

Voices
by
Olivia Cozzini

Version Short 2

FADE IN

INT. BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Lace white drapes sway as a cool autumn breeze passes through the open bedroom window. MIRA (12) has brunette princess curls and big, round blue eyes. She looks out as the sun begins to change golden-orange, casting fiery, living shadows on the plain walls. Outside, the sounds of FARM LIFE echo-the lowing of cows, the clucking of chickens, and the occasional whinnying of a horse.

PORTIA (O.S.)
Get over here.

A weathered feminine hand hastily reaches over the nightstand to grab a hair brush. Rouge, powders, and lip colorings litter the surface.

Mira's curls settle onto her worn, yellow bodice as they are roughly brushed. PORTIA (40)'s eyes are as dark as coal, her hair silky, long, and blood red. She grabs a sparkling, but tarnished BARRETTE and snaps it onto Mira's head. She winces.

MIRA
Mother, please don't make me go.

PORTIA
Your father is staying here with your sisters, so you're my support. Don't ask me again.

Mira averts her gaze. Her dainty earring catches the changing light when she tilts her head downward. She fidgets with her faded pink skirt, which falls just above her ankles at an awkward length.

Portia squeezes Mira's shoulders. They stare at their reflections in the mirror.

PORTIA (CONT'D)
Our fun awaits.

With that, Portia leaves. Mira takes a deep breath. The air sits still and quiet.

INT. MODEST FAMILY HOME FOYER - NIGHT

Men and women mull around the room. Chatter, laughter, and the faint cling of glasses echo as JAZZ pours from the radio. The SMOKE from cigarettes rises into the air. Just beyond the

foyer doorway in the dining room, various breads, stews, and pies are displayed on the center table.

Mira and Portia survey the space as they enter. Portia turns to a nearby group and laughs obnoxiously when they do.

PORTIA

Oh, isn't this just so lovely! The Smiths really outdid themselves this time.

They share considerate smiles.

PORTIA (CONT'D)

Where did you all put your coats?

PARTY GUEST

Oh, anywhere you'd like. Even upstairs.

Instantly, Portia dumps her coat into Mira's arms.

PORTIA

Be a dear and find a safe place for this upstairs.

MIRA

But mother--

PORTIA

Run along.

Reluctantly, Mira turns away and heads up the wooden staircase.

INT. MODEST FAMILY HOME BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cheery VOICES echo faintly from the stairwell. Cloaks lie on the bed's pale duvet. On the nightstand, a NEWSPAPER reads with the headline: BILLIONS LOST AS STOCKS CRASH. It sits next to PICTURE FRAMES of family and friends. Mira picks up a NOTE that has "I love you" scribbled over it.

MIRA

Wonder what that must feel like.

She drops the note where she finds it.

INT. MODEST FAMILY HOME LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mira follows the sound of the PIANO and makes her way past

other guests to find it. She finds her own corner in the large space. Some people talk. Some people dance to the music. THREE GIRLS (around 11-13) smile at Mira from across the room. She offers a hesitant smile back.

A collective GASP arises from the crowd. A WOMAN leads her male partner, who is smugly grinning, to the center of the room. Everyone freezes and stares. Mira looks around the room.

QUICK CUTS:

--A woman says, "That's Lyra Cadault," to another woman.

--A man sitting with his partner CHOKES on his food. Her wedding ring flashes as she pats on his back.

--A woman whispers, "harlot," to a man next to her.

--An older woman SNEERS in disgust.

--The three girls' mothers round them up and lead them out of the room.

LYRA CADAULT (32)'s thick kohl eyeliner starkly contrasts her piercing green eyes and golden ballerina bun. She wears an elegant, golden-orange silk DRESS that leeches the color from the rest of the dreary room. The speed of their dance increases with the CRESCENDO of the piano. Their moves are efficient and strong.

The man releases her, and she spins, and spins, and spins. Lyra closes her eyes and lifts her arms and face to the sky. She is one with the MUSIC.

On the final NOTE, Lyra holds her pose. Mira can only stare. Time seems to slow.

Portia, holding an almost finished platter of food, appears behind Mira.

PORTIA

Where is my coat, girl?

Mira continues gazing at Lyra.

MIRA

Upstairs, mother. Where you told me to put it.

Lyra curtsies slowly, elegantly, and her dress fans out

around her on the floor. She returns the stares in the room for a moment before she walks to her partner to whisper something. When she turns away from him, his eyes rake up and down her body. He grins.

Lyra walks toward the entryway that Mira and Portia stand by.

PORTIA

Get it.

MIRA

But I just put it there.

PORTIA

Are you deaf? Simple? We're leaving.
Throw this out while you're at it.

Portia tosses her emptied dish to Mira before wandering off to mingle. Lyra passes Mira. She hears the way Mira's mother talks to her. Lyra exits the room.

Mira turns to see Lyra once more, but she has faded into the crowd.

INT. MODEST FAMILY HOME STAIRWELL - NIGHT

Mira walks down the stairs-narrowly avoiding a DRUNK COUPLE-Portia's coat in her hands. When she reaches the bottom, she looks for her mother, who is nowhere to be seen.

After a moment, Mira walks down a quiet back hallway. She reaches the screen door. Looking back once and setting Portia's coat down, she steps outside.

MOONLIGHT floods the back porch. Leaves CRINKLE as the wind HOWLS. Mira leans against the porch railing.

LYRA (O.S)

What are you doing out here, little
bird?

Mira whirls. Lyra sits in the SHADOWS, smoking a cigarette. The moonlight makes the gold in her dress GLOW.

LYRA (CONT'D)

You were the one watching me dance.

(beat)

Mira nods.

MIRA

They don't like you very much.

Lyra chuckles.

LYRA

No, I suppose they don't.

MIRA

Why?

LYRA

Because I left. Because I came back.

Lyra stands and walks toward Mira. She snuffs out her cigarette.

MIRA

Why do they say those things about you?

Lyra studies Mira. The distant HUM of the piano drifts between them.

LYRA

I forget what it's like at your age. When you're young, the world makes sense. You think people are kind because they should be. That if you follow the rules, life will be fair.

Lyra kneels to meet Mira's eye level.

LYRA (CONT'D)

But then you grow up, and you realize- people don't like when you step out of place, when they can't control you. When you choose something different.

MIRA

Like leaving?

Lyra offers a sad smile.

LYRA

Like leaving. Like coming back and refusing to pretend I regret it.

MIRA

Do you regret it?

Lyra looks up at the moon.

LYRA

No. That's what they hate most.

The WIND blows. A stray piece of hair falls into Mira's face. Lyra tucks it behind her ear. The ring on her pinky finger GLINTS in the moonlight.

LYRA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

But that's why we choose not to listen
to them, isn't it?

(beat)

LYRA (CONT'D)

Are you happy here, little bird?

The sound of FOOTSTEPS approach on the other side of the screen door.

PORTIA (O.S.)

Mira! Where are you? Come here now!

MIRA

I don't know.

Lyra holds Mira's gaze. She rises.

LYRA

One day when you do, be brave enough
to do something about it.

Lyra steps off the porch and walks away. Portia barges out.

PORTIA

What are you doing out here? Let's go.

Mira stares where Lyra is disappearing into the night.

PORTIA (O.S.)

Mira, now. I won't say it again.

Mira looks down. Lyra's ring lies on the railing. She slides it onto her pointer finger.

She looks up once more. Lyra is gone. Mira smiles.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END