He greeted Rosemary, Cezanne's friend, younger and funnier, and asked her if he had enjoyed the show. She smiled and said yes. Afterwards, William turned to Cezanne and told her that he had arranged to meet a friend and his family. He had made them wait days before. He wanted to apologize