

Perfect

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

At a piano a young girl, APRIL, sits in a black dress. She has an expression of distant grief. She takes a deep breath and begins to play the piano. However, rather than a robust sound, a muffled quiet tune plays instead.

April's MOTHER watches flinching at the mistakes, one that an untrained ear could never hear. She seems to hear the piano very clearly, and her compulsive obsession with error shines through her composed disposition.

April stops playing, her expression blank. A few moments pass before the sound of light clapping is heard. A few people come up to April to compliment her, however she remains sitting.

WOMAN

That was wonderful.

YOUNG MAN

Your mother would be so proud.

They touch her shoulder, whispering to her as she remains still. In a wide shot, we see people filing out of the piano room. Her mother walks up to her and squeezes her shoulder.

APRIL (V.O.)

I've always hated piano, at least  
I don't have to hear it anymore.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

April at the dining room table cleaning up dirty dishes. Her mother walks from the kitchen.

MOTHER

What was that?

APRIL

What?

MOTHER

Measure 13 and 24. You missed the  
rests, and it sounded rushed...  
like you didn't want to be there.  
Your father's funeral.

April looks down in shame and picks up some silverware.

APRIL

Sorry-

MOTHER

Sorry doesn't walk the dog. Fix it. That's the apology I want.

Mother walks away from her, grabbing a dirty dish on her way. April pulls out a chair and sits in silence.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

April sits at the piano, seemingly playing a song but no music can be heard. Her mother is by her side, speaking inaudibly while instructing her on her playing.

APRIL (V.O.)

I guess it started after my dad died. He loved to hear me play, and I suppose that was the only thing that kept me playing piano. That died with him.

MOTHER

No, no, no! April. Are you even trying? Your tempo is all over the place and F is natural in measure 82. You're playing it sharp.

April begins to play again.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Stop. Again

Once, again April starts playing.

APRIL (V.O.)

Now I hate it all. I hate playing, I hate her telling me how to play, and I hate the fact that she can still hear it.

April continues to play while her mother critiques her.

MOTHER

You keep messing up on this sixteenth note in measure 112. Again.

April plays it again.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Do you hear yourself? You're flat. You have an audition in 2 days, and this piece is still a mess. Does this sound worthy of a scholarship? A degree?

April sits in silence.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Does it?

APRIL

No.

MOTHER

I agree. So we will sit here all night until it is perfect.

The scene fades out as April continues to practice.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - DAY

April is walking through her upstairs hallway. As she walks through the hallway, she notices photos of her father places on some tables. She stops to look at them.

APRIL (V.O.)

I haven't cried since my father died. He was the only shred of sentimentality in this family. It's not that I don't want to, I feel like I can't. Being the ideal daughter has always come before my feelings. Anything that doesn't meet these- these standards of perfection- crying, acting out, anger- is inhibiting my future. Its always about my future.

April looks at a photo as she says the last line. It depicts April's father. She continues to look at photos of her dad on the table.

APRIL (V.O.)

I don't even want to audition for the music program. I've been practicing the same song for months, for a school with even more cold, judgmental people. And I feel like I'm not even getting better. But it has to be perfect. For my father's sake.

INT. PIANO ROOM - NIGHT

April continues to practice piano with her mother. The sound is still muffled, and her mother looms over her shoulder as she plays.

MOTHER

Stop. This is disappointing, April. Start over.

April doesn't play.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Play.

APRIL

I can- I don't want to.

MOTHER

You don't want to?

APRIL

I just-

MOTHER

You just what? How do you think your father would feel watching you throw away your future because of laziness and- and apathy?

APRIL

I'm not throwing awa-

MOTHER

If you're not throwing away your future, if you're some model of hard work, then why is the piece not perfect?

APRIL

I don't- I don't know-

MOTHER

That's enough for today. You may  
continue to practice by yourself.

Mother leaves the room. April sits in a defeated silence. She tried to stand up for herself and failed.

She is almost in tears, however she finds it in herself to be composed. She starts to play, still hearing muffled sounds.

She begins to cry as she plays, stopping and starting over and over trying desperately to hear something, to be perfect.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mother sits in a chair, hearing the sounds of her daughter playing. From the distance, it sounds muffled, a few rooms away, signalling that she too is lost due to the loss of her husband.

She plays with her wedding ring.

A life was ripped out of the home, and the damage may never be fully recovered

FADE OUT