

Introduction

This is the story of a real person: Isaac Albeniz, a Spanish pianist and composer who lived from 1860 to 1909. His music is pleasant and easy to listen to. It is used now and then in commercials and feature films, so that people have actually heard some of it—without knowing who composed it. If this film is made, the music of Albeniz would become more popular (I mean, outside the classical music circles). People would hear it on the radio and then go and see the film.

Except two short scenes at the beginning where Albeniz is a four or five-year-old child, and one scene at the end where he is 23, he is ten, then twelve and thirteen, throughout the film. The character should be played by a twelve-year-old pianist.

Albeniz

A train somewhere in the American West, circa 1873. Our hero, Isaac Albeniz, is thirteen years old. He is rather rotund and chubby. He should buy new clothes, because his old ones are too small. Besides, they have been worn too much. He is sitting in a first-class carriage or compartment. He stares at a passenger who seems to be a gentleman, if this means anything in the wild West circa 1872.

ALBENIZ. Excuse me, sir. Are you going to San Francisco ? (He speaks with a Spanish accent).

GENTLEMAN. Yes, my boy. That's where I live, actually.

ALBENIZ. Do they have concert halls, there?

GENTLEMAN. Why, of course. San Francisco is a big city. We have everything. Theaters and music halls everywhere! We love entertainment, my boy. We're even building a new theater for the grand opera. Are you an amateur of music?

ALBENIZ. I would like to give concerts. I am a pianist. My name is Isaac Albeniz. May I ask you what is your profession, sir?

GENTLEMAN. I'm a banker. My name is Douglas. J. Adams. I'm sure you've heard of Golden Gate National Bank. That's my baby!

ALBENIZ. Many people have told me that there was gold in the hills of California. So you built the gate of your bank out of pure gold!

GENTLEMAN. Good gracious, I wish I had! No, Golden Gate is the name we give to the entrance to our bay. Don't expect to find gold in those hills. The famous gold rush has been over for more than twelve years. People did earn lots of money, though, and built a beautiful city. Why, we even financed part of this railway line. It crosses the United States all the way to the Atlantic ocean, you know.

ALBENIZ. I know. I come from New York City. Oh, I didn't travel straight from New York City right now, but I stopped in many places. As a banker, I'm sure you are interested in earning more money.

GENTLEMAN. Well... You're a clever little lad. Precocious... Are you going to tell me of some money-making scheme?

ALBENIZ. You should finance my concerts.

GENTLEMAN. Finance your concerts? This is a rather surprising proposition. Aren't you a little young, actually, to give concerts? Why would anybody come listen to

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your concerts? Before investing money, we bankers need to be sure that we'll get satisfying returns.

ALBENIZ. The whole point is that I'm young. I'm thirteen, but we can pretend I'm twelve. In Spain, I was known as the new Mozart. People flocked to my concerts. Let me show you my travel book.

He opens a medium-sized canvas bag or pouch and shows the banker a kind of big scrapbook, bound in red leather, with bits of paper sticking out here and there. Opening the scrapbook to its first page, he unfolds a poster that says: "Théâtre Romea, Barcelone. Isaac Albeniz, le nouveau Mozart, grand récital de piano, 24 septembre 1864"

ALBENIZ. This was my first concert, sir. I was only four years old. My dear papa rented the theater. It was a great success.

His voice becomes a voice over, as we see him as a four-year-old child on the stage of theater Romea. He wears a cute yellow musketeer's costume, with a feathered hat, a white lace collar and cuffs, white stockings and a tiny sword. His father, don Angel Albeniz, gives an introductory speech. He is also quite rotund and chubby. We can accept that don Angel and all the other characters, who belong to a story told in English by Albeniz, speak English themselves—with a trace of accent or even no accent at all.

DON ANGEL. Ladies and Gentlemen, I wrote on the program, "The new Mozart." You'll soon judge by yourselves whether this claim is exaggerated. When he was still a babe in arms, my son Isaac would stop sucking his mother's breast whenever he heard music. He never cried, since we could quieten him easily by singing any song. Soon after celebrating his first birthday and walking his first timid steps, he approached the piano and hit the keys with his tiny hands. We were amazed to discover that he reproduced precisely the rhythm of a bugle that we heard twice a day, as we lived close to military barracks. I found a piano master, don Narciso Oliveras, who accepted to live in our home and give him lessons every day. As a result, this child learned music at the same time as his mother tongue. Chords and melodies speak to him. He enjoys reading a Beethoven sonata as we do a poem. What are you going to play for us, Isaac?"

ALBENIZ (four-year-old voice). A mazurka by Chopin, father.

Albeniz

He bends to salute the public. The tip of his toy sword pops upward. He sits on a little stepladder and plays his Chopin piece without any error. Then he salutes again. The spectators applaud and shout “Bravo! Bravo!”

Sceptics jump onto the stage and look inside the piano, to check whether no dwarf pianist is hidden inside. This makes the child quite angry.

ALBENIZ. Are you deaf? Haven't you heard me play? I'm Albeniz, the new Mozart!

(Albeniz will play piano music, now and then, throughout the movie. I don't know whether we should also be hearing background music like in other movies. Would this background music be made of Albeniz compositions?)

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Back to Albeniz and the banker in the train. Albeniz shows the gentleman a new page of his travel book. Pictures and mementoes of Paris are stuck on the page.

ALBENIZ. The concerts brought in lots of money. Believe me, it can be a very profitable business. When I was five, my parents had an argument. My father wanted to go on with the concerts, but my mother said I should study music in a school. I think she wanted to invest the money I earned before my father spent it all. We went to Paris. I studied with monsieur Marmontel, the most famous teacher they have. I'm sure you've heard about him. After six months or so, he thought I was ready to enter the Paris Conservatoire as a pupil.

As before, the voice of Albeniz becomes a voice over. We discover a room in the Paris Conservatory of music. A piano with a high chair, etc. Albeniz is sitting on a bench with his mother and one of his older sisters, Clementine—two more rotund characters. The child is one year older than before, but the main visible difference is that he doesn't wear the yellow musketeer's costume. Some old gentleman are huddled in a corner.

MOTHER (talking in the child's ear): Stay quiet. Stop jumping and fidgeting. Be a good boy. Sit straight.

ALBENIZ (five-year-old voice). What are we waiting for? What happens now?

Albeniz

MOTHER. The jury is deliberating.

ALBENIZ. Who's this jury ?

MOTHER. The gentleman who listened when you played the piano.

ALBENIZ. You mean the old gizzards over there...

The child has been sitting long enough. He gets up, hops around the room, then finds a ball in his pocket and throws it up and down. He breaks a window. The jury members seem as unhappy as if they had to pay the new window out of their own pockets. Clementine goes and asks them whether they're going to accept Albeniz in the Conservatory.

CLEMENTINE (coming back to Albeniz and his mother). They say you're too young.

You should come back and try again next year.

ALBENIZ. I may be too young, but they're too old.

MOTHER. I had told you to control yourself and stay quite. We've taken all these lessons with monsieur Marmontel and now, what are we going to do? We wasted our money.

ALBENIZ. I don't like your monsieur Marmontel. I'll be glad to go back to Barcelona.

* * *

Back to the American train. Maybe we see the Rocky mountains through the window. Albeniz turns pages of his travel book. Glued mementoes illustrate what he says: pictures or photographs of him getting older, concert advertisements, etc.

ALBENIZ. During the next two years, I toured the north of Spain with my sister Clementine. I played in town halls and concert halls, on good pianos and terrible pianos, in front of refined people and peasants who came to see the famous child prodigy. Everybody in Spain knew el nuevo Mozart! We had to stop because there was a revolution in 1868. When people fight in the streets, they don't go to concerts. Also, my poor sister Enriqueta died of typhus. She was not yet twenty and intended to be a school teacher. They didn't tell me she was dead. They said she was travelling, like me. I was expecting her return.

BANKER. I didn't know there was a revolution in Spain.

ALBENIZ. Spain is very far from here... We would like to have a republic, like you, but tyranny prevails.

Albeniz

BANKER. I had never even heard of this city of yours, Baracuda. Is it the main city in Spain?

ALBENIZ. Barcelona. No, the main city is Madrid, our capital. We moved there, actually. My mother still wanted me to study music. I didn't go to Paris again, but became a student in the Madrid Conservatory. My teacher, don Mendizabal, forced me to practice scales and arpeggios all day long. What a bore! I was very unhappy. He pretended there was a good way of playing Chopin and a bad way. I preferred the bad way, of course. My mother said I had to obey him, because he knew what was good for me. He is severe for your own good, she said. If you listen to him carefully, she said, you may become a teacher in the Conservatory yourself, some day. I didn't want to become a music teacher, especially not a teacher like don Mendizabal. Have you ever played scales and arpeggios?

BANKER. Honestly, never.

ALBENIZ. I played scales and arpeggios for years. I was becoming a lunatic, fit for the insane asylum. Besides, my home was a crazy place. My parents and sisters always quarrelled when we sat down to eat dinner, as if their shouts could somehow spice the soup. My sister Blanca would ask for money...

The voice of Albeniz gradually becomes a voice over. Albeniz, his two parents and two older sisters are eating dinner in their Madrid apartment. Albeniz is now a chubby twelve-year-old boy. Everybody is quite rotund in the Albeniz family. Maybe they eat too much and forget to chew because they talk while they eat. Or it has something to do with genes and bone structure.

BLANCA. Oh, papa, please.

MOTHER. You should not talk when your mouth is full, miss.

BLANCA. It eage awful. I am sho poor!

DON ANGEL. There's no money left, so stop bothering me.

BLANCA. My dreshes are sho old! How will I find a husband?

CLEMENTINE (laughing). You don't find a husband with a dress! You need a pretty nose or, for want of it, a dowry. In your case, I suggest a dowry...

BLANCA. As for you, even a dowry would not suffice. Oh, father, please, give us shome money! We're your daughters, aren't we?

MOTHER. Don't be fresh with your father, miss.

DON ANGEL. Let Isaac go on tour.

Albeniz

ISAAC. Oh yes. What a good idea, papa! Clementine will come with me. Do I still have a musketeer's costume left? We would print a new poster: El nuevo Mozart is back!

MOTHER. Isaac must stay here and practice his piano. The tours are over. The last one earned no money.

DON ANGEL. Blame it on the revolution. Now the country is quiet again. People are getting rich. At the customs office, I see what they buy in France and try to smuggle in.

MOTHER. We would also be rich, my friend, if you had invested the tour money. Instead of securing your children's future, you spend everything gambling and drinking and with these girls on calle de Avignon.

DON ANGEL (feigning anger to shorten the conversation). What are you talking about? What girls? Calle de Avignon is in Barcelona. There is no calle de Avignon in Madrid.

MOTHER. You know what I mean. He'll stay in the Conservatory. Mozart practised his scales!

Don Angel breaks a glass to escape this ridiculous scene. He swears, stands up and slams the door on his way out. The sisters and the mother scream. Albeniz hums some music, drums imaginary piano on the table, looks at a black statue standing on a piece of furniture between the two windows—a naked idol, which don Angel confiscated in the customs. He also looks longingly at his old poster, hanging from the wall in a pretty frame: "Théâtre Romea, Barcelone. Isaac Albeniz, le nouveau Mozart, grand récital de piano, 24 septembre 1864"

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Back to the train. It might stop for a refill of water, etc.

ALBENIZ. Their quarrels were so boring... We musicians have delicate ears. Screams hurt us more than other people. I was wasting my life practising scales for don Menzidabal and trying to play Chopin the right way. Besides, his breath stank of garlic. One morning, when I was ten years old, I woke up very early...

His voice becomes a voice over. We see a dark bedroom. Through the curtained window, a vague gray light announces that dawn is on the way. The sisters' bodies,

Albeniz

somewhat uncovered because Spain is a very hot country, glow quietly in the dark. Isaac gets up silently, pulls a yellow musketeer's costume hidden under his bed, puts it on.

ALBENIZ (vo). This was not the same costume I wore for my first concert. Mama had made two other ones since. It didn't have a sword anymore.

He puts his leather-bound travel book into his bag.

ALBENIZ (vo). The travel book was papa's idea. Whenever I played in front of distinguished people, I asked them to sign their name.

With his bag on his back and his shoes in his hands, he walks down the stairs very carefully. He opens the main door and goes out. The street is empty and silent.

ALBENIZ (vo). Although I wanted to travel freely across the vast expanses of the world, I hesitated. Would I be able to give concerts without the help of Clementine? Could I live without my parents? I told myself that my real parents were Bach, Mozart, Scarlatti, Chopin. I had to take a decision, because I saw my dear papa coming back home. I walked away. He didn't see me...

Don Angel couldn't see an elephant. He looks at the ground and at his feet. Keeping his feet on the ground and moving them in a straight line seems to be very difficult.

ALBENIZ (vo). I went to the Atocha railway station. I didn't enter it through the main gate, because I didn't have a train ticket...

He climbs over a fence (We don't have to show the main station building). He walks across a hall full of parcels and luggage. He is fascinated by a huge steam engine. Blackened engineers are feeding it shovels of coal.

ALBENIZ (to the engineers). It spits fire, like a dragon.

ENGINEERS. The dragon is ready to crawl away. You'd better go and sit inside its tail!

Albeniz

Albeniz looks inside the first railway car with distaste. The passengers seem rather dirty. Some of them are bringing along hens, ducks and even pigs. Albeniz prefers the comfort of a first-class compartment. A señora dressed in black and a hidalgo with heavy gray whiskers and a gold watch-chain are already seated there. Albeniz sits near the window, looks outside, seems quite nervous. The station master shouts some garbled words. The engine whistles.

ALBENIZ (laughing). A D sharp! The engine whistles a D sharp!

The train moves slowly, by fits and starts. The señora crosses herself, with a frightened look. Albeniz tries to reassure her, but he wouldn't speak so fast if he wasn't a little worried himself.

ALBENIZ. Have you never been on a train, madam? Me, I'm not afraid. I travelled on a train several times. I went to Saragossa, to Burgos, to Valladolid, to Lerida, to Bilbao. I even went to Paris, in France! It is written in my travel book.

He pulls the red travel book from his bag. He shows it to the señora. He points with his finger. He turns pages. He bothers everybody like a rude child. Suddenly, the compartment becomes pitch-black. The señorita shrieks in panic.

ALBENIZ (laughing wildly). It is a tunnel! The train burrows through the mountain like a mole! I'm not afraid.

As soon as the train is out of the tunnel, Albeniz shows his travel book to the noble hidalgo.

ALBENIZ. This is my sister Clementine and this is my papa. Since this picture was taken, he has become even stouter. This is the poster for my first concert. I was only four years old. Now I'm ten.

HIDALGO. Let's see. Oh oh, Isaac Albeniz, the new Mozart! Is it you? I remember you, yes, I remember. In Burgos, in Valladolid, in Paris... So tell me, new Mozart, do you still play the piano?

ALBENIZ. Of course. Actually, I'm starting on a grand tour around the country.

HIDALGO. A grand tour? Alone?

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. Well... Ahem... Alone? It is because of my father... My poor papa. He is quite ill, sir. I need money to cure my poor papa. Medicines are very expensive. He overworked himself. He doesn't sleep enough. He has gout, kidney stones and, hmm, diabetes. He is paralysed. My mother is very sad. He must go to a spa in France and consult the best surgeon. My mama told me: "Isaac, you must go on tour, you're our only hope."

From one train to another. Albeniz speaking to the banker in the Rockies:

ALBENIZ. As a fact, unbeknownst to me, my dear papa was not well at all. Clementine told me about it later.

We see don Angel vomiting in the kitchen sink. We hear his wife's voice:

MOTHER (wearing her night-gown). Angel, where are you? Isaac has vanished!

SISTERS. Papa, papa! He went away...

DON ANGEL. Leave me alone. Why do you bother me about such a trifle? This child is an ungrateful cur. Good riddance. Bringing a child into the world is a crime. Sooner or later, you receive the punishment you deserve, and the child himself is the executioner.

MOTHER (crying). What are you talking about? You're a monster. The child is only ten years old. I'll die of grief.

DON ANGEL. If grief could kill, I would be dead already. I bungled my life the day I married you. The scoundrel owes me everything. I turned him into the new Mozart. I discovered his talent before he could even walk, when I saw him hiding under the piano during his sisters' lessons. I hired don Narciso Oliveras full time to teach him music. It cost me a fortune. I organized his first concert. (Broken voice, close to tears). Do you remember how sweet he was in his little page costume?

MOTHER. He took his last yellow costume. He hadn't worn it for more than a year. And also, his travel book, as if he wanted to go on tour again.

DON ANGEL. The tour money belongs to me. I'll send the Guardia Civil after him.

MOTHER. Why don't you? You talk a lot, but you never do anything.

Back to the American train.

BANKER. Did the hidalgo believe your story about your father?

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. Of course.

In the Spanish train. The hidalgo's generous but ironic smile shows that he doesn't believe a word of the child's story.

HIDALGO. Listen, new Mozart, I am the mayor of El Escorial. If you want, I can gather a few people for an improvised concert tonight in the palace.

ALBENIZ. This train goes to El Escorial? But this is very close to Madrid. I could have walked there. I want to visit Granada and Cadiz.

HIDALGO. It is a local train. Haven't you read the panels in the railway-station?

ALBENIZ. Hmm, read the panels? I looked at the steam-engine...

A music room in El Escorial palace. Albeniz plays the end of Mozart's "Turkish March" sonata for twenty noble patrons. When he comes to the staccato part, he jumps on his seat and his ball falls out of his pocket. He looks at it, but instead of interrupting the sonata to pick it up, he adapts the tempo of his play to the ball's bounces. The spectators smile, but they are too distinguished and polite to really enjoy the scene. After warm applause, he improvises some wild encores. Then he asks the gentlemen and ladies to sign his travel book.

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The El Escorial railway-station. Albeniz is sitting in the same first-class compartment as the day before. There's another passenger: a young lady. The hidalgo is standing outside and talking through the open window.

ALBENIZ (vo). The mayor of El Escorial let me sleep in his house. Then he drove me to the station in his buggy.

HIDALGO. I bought your train ticket. I hope you understand that you shouldn't take a train without a ticket. Here's your fee for yesterday's concert. Spend it to buy medicines for your, ahem, sick papa. This train goes back to Madrid, so you can see him soon. You play well, but you should stay in your family and study some more. You'll go on tour again when you're older. Well, the train is going to depart. Farewell, my child, and good luck!

ALBENIZ. Thank you, sir. Thank you for everything. I'll take good care of my good papa! You know what? It is not the same engine. It whistles a B flat!

Albeniz

After a very short while, he stops waving to the hidalgo and counts his money. The young lady smiles politely. Moved at seeing this child all by himself in this new kind of transportation, she begins a conversation.

YOUNG LADY. Are you going to Madrid, my child?

ALBENIZ. No, señorita, I get off at the next station. I bring money to my papa, who is ill.

YOUNG LADY. I hope it is not too serious.

ALBENIZ. He caught it in a bordello.

YOUNG LADY. Oh!

Albeniz interrupts his trip in the first station. He walks away from the railroad. That is, he is neither going towards Madrid nor towards El Escorial. His yellow costume is definitely too small.

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The American train stops in a small pioneers' city.

ALBENIZ. Do they have a concert hall, here?

BANKER. I guess not.

ALBENIZ. I played in cities that were not much bigger than this one. I played in schools, in churches, in palaces. I asked people where they danced on Saturday nights. There was always someone willing to rent a hall. Sometimes it was the city's mayor, sometimes a noble gentleman or a real theater owner. They always promised me wonderful fees, and the hall was always full, but costs seemed to eat the profits in some mysterious way.

We see a discussion with a theater owner:

THEATER OWNER. Look, señor. This number represents the hall's rent, this one is for printing the posters. The printer had to hurry and stop his other jobs, so he doubled his usual fee. You may notice that the number of paying seats is inferior to the total number of seats. The reason is that we have to give free seats to the city notables...

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. I don't understand your numbers. This is more difficult than harmony and counterpoint. Are you sure you only owe me two pesetas ?

THEATER OWNER. Definitely. Do not forget that we housed and fed you. We have some posters left. You can keep them if you want.

ALBENIZ (in the American train). I knew they were cheating me, but what could I do? I discovered that I became angry easily, like my dear parents, but that it was useless. They could throw me away without any fee, after all. I learned patience and humility. At least I insisted on staying in good hotels and eating a hearty meal before my concert. When they wrote the accounts, the theater directors and the mayors put down extraordinary sums for my meals, as if I had eaten caviar and ortolans while drinking old Burgundy.

BANKER. How long did your tour last?

ALBENIZ. A few weeks.

BANKER. Didn't your parents worry?

ALBENIZ. Not at all.

The Albeniz dining room in Madrid. While Mrs Albeniz is mending a dress or a shirt, her daughters are cutting newspaper articles about Isaac.

CLEMENTINE. Listen, papa: "The young prodigy, Isaac Albeniz... A recital yesterday evening... He asked the audience to suggest some tunes, which he developed brilliantly."

DON ANGEL. Young prodigy? Who says so?

CLEMENTINE. La Gazetta de Villalba, papa, three weeks ago.

DON ANGEL. Villalba... I didn't know they had a theater in Villalba. A bad journalist. He doesn't say whether there was a full house.

MOTHER. Neither does he say whether Isaac has a cold and eats well. You cut up newspapers like children, instead of finding a way to have him back.

BLANCA. Papa! Papa! He gave a concert in Zamora. Look! He played the Mozart variations on a minuet by Duport and the Schumann Fantasy.

DON ANGEL. I spent good money so he could learn the music of these foreign composers, Mozart and Beethoven and Jopin...

BLANCA. Chopin, papa!

DON ANGEL. ...and the scale and the G key and the F key. He is going to earn millions, but he owes everything to me. It is my money. I would be a vlistuoso, too,

Albeniz

if I could have studied when I was a child. A young child learns as if by magic, like a bird. All the money he earns belongs to me. I understand music better than he does. Instead of playing all these foreign composers, I would compose good Spanish music. I would take to the road. Tonight I sleep here, tomorrow night there. Under the starry sky. Nobody bothering me. He is lucky.

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ALBENIZ (in the American train). Do you remember how the mayor of El Escorial put me in the train to Madrid? I did return to Madrid, eventually. But there were no hidalgos and señoritas in my compartment...

As his voice becomes a voice over, we see him in a third class compartment between two armed policemen or guards. His hands are tied by leather handcuffs.

ALBENIZ. You're abusing your powers. I'll complain to my father.

GUARD. Your father himself asked us to arrest you. We nearly caught you in Salamanca, then in Zamora. We thought that after Zamora, you would go to Burgos, so we waited for you there.

ALBENIZ. I once took a train to Paris. It is the capital of France!

GUARD. Well, this train is going to Madrid. It is the capital of Spain.

The Albeniz dining room.

DON ANGEL. Sinche the war began between Franche and Prussia, there's a lot of smuggling acrosh the Pyreanean mountains. The empresh Eugénie has gone to England.

BLANCA. Poor Eugénie. She should never have married the fat emperor.

DON ANGEL. They'll shertainly proclaim a republic. They're right. Kings and emperors are ugeless. Power should belong to everybody, like in old Athens.

MOTHER. What are you talking about? The country would soon be in shambles if they started taking the advice of fools like you! (Turning towards the maid, who just came in). Yes, Celestina, what is it? (The maid whispers into her ear). What? Isaac? Guards? Angel, guards are bringing back Isaac. I understand: you sent them after him. My God, how dreadful! Don't you ever use your brain? Brought back like a thief in full daylight... What will the neighbors think?

Albeniz

DON ANGEL. You're always complaining. First you say I incite him to abscond and I do nothing to bring him home, then you protest when I do bring him home. What do I care? I'm the head of this wretched family, anyway. He's my son. All the money he earns belongs to me.

The two guards bring Albeniz into the room. His mother doesn't know whether she should faint or not. Don Angel whispers a few words to the guards and gives them money discreetly. They untie the child's handcuffs and leave.

Don Angel catches his son in order to give him a sound beating.

DON ANGEL. I'll show you! I'll teach you to go away! You scamp!

The child wriggles and escapes between his father's legs. Clementine and Blanca, who were trying to protect him, receive all the blows! Albeniz laughs so much that he has to sit on the ground. Don Angel stops because he must catch his breath.

DON ANGEL. The lord mayor of El Escorial came here two days after you disappeared. You promised this gentleman you would come back home. He asked about my health as if it was a funny subject. You told him I had caught all the illnesses in the world. I felt ridiculous in front of that nobleman! You're a liar and a scoundrel. After all the sacrifices I made for your education!

ALBENIZ (with irony in his voice). I'm glad to see that you regained your health, my dear papa. Look, I gathered dozens of new signatures in my travel book. This one is your lord mayor's. I went to Saragossa and Segovia. I wanted to visit my country. Look, the countess Viñez de Marbella wrote: "Mozart reborn." This is the signature of a Russian prince. His name is Romolov or something.

BLANCA. Don't you have a signature in Chinese?

ALBENIZ. I'll have one some day! (He sits at the piano). I heard a pretty song in the streets of Valladolid, accompanied by a guitar.

He imitates the guitar by playing arpeggios with his left hand, while the right hand sings the melody.

* * *

In the American train.

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. I could bear the quarrels in my family and the useless lessons of don Mendizabal, but I suffered terribly every morning at dawn. I yearned for mountain trails, cool valleys, deep skies. I needed to hear the songs of birds, peasants and gypsies. I went away again.

BANKER. Still disguised as a musketeer?

ALBENIZ. No, this time I was wearing a gray woollen suit, which the tailor on calle Montoya had cut for me. I headed south. I wanted to see the perfumed gardens of Andalusia. Instead of travelling by train, I walked. (His voice turns into a voice over and we see what he describes). Thus I could stop wherever I wanted and sleep under the scintillating cupola of the night sky. I got up when the last star departed with a last wink. I saw the big fuzzy ball of the sun pop up every morning. I drank the springs' singing water and bathed in the lazy rivers. Marvellous melodies came to me when I walked in the fresh morning air.

After walking uphill in the hot midday sun, he sits under a tree for a siesta. A thief, who may have been following him for a while, crawls towards him to steal his bag. Suddenly, a knife flies through the air. The thief screams and runs away. Albeniz sits up. He sees the fleeing thief and the knife sticking from the tree trunk, still quivering. The knife-thrower shakes hand with Albeniz. He unloads a heavy basket he carries on his back and sets it on the ground. It is full of knives.

SANCHO. Hello. My name is Sancho.

ALBENIZ. I'm Isaac. The man was going to steal my bag, I guess, or worse. Thank you!

SANCHO. Don't mention it.

ALBENIZ. You certainly know how to use a knife. Why do you own so many? Are you a knife-thrower in a circus or something?

SANCHO. I'm a knife-grinder. I sell them, I repair them and I sharpen them.

ALBENIZ. I'm a pianist.

SANCHO. You make pianos?

ALBENIZ. No, I Play music on them.

SANCHO. Is this a profession?

ALBENIZ. Of course. I give concerts. People buy seats and applaud me.

SANCHO (after a puzzled pause: he has never heard of such a strange job). Yeah...

What makes a good Toledo blade is the way you soak it to chill it. Our elders knew

Albeniz

how to chill a blade. They would thrust it into a prisoner's body. Then they would chop his head in one blow. Like this, you understand.

ALBENIZ. Don't they do it anymore?

SANCHO. Nowadays, you can't do nothing. They chill steel in water. I've been told that old blacksmiths use sheep blood. Bah, sheep blood! The sword will be good for fighting sheep.

ALBENIZ. My master, don Mendizabal, says that pianos have improved a lot since he was young. I don't know whether they chill the strings in sheep blood.

SANCHO. No doubt, they make pianos, toys for dames, instead of forging strong blades for men.

They stop for the night. Sancho empties his basket and turns it upside down. He raises one side with a wooden stick that he has tied with a piece of string. He scatters a few hazelnuts under the basket.

SANCHO. When the squirrel is under the basket, I pull the string and the basket falls down upon him. You understand?

They move back and wait until a squirrel comes. None does.

SANCHO (low angry voice). Stop singing. You scare the squirrel!

ALBENIZ. Was I singing? I'm sorry.

SANCHO. In my village, we thank heaven, whether it sends us good rain or a storm that destroys the crops. God knows His business.

ALBENIZ. The squirrel should thank heaven. Thank you, o heaven, for sending me a hunter who can't stop singing!

SANCHO. We can thank heaven for the hazelnuts. I also have some bread and cheese.

He cuts the bread and cheese with one of his knives. He hands his flask of brandy to Albeniz, who doesn't know what to do with it. Curiosity and fear of offending his new companion overcoming his shyness, he takes a few sips. He coughs and hiccups. Sancho laughs.

ALBENIZ. This poison burns my entrails! It gave me the hiccups!

SANCHO. Try smoking my cigar: your hiccups will go away.

Albeniz

Albeniz tries to smoke. He coughs more, but his hiccup is gone... He gets up to stretch his legs. He staggers.

ALBENIZ. Strange... My papa, that's the way he walks after a night on the town...

He tries to catch a firefly, but falls on the ground. Sancho laughs so much that he catches the hiccups.

* * *

Early next morning. Sancho, who isn't much older than Albeniz, sharpens one of his knives, then pretends to shave. He sings old songs from Andalusia. (Their tunes and oriental modulations will be heard later in the music composed by Albeniz).

The two friends walk through a poor village. Black-dressed women glide like shadows along the walls of the house. Albeniz talks to some villagers, moving his fingers on an imaginary keyboard, but they shake their head, as if they didn't understand what he says.

ALBENIZ. I wanted to find a piano, to show you what I can do. They don't have one.

They're so poor that they don't even have an organ in the church.

SANCHO. I like it better this way. I don't have enough money to listen to you.

ALBENIZ. No no, it's not as if you couldn't listen to me unless you paid! I can play for free!

On the road. A peasant lets them sit in his cart.

PEASANT. I know you, knife-grinder.

SANCHO. I came here last year.

PEASANT. You found a new apprentice?

ALBENIZ. I'm a musician. I come from Madrid.

PEASANT. Madrid? That's pretty far from here. Some day, I'll go away. This land is too poor. Nothing grows. My brother went to the province of Cuba. He sailed on a ship with three masts.

ALBENIZ. Didn't she capsize?

PEASANT. The devil sent a wild storm. The waves of the ocean rose higher than the ship's masts. The passengers prayed the Virgin Mary. They arrived safely in Cuba.

Albeniz

My brother dictated a letter. The schoolmaster read it to me. In Cuba, bread grows on trees.

ALBENIZ. White bread or brown bread? My father went to Cuba as a customs officer. He didn't bring back any of this bread, but only sugar cane.

PEASANT. That's what he wrote. Bread tree. A fruit that tastes like flour. You cook it like bread. They have all kinds of fruit. When they're ripe, they fall from the branch. You just have to bend down and pick them up. And women. As many as you want. Like fruit.

SANCHO. Ripe?

PEASANT (laughing). You're clever, knife-grinder. Black women. Slaves they bought in Africa. They pretend to be Christian, my brother says, but they worship wooden idols secretly.

They stop at a big house near a river. The peasant and Sancho enter the house, but tell Albeniz to wait for them outside.

PEASANT. You're too young.

ALBENIZ. I'm not a child anymore. I know this place is a dancing-hall with girls. I have played piano in such places.

He stays outside. Two young girls come out. They may be fifteen or sixteen years old. They wear old wrinkled dresses. Their faces are painted in a clumsy fashion. It should be clear that Sancho, the peasant and the girls belong to "the people", whereas Albeniz is a young bourgeois.

GIRLS. Where do you come from?

ALBENIZ. Madrid. I am a pianist. I'm going on tour across the ocean. I'll give concerts in Cuba.

GIRLS. Is it beautiful, in Madrid?

ALBENIZ. Andalusia is more beautiful, and Cuba even more. Tell me, what's this house? A dancing hall?

GIRLS. It's a house... A house for men.

ALBENIZ. But you... Do you work in there? What do you do?

GIRLS (laughing). Don't you know? Don't they do it, in Madrid? Come back in five years... Don't forget to bring money!

ALBENIZ. Do you have a piano, in there?

Albeniz

GIRLS. Yes, we do. Every Saturday, an orchestra comes and we dance.

Albeniz enters the house with the girls. He tries playing, but the piano is badly out of tune. He gets a tuning key from his bag. The strange sounds he extracts from the instrument while tuning it attract other girls and customers, including Sancho and the peasant. Then he plays. He improvizes music after the songs Sancho sang when he shaved. Sancho, stares, dumbfounded. Everybody applauds. Albeniz plays lively music, so that the girls and the customers can dance. Eventually, the peasant and Sancho move on, but Albeniz stays behind to get his fill of music-playing.

* * *

In the American train. Albeniz shows his tuning key to the banker.

ALBENIZ. Do you have bandits here?

BANKER. We call them outlaws. We used to have plenty during the gold rush. This part of the world was known as the Wild West.

ALBENIZ. After staying a few days in that house and playing piano for the girls, I took a stagecoach to Cordoba. Bandits attacked us in the Sierra Morena.

We see the stagecoach, pulled by eight mules, escalating a steep road. Albeniz is dozing in the afternoon heat. Suddenly, screams and gun shots wake him up. Bandits, armed with antique muskets, have blocked the road with branches just after a bend. The mules stop, the armed guard sitting next to the coachman falls down onto the mules, losing his gun. The bandits find this quite funny, the passengers less so. The bandits pull them out of the coach and begin to empty their bags, looking for valuables. They even steal the gentlemen's boots. Albeniz resists.

ALBENIZ. Leave my bag alone. It contains nothing of value. This is my tuning key. You don't need music scores, do you? I won't let you...

He begins to fight. The bandits' leader, a very hairy man, approaches to see what the disturbance is about. Albeniz show him a music score.

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. I'll die of hunger if you take my music scores. I also need my tuning key and my travel book. Look, señor brigand, this is the signature of the duchess of Alba. She wrote: "My dear Isaac will become a great composer."

BANDIT. Are you a guitar player?

ALBENIZ. I play the piano, señor. But I like to hear the guitar, especially played in the Andalusian manner. Tell me, do you sing brigand songs?

BANDIT. Brigand songs? Well, let me think... I know the Hanged Man's Complaint, but I guess you know it too.

ALBENIZ. Not at all. Please sing it for me, señor.

BANDIT. If you want. (Singing through his beard, with modulations similar to Sancho's):

*I wasn't yet twenty
When the recruiters got me
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
Come here strong feller,
Now you're a soldier
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
Hold your gun high
The enemy is coming nigh
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
I saw on the other side
A poor man trying to hide
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
I shot him in the head
And then he was dead
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
I ran away
Became a thief on the highway
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
I thought I was quite far*

Albeniz

From the bloody war
Radabom, bom, bom
Shall I ever see my mom?
But the guards caught me
And now I hang from a tree
Radabom, bom, bom
Never shall I see my mom!

While he sings, the bandits frisk the passengers. The men try to protest when the bandits begin frisking the women, but the bandits know their business: they keep them away with a few precise blows. The ladies scream, the bandits imitate their screams for fun.

Albeniz sings in harmony with the bandit, let's say a major third higher.

BANDIT (joking). You sing better than I do, musician. Why don't you join our troop to serenade us?

ALBENIZ (seriously). I am willing to become a bandit, señor, but I beg you to steal a piano and put it in your den, as I need to practice my instrument.

BANDIT. A piano in my den? Hmm... I'd better let you go. You should play for ladies and gentlemen, not for brigands.

ALBENIZ. But señor brigand, you forgot to sign my travel book!

BANDIT. Ahem! You want me to sign... (He signs with a cross). You'll tell the duchess of Alba that this is the mark of don Feliz, whom you met in the Sierra Morena.

PASSENGERS (muttering). Oh, don Feliz... It is don Feliz... My God!

The stagecoach has resumed its journey. Albeniz sings the Hanged Man's Complaint, sotto voce. He is so happy at having kept his travel book and other goods that he can't help laughing aloud. This makes the other passengers, who lost money and jewelry, quite angry. A big fat bourgeois jumps at him:

BOURGEOIS. I'll teach you to sing!

LADIES (protecting Albeniz). Come on, leave him alone; he is only a child.

* * *

Albeniz

In the American train... He shows the banker the mark left by don Feliz in his travel book. A green feather is glued on the next page.

ALBENIZ. Where do you think this feather comes from?

BANKER. I don't know... Cuba, maybe.

ALBENIZ. I picked it up in the streets of Cadiz.

The streets of Cadiz, a great harbor in Andalusia. Albeniz walks the streets like a tourist in a museum, looking with wonder at fishing nets and wooden barrels. High masts and sails can be seen in the distance. Bearded sailors speak of storm-jibs, boom gallows, reef cringles, whales, China sea typhoons, Zanzibar girls and Macao girls. A fat sailor carries a rainbow-colored parrot on his shoulder. A black woman, whose dress is as colored as the parrot's, walks at his side. A cat jumps towards the parrot, who shrieks threateningly enough to scare it. Some feathers fly. Albeniz picks up the green feather.

Albeniz goes to the beach. He takes off his shoes and walks in the water.

The streets of Cadiz fascinate him so much that he is still walking them after sundown. Suddenly, he freezes: don Angel is entering a tavern with two girls.

* * *

He is lying on bales of newspapers in a dark room.

ALBENIZ (voice over). I was pretty sure that my papa was looking for me. I wanted to leave Cadiz as fast as possible. I hid in the belly of a ship. The great symphony of wind and waves rocked me to sleep. I heard voices as in a dream...

SAILOR 1 (holding a lantern). A stow-away!

SAILOR 2. I told you some ham and apples were missing.

SAILOR 1. Poor kid. He chose the wrong ship.

They wake him up and take him to the captain. A large room with wooden panels, maps and harpoons on the walls, stuffed fish, African statue. The captain is visibly a tyrant, as captains were wont to be in 1872.

ALBENIZ. There's a statue just like this one in our home. My father confiscated it as a customs officer.

Albeniz

CAPTAIN. Well, what do we have here? A stow-away! Let me tell you something, my boy: I don't like your kind. So you want to cross the ocean without paying? We're losing the fight against steam-boats, so the last thing we need is passengers who won't pay. The steamers get the millionaires and we get the stow-aways... Did you really think you'd succeed? Didn't they tell you about me in Cadiz? You know the name of this ship, don't you?

ALBENIZ. I am very sorry, but I don't, señor captain.

CAPTAIN. The Santa Maria, like Christopher Columbus's. I am captain Guevara! Everybody knows what I do with stow-aways. Do you know what I do?

ALBENIZ. Please tell me, señor captain.

CAPTAIN. I throw them to the sharks, that's what I do. Good ol' sharks, who follow us as faithfully as dogs and help us get rid of our food scraps. You know what? They love a surprise now and then. You're a delicacy for sharks, my boy.

ALBENIZ. Are you allowed to do this?

CAPTAIN. You bet I am! As the captain of this ship, I'm the master aboard after God. I do what I want and everybody obeys me.

ALBENIZ. What if I pay my passage?

CAPTAIN. Oh, my little friend, if you pay, it is different. Of course, I can keep your money and throw you to the sharks all the same! No, just kidding. If you pay for a first-class cabin, you get a first-class cabin. So you hide money about you... Have you frisked him, you morons?

SAILORS. We found no money, captain.

CAPTAIN. So where did you hide it? In the hold? Tell me everything, my dear first-class passenger.

ALBENIZ. I'll pay you by playing the piano. I'm Isaac Albeniz, the new Mozart. People usually pay a lot to listen to me. Your passengers will appreciate free concerts.

CAPTAIN. Are you serious? What would I gain out of this? Go play the piano for the sharks! My passengers are gentlemen and ladies. They are not interested in some tramp playing music.

ALBENIZ. I'm not a tramp. I'm Isaac Albeniz. Just look inside my travel book.

CAPTAIN. What are you talking about now? What book?

SAILORS. We found this book in his bag, captain.

CAPTAIN. Give it to me.

ALBENIZ. See, captain, I played for the duchess of Alba. This is the signature of monsieur Charles Baudelaire, a famous French poet.

Albeniz

CAPTAIN. Wait for me. Don't let him escape, you fools. I'll show your book to count Sotomayor and see what he says.

ALBENIZ. Count Sotomayor? I know him! He heard me play. The sharks won't get their delicacy!

The captain goes out. Albeniz plays on an imaginary keyboard while humming The Hanged Man's Complaint.

ALBENIZ (voice over). I didn't worry. This captain reminded me of my dear papa: his bark was worse than his bite.

The captain comes back with count Sotomayor, a charming old man.

CAPTAIN. I'm sorry, my child. A ridiculous mistake...

COUNT. Isaac Albeniz, the little pianist... You're not so little anymore, I say. But I recognize you, no doubt about it. This is him, captain, believe me.

ALBENIZ. Hello, your lordship. You save my life!

COUNT. How do I save your life?

ALBENIZ. Without you, a shark would have swallowed me already.

CAPTAIN (embarrassed). Ahem... The child is choking, I mean joking, your excellency. As he forgot to rent a cabin, he was sleeping in a dangerous place and I told him he might fall overboard. You must take a cabin, maestro!

ALBENIZ. A first-class cabin?

CAPTAIN. Well... I'll see if there are any left. First-class if I find one.

* * *

Albeniz plays the piano in the main drawing-room of La Santa-Maria. Oriental carpets cover the floor. Ebony bookshelves carry leather-bound books. Sailors light shining chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. The tables and chairs, as well as the grand piano, are chained to the floor. That's because the floor is always slanted—more or less, according to the strength of the wind. The passengers walk carefully. The count's elder sister never moves without holding the arm of a strong sailor.

Albeniz plays the last notes of a sonata. The passengers (and the sailors) applaud.

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. This was the Beethoven sonata known as The Tempest. Ladies and gentlemen, I am now going to play a piece I composed myself after a song I heard in the sierra Morena, The Hanged Man's Complaint. The singer was the famous bandit don Feliz in person. He had just attacked the Cordoba coach!

PASSENGERS. Oh, ah, don Feliz! The sierra Morena bandit!

ALBENIZ. He asked me to join his troop. "We need brave youngsters like you," he said. I refused, because I didn't want to deprive my dear public of my music. Then don Feliz sang The Hanged Man's Complaint and begged me to compose this music, so he could become famous beyond the seas.

While he plays, a sailor crosses the drawing room, shaking a little bell.

SAILOR. Please beware, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to tack!

The passengers hold onto copper bars screwed to the walls. The floor straightens up slowly, then slants again. The tables and chairs move and creak. Albeniz plays glissandi to accompany the change and loud chords when a teapot falls to the ground.

* * *

The passengers are on the deck, looking at the horizon.

ALBENIZ (voice over). After three weeks at sea, they told us that land was in sight.

COUNT. Look, Isaac, this is El Rio de la Plata!

ALBENIZ. Is it the province of Cuba?

COUNT. Cuba? Why, no... This country is called Argentina. We'll reach the city of Buenos Aires tonight.

ALBENIZ. Does bread grows on trees, here?

COUNT. What a strange idea! To my knowledge, bakers make bread, like everywhere else.

* * *

ALBENIZ (voice over; we see some of the scenes he describes). Life wasn't easy in that country. They had few pianos, mostly out of tune. It didn't help me when I said I was the new Mozart, because they had never heard of Mozart. I slept in a

Albeniz

warehouse behind the harbor. When I found some food, which didn't happen every day, I had to eat it right away, otherwise the rats would come and get it. There were worse dangers than rats. I slept with a knife in my hand—a parting gift of my friend Sancho. (We see him get up in the morning—wide awake instantly). I found a tavern with a clanky upright piano. I slept in the day and played at night. (He smokes a cigar and drinks brandy while playing, without coughing or hiccuping!) They eat meat pastries called empanadas and drink a kind of bitter tea called mate pampero. All the dock-hands and sailors came to know me. As they were not interested in Beethoven, I adapted my manner of playing. (He plays with a scarf over his eyes, than with his back to the piano. The sailors laugh, the girls kiss him.) They play a kind of portable organ called a concertina or accordion. The men and the girls hold each other tight to dance. They call their dance “tango.” Even when their music is fast, it is always sad. It describes the pain of immigrants exiled at the end of the world, renouncing their golden dreams. The people in Argentina are proud and haughty. They hide their gloom, but the accordion wails in their place. One of the girls, Dolorès, had a rich boy friend named Eduardo. He taught me poker and dice.

He plays poker with Dolorès and Eduardo.

EDUARDO. So you can play classical piano... My mother is giving a party to-morrow. Why don't you come and play? She'll pay you well.

He plays Chopin on a grand piano in a bourgeois home.

ALBENIZ (voice over). I remembered Chopin's waltzes and mazurkas perfectly well, but maybe I let the rhythm resemble a tango's. I think I also invented new mazurkas. Nobody cared. They ate and drank without noticing me, as if I was just another servant. I liked playing in the tavern better. After a while, I lived in the tavern, actually. It was more comfortable than the warehouse. No more rats.

He lives in Dolorès's room. We see both of them ready to get up very late in the morning. They sleep in separate beds.

DOLORES. Why do you sleep with a knife under your pillow? Nobody's going to attack you here.

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. I got into this habit when I slept in the warehouse. A good friend gave me this knife in Spain. Are you going to marry Eduardo?

DOLORES. Are you crazy? I hate him. I don't need him, but only his money.

ALBENIZ. If you don't love him, why don't you let me come into your bed?

DOLORES. You're too young. It wouldn't be right. I'll go down and fetch some mate pampero.

ALBENIZ. Coffee for me, please.

He picks up an old Madrid newspaper and reads. Suddenly, we hear the voice of don Angel.

DON ANGEL (in the staircase). I know he lives here. I want to see him. I'm his father.

DOLORES. He is a good kid. Don't be too severe with him.

DON ANGEL. You're a charming young lady. Charming. Let me go! I'm an officer of the law. You shouldn't interfere. You risk consequences...

Albeniz is dressing as fast as he can. He throws his belongings into his bag, not forgetting his precious travel book.

DON ANGEL (panting). Isaac? Are you up there—somewhere? Ah—do you hear me?

ALBENIZ (addressing the door). Is it you, my dear papa? Yes, I hear you perfectly.

What a pleasure! How do you like this marvellous country?

DON ANGEL. I came, ah—to take you back—Time for you—to come home. Your mother—your poor mother—worried—Do you think you can, ah—spend your whole life—having fun?—Am I—having fun? As my son—you must obey me.

Whatever you earn—belongs to me—Please, miss...

ALBENIZ. Good bye, my dear papa. See you soon!

He opens the window and glides down the gutter.

* * *

ALBENIZ (in the American train, showing his travel book to the banker). This is Dolorès's signature. She was a good girl... To put some distance between my father and me, I left Argentina and went to the next country, Uruguay. I walked to the capital, Montevideo. (Voice over, as we see what he describes). I was careful to

Albeniz

walk near the sea, because I was afraid I might get lost in the immensity of the plain they call “pampa.” South America was such a big continent, and I was so small... I slept on the beach. I dreamt of my bedroom in our first apartment, in Barcelona. Having left Spain in winter, I had been pleasantly surprised by the warmth of the weather in Argentina. Now summer was coming, and it was getting colder every day. They told me seasons are upside down in south America, but nobody could explain why. My threadbare suit let the wind chill me to the bones. (He walks the streets of a city, looking like a homeless tramp). Montevideo was a very draughty city. It didn’t help that I had not eaten for several days. I thought of the marvellous soups cooked by my mother and our dear Celestina... I was looking for some empty house to escape the cruel wind and lie down when I heard strains of a familiar music: one of Chopin’s mazurkas.

The music and warm yellow light pour from a house close by. Albeniz finds in himself the strength to walk much faster. A board above the door says “Pension de los Andes.” As the door is wide open, he walks in. A large hall is surrounded by a first-floor gallery leading to bedrooms. At the far end of the hall, a young girl plays on a grand piano. She has jet black hair, almond eyes and a light-brown skin. Her ancestors were probably Incas or other Andes Indians.

ALBENIZ. Your left hand is too loud, so it covers the melody.

ANGELICA (stops playing). Can you play the piano? My name is Angelica. What’s yours?

ALBENIZ. Isaac. I can play, if you want.

He plays the mazurka, much better than the girl. The hotel guests applaud him. He hadn’t even noticed them and seems surprised. They were reading newspapers or playing cards before the dinner. A gray-haired Indian man holds Angelica’s hand. He is obviously her father. His creased face tells of a hard life. A door opened noiselessly while Albeniz played. A beautiful young woman, who could be Angelica’s sister or mother, is standing there with the help of two canes. Her eyes are serious, but not as sad as Angelica’s father.

ALBENIZ (standing up). Here, Angelica. The piano is yours again.

ANGELICA. Oh no! After you, I can’t. Let my sister try. Come on, Laura!

Albeniz

The young woman sits at the piano and plays a Brahms waltz. Albeniz applauds vigorously.

ALBENIZ. What is it?

LAURA. A waltz by Brahms, a young German composer.

ALBENIZ. Wonderful. The name Brahms is vaguely familiar, but I had never heard his music.

In the American train. He shows a few lines of music in his travel book to the banker.

ALBENIZ. I wrote the Brahms waltz here. (He hums it). The father of Angelica and Laura, who owned the pension, asked me to become Angelica's piano teacher. I was replacing Laura, who was very busy in the pension since their mother had died. Besides, there was something wrong with her legs. Her hands were very nimble, though. She was a marvellous cook.

Dinner in the pension. All the guests, as well as Laura and her father, are sitting at a large table. Angelica helps the old servant (a double of Celestina, the servant in the Albeniz home); she runs around the table, light as a fairy. Albeniz is so hungry that he can't stop eating; at the same time, he is quite ebullient and wants to tell his story. Laura smiles at his antics. Her father and the guests (who all seem to be in love with her) are very happy to see her smile.

ALBENIZ. I played for the lord mayor of El Eshcorial... I hid in the hold of the Shanta Maria, but shailors found me... They attacked the shtagecoach in the Shierra Morena... Have you heard of don Felish, the bandit?... I went to Parish and played for the old geezers of the conservatory, but they shaid I was too young because I broke a window... I thought I was going to Cuba, where bread grows on trees... Why isn't this country a provinshe of Shpain, like Cuba? What's itsh name again? Why do you shpeak Shpanish, if you're not Shpanish?

ANGELICA. This is Uruguay! We belonged to Spain, like your Cuba, but we have been free for fifty years. We're not going to change the language we speak just to please you!

ALBENIZ. It's freezing in shummer. It musht really be terrible in winter!

ANGELICA. Winter is now!

Albeniz

* * *

ALBENIZ (voice over). Laura wasn't very strong. She spent a lot of time sitting and resting. I showed her this book.

LAURA (seated in an armchair, knitting; she looks at the poster of the first concert). Is that really you? How pretty! Where did you find the little sword?

ALBENIZ. My father probably brought it back from the customs office. Look, here is the signature of the duchess of Alba.

Angelica pops in and out, carrying bed sheets, pillows, chickens, fruit baskets.

ALBENIZ (voice over). Everybody thought that when Laura laughed or smiled, it meant she was feeling better. I showed her all my tricks!

Albeniz plays the piano with his eyes bound, turning his back to the keyboard, etc. She does laugh and smile. Her father, visible behind a half-opened door, is so happy that he blots out a few tears with his handkerchief.

LAURA. I'd love to see Spain. Did you give concerts everywhere?

ALBENIZ. I went on tour with my sister Clementine, and also by myself. Each province has its own songs and dances. Listen, Laura... In Catalonia, near France, they dance with ribbons and the music sounds like this (his left hand jumps and dances on the keyboard). In the south, in Sevilla and Granada, a very soft wind sings in the palm trees, like this... Gentlemen play the guitar and sing serenades under the ladies' balconies.

In the American train. On a page of the travel book, a pencil or ink portrait of Laura.

ALBENIZ. An art student who lived in the pension made this drawing of her.

BANKER. She looks beautiful.

ALBENIZ. She had a beautiful and generous mind. She decided she'd teach me what children learn in school.

Albeniz

Sitting at a table not far from Laura's armchair, he is trying to cut the nib of a goose quill with Sancho's knife. He then writes slowly on a sheet of paper. As the nib is not cut right, the ink flows too fast and the result is a blot on the paper.

ALBENIZ. Oh, damn! Shit! Not again!... I mean... Please excuse me, miss Laura.

LAURA (smiling). Did the duchess of Alba teach you these words?

ALBENIZ. I never went to school, señorita. I learned to read by deciphering my name on posters.

LAURA. It's not too late. You could learn how to write the music that you improvise.

ALBENIZ. Well, I won't return to the Madrid Conservatory. I'll go and study harmony in Leipzig, in Germany. That's where Johann Sebastian Bach taught music. They have a good teacher there, Herr Reinecke.

* * *

ALBENIZ (voice over). I shared Angelica's room. Every evening, Laura read fairy tales to us.

LAURA. Then the princess let her long blond tresses hang outside the tower. The prince seized them and began to climb...

ANGELICA. Poor princess. It must have hurt like hell!

ALBENIZ. Were her tresses fifty feet long?

LAURA. If you keep interrupting, you'll never know the end of the story.

ANGELICA. It's Isaac. He always interrupts.

ALBENIZ. Oh yes? And who said it hurt like hell?

ANGELICA. You rascal! You should be polite with ladies and not contradict them.

They begin a pillow fight. Feathers fly. Laura coughs. They stop immediately and help her walk out of the room.

* * *

Albeniz is drawing a charcoal mustache under Angelica's nose. They are going to play some theater to amuse Laura, who is seated in her armchair and knitting. Chairs represent a stagecoach and mules.

Albeniz

ALBENIZ (as the coachman). Hurry up, my sweeties! Be brave: we've nearly reached the top of the mountain!

ANGELICA (as don Feliz). Halt! Bang! Bang! Your money or your life!

ALBENIZ (as himself). Nah, nah, your money or your life... What's this baby talk? When don Feliz spoke, every living creature trembled. YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE! JUST TRY TO MOVE YOUR LITTLE FINGER AND I'LL STUFF YOUR HEAD WITH BULLETS! OPEN YOUR BAGS!

ANGELICA (as a passenger). Please, señor brigand, I possess nothing. I'm just a poor orphan.

ALBENIZ (as don Feliz). All right... We're not dumb brutes. Hey, you, young man, open your bag!

ALBENIZ (as himself). There's nothing for you in my bag.

ANGELICA (as don Feliz again). What about this nice leather-bound book?

ALBENIZ. This is my travel book, señor. Look, this is the signature of the lord mayor of El Escorial. I'm a musician.

ANGELICA. Why don't you come with us, then? You'll play for my men. We found a guitar in a coach last week.

ALBENIZ. I do not play the guitar, but the piano. I'm touring Andalusia. I'll become rich, so that if you attack my stagecoach again I can give you diamonds.

ANGELICA. I'll sing the Hanged Man's Complaint.

ALBENIZ. No, he didn't offer to sing. I asked him if he could.

ANGELICA. What's that tune again?

Albeniz plays and sings the Hanged Man's Complaint.

ANGELICA (as don Feliz). I can't write like these grand ladies and gentlemen, but I'll draw a cross in your travel book...

ALBENIZ (opening his book). See, his mark is here. This is the signature of my sister Clementine.

LAURA. Is she beautiful?

ALBENIZ (blushing). I thought she was, until I met you...

LAURA. I've finished knitting. It is a woollen cap for you, Isaac. See, this is the kind the Indians wear in los Andes, except they use llama wool. Your ears will be warm when you go out. Ears are important, for a musician!

ALBENIZ. What's llama wool?

Albeniz

LAURA. A llama is an animal we have in los Andes, halfway between a horse and a camel.

ALBENIZ. Thank you. I hadn't received a present for a long time. Here's my present for you: a tango like they play in Buenos Aires. (He plays his tango; he speaks while he plays). They have a portable organ they call an accordion. The boys hold the girls very close when they dance together...

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In the American train.

ALBENIZ. The public loves my tango. I'll play it for you as soon as we arrive in San Francisco. Once you've heard it, I'm sure you'll finance my concerts.

BANKER. Do you still have your Indian cap?

ALBENIZ. Of course: here it is. I don't wear it in summer, because it is really very warm. I did wear it in Montevideo, although it was summer, because they're altogether mixed up with their seasons over there...

He is sitting on a bench near the beach. Laura comes towards him, walking very slowly with the help of her canes. He comes to her rescue. They both sit on the bench.

ALBENIZ. I love to see the sun rising over the sea. It is so strange!

LAURA. What's so strange about it?

ALBENIZ. In Cadiz, it fell into the sea in the evening!

LAURA. You get up before the sun. That's very early...

ALBENIZ. I got into this habit when I walked across Spain. I loved to walk at dawn and see the sunrise. Every morning, the world was born again. I always felt that the sun promised me new adventures. So many adventures were in store for me... I felt giddy with joy when I imagined them! This feeling is hard to describe... Maybe I escaped from my home for this very feeling.

LAURA. How long ago did you leave home?

ALBENIZ. Well, I don't know... Maybe six months.

LAURA. Don't you miss your parents?

ALBENIZ. Not at all, señorita. On the contrary. They scolded me for trifles. Their quarrels made me crazy. You're lucky that your father is so gentle. I'm sure your mother was also very gentle and they never fought.

Albeniz

LAURA. That's true, but they didn't take in a full time music master for me, so that I do not play as well as you do. Your parents may not be perfect, but they gave you a good education. After all, not only are you a talented artist, but also a very resourceful young man, capable of getting along in the world all by himself. You should be grateful.

ALBENIZ. I'm willing to be grateful from afar, but don't ask me to go back to Madrid and kiss their hands!

LAURA. Won't you ever go back to Spain ?

ALBENIZ. I don't know. I do miss our cities. I find them more beautiful than yours. People have cherished, improved and polished them for centuries. On this continent, everything is new and unfinished...

LAURA. There were old cities before the Spaniards came, but they destroyed them.

ALBENIZ. Do you think these waves come from Spain, like me?

LAURA. If you could swim in a straight line from here, you wouldn't reach Spain, but maybe South Africa or Australia.

ALBENIZ. Some day, I'll go to Australia.

LAURA. It must be wonderful to cross the ocean...

ALBENIZ. I met the count de Sotomayor on the Santa-Maria. His sister travelled with him. She walked with a cane, like you. Captain Guevara wanted to throw me to the sharks. I ate apples I had found in the hold.

LAURA. I think I won't ever leave my country, but I'll meet travellers like you. I would like a poet with golden hair to cross the seas on a white ship. He would disembark here, singing a sweet melody. He would be looking for me. As soon as he would see me, he would hurry to me and call me Princess... You know Isaac, my health has improved since you've been staying with us. The doctors say I'm so strong now that they're willing to risk an operation. I shall go to the hospital next week.

ALBENIZ. Will you be able to walk without your canes?

LAURA. Maybe. You know what? Doctors put you asleep by letting you breathe a special gas, then they open your body with a knife and repair it while you sleep. In the end, they sew the skin with a thread and needle, as if it was made of cotton.

ALBENIZ. If they have a piano, in this hospital, I'll go and play for you.

LAURA. It might be better to stay here and play for Angelica and my father, because they'll worry more than me.

* * *

Albeniz

Laura is gone. The guests seem to worry as much as Angelica and her father. Albeniz plays with bound eyes or with his back to the keyboard, but nobody finds it funny. He tries to play happy dances, but they sound like dead marches. Actually, the guests do not listen to him, because they talk about the operation.

GUEST 1. They'll cure all the diseases pretty soon.

GUEST 2. Medicine is rushing ahead.

GUEST 3. Nobody was even vaccinated against smallpox.

GUEST 4. You breathe a gas, then you fall asleep and feel anything anymore.

GUEST 5. Are you sure to wake up?

GUEST 1. Hush...

* * *

ALBENIZ (voice over; we see what he describes). Then one day, her father came back from the hospital and gave good news. The guests were delighted. Angelica jumped with joy. I played a wild dance. Three weeks later, she came back...

The guests are huddled at the door. Albeniz is playing his tango. Neighing horses stop in front of the pension. Out of a shining white gig descends Laura, without canes, but with the help of the surgeon, a tall yellow-haired fool. She enters the pension. Angelica moves her armchair slightly, to show that it is still there for her. She sees Albeniz and smiles. He stops playing and lets his cigar go out. The surgeon walks her to the armchair.

SURGEON. Sit down, princess...

In the American train.

ALBENIZ. I was too young, you know.

* * *

Albeniz

BANKER. In a way, you're lucky: life started teaching you its lessons pretty early.

You can hope to make fewer mistakes than other people. If I ever go to Uruguay, I'll visit pension de los Andes and see what your Laura looks like.

ALBENIZ. I don't know whether she still lives there or married her doctor and followed him elsewhere. I left before dawn on the next morning. I walked to Brazil. In Spain, when you walk towards the North, the weather becomes colder. Here, because of the upside-downness of south America, it was the contrary. (His voice becomes a voice over. We see what he describes). This was a good thing, because my clothes were becoming dangerously thin. I was afraid they'd vanish suddenly, taken away by the wind and the rain. Then I'd be as naked as a savage. (It rains. He has a hard time walking without slipping on the glistening red earth road.) I can't tell you how long I walked. I remember trembling with fever...

At night, after a rainy day, under a full moon. He sees a house by the road. Tired and hungry, he approaches it longingly. He locates an open window and enters the house. He gropes silently in the dark until he finds a bedroom with two sleeping children and an extra bed. He slumps into the bed and falls asleep.

Five laughing children and two parents wake him up in the morning. The father, a tall bearded man, asks some questions in Portuguese.

ALBENIZ. I'm afraid I don't understand you. Don't you speak Spanish?

FATHER. Spanish, yes, a little. Who are you? What are you doing in my children's bedroom?

ALBENIZ. My name is Isaac Albeniz. Do you have a piano? I'm a pianist.

They go to an attic, where an old piano is asleep in a corner. Albeniz plays some of his pieces. The whole family applauds. Albeniz opens the piano.

ALBENIZ. The frame is in bad shape, because of humidity. I can try to tune the piano, but I'll probably have to do it every day.

FATHER. Can you teach my children to play it?

ALBENIZ. Of course—if you let me sleep here and feed me a little.

FATHER. I'll pay you.

The father asks some black slaves to carry the piano downstairs. The mother gives Albeniz clean clothes.

Albeniz

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In the American train. Albeniz shows the banker a music score in his travel book.

ALBENIZ. See this music? That's what the slaves sang in the coffee plantation. There were several hundred slaves. Very strange rhythm. Maybe it comes from Africa. I tried to play it on the piano. (His voice becomes a voice over and we see him at the piano).

FATHER. What are you playing?

ALBENIZ. Don't you recognize this music? It's what the black men sing when they work.

FATHER. Don't teach this to my children. I prefer Mozart.

ALBENIZ (voice over, still playing). His Negroes were pieces of furniture, not artists. This made me uneasy. Otherwise, they were a good family. I could have remained with them as long as I wanted. I told them I wanted to go back to Europe to cure my fever and study music in Leipzig. The father drove me to Porto Alegre in his phaeton. He took me to the Spanish consul.

In the office of the Spanish consul.

FATHER. This young countryman of yours has a bad case of fever. I think you should send him home. His parents are honorable people, who will pay his passage.

CONSUL. What's your name, my boy?

ALBENIZ. Isaac Albeniz.

CONSUL. Are you a relation of don Albeniz, the customs Inspector General?

ALBENIZ. So he is a Inspector General now? Good for him. I'm his only son.

CONSUL. I think I can do something for you. A Spanish steamer is expected next week. It comes from Buenos Aires and Montevideo, then goes to Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Caracas, Cuba and across the ocean to Vigo.

In the American train. Albeniz shows the banker a small poster with a picture of a paddle-wheel steamer.

ALBENIZ. The paddle-wheels hit the waves without ever resting. They made a kind of churning noise that I found adverse to my taste. Besides, there was no piano on

Albeniz

board. I disembarked in Cuba. My fever had abated. I wasn't that eager to see Spain again. I hoped to taste the bread fruit. But mainly, I wanted to flee the terrible churning noise of the paddle-wheels.

BANKER. So how's breadfruit?

ALBENIZ. My expectations were too high. It tasted like stale bread. On the other hand, Cuba is a paradise for cigar lovers. They also brew a pretty good rum from their sugar canes. They sing rather languid songs called habañeras. (He sings). I couldn't stay there, anyway, because it was a Spanish province. Either the guardia civil already had my description, or they might receive it soon. The consul had given a letter for my father to the captain of the steamer. My father would ask about me and the captain would tell him I had vanished in Cuba. Since I had earned some money teaching the children in Brazil, I bought my passage on an American vessel going to New York City.

* * *

He carries a heavy stem of bananas in New York harbor.

ALBENIZ (Voice over). If bread could grow on trees, why not dollars? I thought that all Americans were millionaires. I wondered whether I would need two weeks or two months to pick a basketful of dollar fruits. I was quite disappointed.

BANKER (voice over). I can imagine that!

ALBENIZ (voice over; we see what he describes). I slept in barracks with poor people coming for all over the world. Every morning, I found a different job in the harbor's job market. I pretended I was already sixteen years old. The harbor was a very dangerous place. Compared to it, Buenos Aires was heaven. There were fights every night. They accused a poor man of robbery, then they tried to hang him. Or they attacked all the black men they could find—because they didn't want them to get any work. I often had to show my faithful knife to keep away someone who threatened me. Eventually, I got a job playing the piano in the most hellish tavern you can imagine. I didn't play any Bach or Chopin, believe me! I had to hit the keys very hard if I wanted to be heard above the din and the shouts. I received nice tips when I played my tricks. (He plays with bound eyes, or with his back towards the keyboard). All the dock-hands knew me.

DOCK-HAND (talking to Albeniz while he plays the piano). You know what, Spic? As soon as I earn enough money here, I'll buy a train ticket and go to California.

Albeniz

ALBENIZ. Why California?

DOCK-HAND. Gold! They found gold in the hills over there. Gold nuggets as big as pigeon eggs.

ALBENIZ. That's not very big.

DOCK-HAND. Big enough for me! You know, Spic, you should go there too.

ALBENIZ. I don't think I would be very good at finding gold nuggets.

DOCK-HAND. No, but you could play the piano in bars. Gold-diggers spend lots of money in bars.

ALBENIZ. Gold-digging makes you thirsty, I suppose.

DOCK-HAND. I'll buy a big house and horses and a billiard table.

* * *

In the American train

BANKER. Didn't they know the gold rush was over?

ALBENIZ. I guess not. They talked so often about it that they convinced me to try my luck, too.

BANKER. So here you are, expecting to see gold-paved streets in San Francisco!

ALBENIZ. I didn't have much money, so I didn't come directly. I stopped here and there. In Pittsburgh, in Saint-Louis. I played in bars to earn more dollars. West of the Mississippi, big cities with bars became scarce. Also, pioneers didn't seem interested in music. I worked for more than a month in a gigantic farm in the state of Kansas, where more than two hundred farm workers were employed. They came from all over the world, like the immigrants I had seen in New York harbor. They spoke Swedish, Russian, Rumanian. They knew a few words of English, which helped them understand each other. (His voice becomes a voice over and we see what he describes). In the evening, they sat around a bonfire and sang sad songs in their native tongues.

BANKER (voice over). Did you play the piano for them?

ALBENIZ (voice over). Oh no. There was no piano in the farm. At first, I worked in the fields like the others. Then the manager took pity of me because of my young age and found me a job in the kitchen.

He is peeling a mountain of potatoes. The cook, a tall red-haired Irishman, comes and picks up some potatoes to see if the peels are thin enough.

Albeniz

COOK . You're skilful. They say you're a piano player.

ALBENIZ. A piano player without a piano. Look at my hands: my fingers are red and swollen because I carried prickly bales of hay in the fields.

FARM HAND (entering the kitchen; speaks with a strong Hungarian accent). Look, O'Toole, I bring choice morsel.

COOK. What is it?

FARM HAND. You know Knut, big Norway guy? He was felling a tree. He cut his little finger right hand. I pick it up. You like jokes. You find something to do with it, no?

COOK. I can give it to the new lad. A spare finger for you, Spic! Hey, look at that... The kid is going to faint! Have you never seen a finger, Spic?

ALBENIZ. If a pianist cuts his finger when peeling potatoes, his career is finished. Especially the little finger of the right hand.

COOK. Why especially this finger?

ALBENIZ. When you play the piano, the left hand and first fingers of the right hand play chords and harmony, while the little finger of the right hand often plays the tune. (He shows what he is talking about by playing an imaginary piece on the table).

COOK. Listen, Spic, I understand you're shocked by this accident. I'll carry and serve the soup in your place today.

Later in the day (the sun is going down). The cook carries the first barrel of soup to the tent they use as a dining hall. Albeniz and the farm hand follow him, carrying the second barrel. The men are waiting on a line, with their bowl in their hand. The cook pours soup with marvellous speed. The soup-ladle seems to fly. Nobody could notice that he drops the finger in Knut's bowl, but he probably told some of his friends what he intended to do: everybody seems to know about it—except Knut, of course. The Norwegian giant gulps his soup with an ogre's ravenous greed. Maybe he thinks the finger is a small sausage. All the men watch him as he pulls it out of his mouth and looks at it. He reddens. Laughs roll like thunder in the big tent. Knut shouts terrible curses in Norwegian. He raises his maimed hand, wrapped in a bloody handkerchief, as if to reproach the men their cruelty.

ALBENIZ (In the American train). Next morning, we discovered the body of the cook lying in a lake of blood. Somebody had cut his throat with a kitchen knife. Knut

Albeniz

had disappeared. The manager said: “You bury him and go back to work.” A Greek man became the new cook. His soup was not as good.

BANKER. Our great land is young and somewhat rough, indeed.

ALBENIZ. I saw gunfights in Denver. Cowboys settle their quarrels with guns. They stand two or three feet from one another. He who pulls his gun fastest out of his holster kills the other man. They’re so near that they can’t miss their target. Often, both are equally fast, so both die.

BANKER. You’ll see that our city of San Francisco is more civilized. (He shows Albeniz a notepad with numbers). I’ve been trying to add things up. I think we can rent a hall for five hundred dollars. Then we need to print posters. This would probably cost another five hundred.

ALBENIZ. That much?

BANKER. We’d print plenty. So then, if you go on tour, we can use them again. They’ll be free after the first concert, so to speak. Considering people would be willing to pay one dollar per ticket, we won’t make money unless more than one thousand people attend the first concert. Well, we won’t probably earn anything before we go on tour, but it will be profitable after a while. Let’s say I agree to finance you, provided we share the profits fifty-fifty.

ALBENIZ. I like this American expression: fifty-fifty!

* * *

We see a tailor fitting a concert suit for Albeniz under the attentive eye of the banker. The entrance of a San Francisco concert hall with a poster saying: “For his first tour in America—Isaac Albeniz, the European child prodigy—A grand piano recital—Mozart, Chopin and his own compositions.” Albeniz playing one of his pieces. Albeniz welcoming some friends of the banker in his dressing room, asking a Chinese gentleman for his signature to fulfil a promise he had made to his sister. Albeniz in a stagecoach with the banker. Albeniz gluing mementoes in his travel book: newspaper announcements of concerts in Sacramento, Monterey, etc.

Then we see the San Francisco concert hall again. The poster now says: “Isaac Albeniz, the Spanish child prodigy, playing again in San Francisco after his triumphal tour of California.” Albeniz plays the end of his tango or habañera. The full house applauds wildly. Someone also applauds and shouts “Bravo!” from backstage. Albeniz turns and recognizes his father. As he stands up and moves forward to salute the public, don Angel steps on-stage with two policemen who arrest Albeniz. While

Albeniz

the policemen frisk him and give his wallet to don Angel, the public protests and whistles in vain. The banker also jumps on-stage but fails to prevent his arrest.

* * *

In the dressing room. Albeniz, don Angel and the banker are seated and discuss the situation. The policemen are standing by the door.

ALBENIZ. I'm so glad to see you, my dear papa.

DON ANGEL (to the policemen). Did you hear? He called me papa! Although he travels without a passport or other identification, we do not need better proof. This is indeed my son Isaac Albeniz.

ALBENIZ. I'm proud of my name. I don't hide it. I print it on my posters!

DON ANGEL. American law recognizes a father's authority upon his minor child. My son, you must come with me. Also, this money you have earned belongs to me.

ALBENIZ. But papa, you should understand that by robbing me of my hard-earned gains, you encourage me to flee even farther away. Next time, I'll spend the money before you catch me! This is quite a pity, really, as I don't want to cut bridges with my family. I want to study in Leipzig with the best teachers, in order to become a great pianist and composer who plays for kings and princes and earns millions. Then I'll offer bags of gold to my dear parents to repay them for the marvellous education they gave me.

DON ANGEL. What you say makes sense, my son, but I can't let you keep the money. An Inspector General of the Spanish customs doesn't reverse his decisions. What's done is done.

ALBENIZ. What's done can be undone. Please meet my partner, Mr Douglas J. Adams. He owns one of the main banks here in San Francisco. Do you know a good lawyer, Mr Adams?

BANKER. I know several...

ALBENIZ. I think a good lawyer might throw a new light on what happened at the end of my concert, saying you seemed more interested in my money than in my success and career. Not a very fatherly attitude. Yes, a good lawyer would convince the judge that you held me up for that money, that you should return it and be punished yourself, maybe.

Albeniz

DON ANGEL. Hmm... I have been told that lawyers can be very nasty in this country.

I'd prefer we came to some kind of understanding without involving lawyers and judges. What do you say?

ALBENIZ. Here's what I suggest... I give you the money, but we go to a public notary and ask him to prepare some papers for you to sign, where you'd promise to leave me alone.

BANKER. A kind of emancipation act.

ALBENIZ. I would be as free as if I had reached my majority. I would give new concerts to earn a capital again, then I would go to Leipzig.

DON ANGEL. Seems fair to me.

* * *

The Albeniz dining room in Madrid ten years later. Mrs Albeniz is dressed in black as if she was widowed. Clementine has a husband and children. Blanca, the other sister, is not there. (The real Blanca committed suicide; the real Albeniz family home was truly hellish). Albeniz has come from Paris with his young pregnant wife. He wears a black beard but can be recognized because his face is still quite round and he smokes a small cigar. He catches up on his story:

ALBENIZ. In Leipzig, I rented an apartment with two other pupils of my master Herr Reinecke. We caught a strange fever that made us play with toy soldiers day and night. My influence on my poor comrades was not so good, I'm afraid. I could play the piano with closed eyes and invent new Chopin mazurkas, so class often bored me to death. We bought hundreds of soldiers. We fought great battles... I earned some money by teaching piano to the son of the Spanish consul, but it was not enough. Good toy soldiers cost a lot! So I went to America again with a singer for a short while and earned dollars again. I spent it all in soldiers. We had more than two thousands, but it was barely enough to fight the battle of Waterloo. They covered the floor of our bedroom in such a manner that we had to jump from one bed to another when we wanted to move. I also brought back from America pretty little canons that shot small but noisy crackers. Frightened neighbors called the police. It was a very hot summer. When the policemen came, they found three naked students playing with toy soldiers! The management of the music school wanted to send me away, but Herr Reinecke interceded in my favor. He liked my strange American music—which he called my Negro music.

Albeniz

CLEMENTINE. What you played to us?

ALBENIZ. Yes. I composed it after hearing slaves singing in a coffee plantation.

CLEMENTINE. Do people like it in Paris?

ALBENIZ. They love it. I am quite famous in Paris. (Turning towards his wife). Isn't it true, Rosine? I met Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. I hope you'll come and see us soon. We rent a very nice mansion. An English banker wants me to set to music three operas he has written.

CLEMENTINE. You seem to attract bankers.

ALBENIZ. They earn the money and I spend it!

MOTHER. Your poor father would have been proud of you.

ALBENIZ. Come on, mama, you speak of him as if he was dead. You shouldn't wear black. I'm sure he is alive somewhere.

MOTHER. Did you really see him in San Francisco?

ALBENIZ. Yes, I told you so ten times already. He was in perfect health. He took all my money. Several thousand dollars. Enough to go to any part of the world and enjoy life.

CLEMENTINE (smiling). I always thought he dreamt of exchanging his life against yours.

* * *

On a beach at dawn. Don Angel and two assistants are carrying bales from a horse-drawn cart to a rowboat. A large sailing vessel is waiting for the rowboat at anchor. A gentleman with a cap seems to be the captain of the big ship.

DON ANGEL. So officially, you're delivering sugar cane in Istanbul. You know the cove where Mr Suleiman will come and get them. He and you are the only ones who know about the diamonds inside the canes. You've got to be very careful.

CAPTAIN. Don't worry.

DON ANGEL. If a sailor decides to eat some sugar cane, you're in trouble.

CAPTAIN. The ship is full of sugar cane. These bales will be hidden inside my own cabin.

Don Angel climbs into an elegant buggy and goes to a suburb of Buenos Aires, where he owns a charming house. Dolorès, the dancer, welcomes him home.

Albeniz

DOLORES. My love, you'll never guess who wrote this letter...

DON ANGEL. I won't even try.

DOLORES. Your son Isaac. Somebody brought it from the tavern. (She opens it and reads). "I studied music in Germany with the best masters... I live in Paris... I composed a tango similar to the one I heard in the tavern... I'm married... I have a daughter, Laura... I am what they call a bourgeois. I've travelled enough. Now I'll settle down for the rest of my life. If by any chance you see my dear papa some day, please tell him I salute him as a son and as a friend."

Albeniz

A panel on the screen between the end of the film and the credits:

After his return from America, Isaac Albeniz studied in Germany. When he was 15, he played for the king of Spain, who sponsored further studies in Belgium. He lived in Madrid and London, then settled in Paris in 1883—he was then 23 years old. His piano compositions revived Spanish music and were extremely successful. He influenced his French friends: Gabriel Fauré, Ernest Chausson, Emmanuel Chabrier, as well as Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel. At the beginning of the new century, his style became denser and stronger. His masterly piano suite, *Iberia*, is considered one of the greatest monuments of piano literature. He died in 1909, aged 49, in the south of France.