

SEIZE

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INT. VALENTINA'S BEDROOM - DAY

TITLE CARD: SEIZE

The title fades as MUFFLED VOICES grow clear: EMANUEL (40), CARLA (39), AND PARKER (16) argue.

CARLA PIERCE (V.O.)
SSSH! You're waking her up.

EMANUEL PIERCE (V.O.)
She needs to wake up to eat this.

CARLA PIERCE (V.O.)
Who wants cake for breakfast?

START OF POV: Valentina

VALENTINA PIERCE (18) blinks her eyes and sees three blurry figures standing over her.

PARKER PIERCE
Who doesn't want cake for
breakfast?

CARLA PIERCE
She's up, SSSH.

Another blink and the family members come into focus. Emanuel and Carla hold a sheet cake, heavy with frosting and an 18 candle. Parker scrambles to light it.

CARLA, EMMANUEL, AND PARKER
SURPRISE!

Valentina sits up and the parents lower the cake.

CARLA PIERCE
Happy birthday!

Valentina BLOWS out the candle. Her parents eye the messy room, looking for a place to set the cake. Valentina sweeps the clutter off her desk- books, cosmetic bottles and cords.

Carla winces. The parents set down the cake. Parker starts recording the moment on his phone while Emmanuel takes a small gift box out of his pocket. He gingerly stretches it toward the camera, toward Valentina.

Valentina takes it.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Wow, already?

Valentina opens the box and GASPS. It's a pair of keys!

VALENTINA PIERCE (CONT'D)

A car!?

Her parents wear proud smiles. She hugs them.

INT. PIERCE HOME HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Continue POV:

Valentina runs past her family, into the hallway, and out the front door.

EXT. PIERCE HOME - CONTINUOUS

Continue POV:

Valentina jumps into her new car, the family follows. We see her eyes in the rear-view mirror before she adjusts it.

PARKER PIERCE

I can drive if you don't want to.

VALENTINA PIERCE

In your dreams!

Valentina SLAMS the car door.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina opens her notebook. Pages of a script, Alice in Wonderland, are tucked inside. A TEACHER lectures about equations on the board.

TEACHER

When the derivative is zero or undefined we see potential locations for local maxima or minima.

Valentina tucks the script under her desk and practices.

VALENTINA PIERCE

(whispering)

How do you know I'm mad?

She looks up at the clock.

She looks back at her notes, and does a double take- TOM (18) is twisting his neck to look at her. They meet eyes. Embarrassed, he looks away.

Finally the school bell RINGS.

CUT TO:

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

TAYLOR (18), Valentina's best friend, helps Valentina tie a white apron over her blue dress. They stand in front of a mirror so we see a lot of them, but not Valentina's face.

TAYLOR
Blue is for NAU, Maroon for ASU,
obviously, and Yellow for USC.

Taylor hands Valentina her phone, with the spreadsheet open.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
That way we have housing options,
no matter what schools we get into.

Valentina glances at the spreadsheet.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Wow, a page for each school? Too
bad you didn't do that for our
actual applications.

TAYLOR
Not funny.

ANNE (17) struts in doing vocal warmups.

ANNE
(vocal warmups)
Brrrr! MA! MA!

Anne eyes Valentina. She snatches her red queen dress off a rack and trots over.

ANNE (CONT'D)
You better not cause a scene.

VALENTINA PIERCE
What?

ANNE
When the college scouts come.

Valentina resumes tying up her costume.

VALENTINA PIERCE
We don't even know that they're
coming.

Anne smirks.

ANNE
Maybe you don't.

She leaves. Valentina shares a concerned look with Taylor.

INT. THEATER WINGS - CONTINUOUS

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina stands in the wings with Tom in a rabbit costume and the DIRECTOR.

DIRECTOR
For this first dress rehearsal,
focus on timing.

He snaps with the rhythm of his words.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Pick. Up. Your. Lines.

Tom gives a confident nod to Anne. They've got this.

DIRECTION
Alrighty then... ACTION!

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

CONTINUE POV:

The lights dim as Valentina steps on stage. She looks into the dark theater seats and Valentina takes a deep BREATH.

The lights come up they flash with all kinds of different colors.

VALENTINA PIERCE
What is the use of a book?

The lights change pattern. The things in Valentina's vision start to glow translucent colors.

Tom enters.

TOM
I'm late!

Valentina begins to sway. These lights are making Tom look weird. She's seeing two of him- he's outlined in all kinds of rainbows.

He looks concerned. Oh yeah, its' her line.

VALENTINA PIERCE
(delivered with a weird
accent or baby voice)
What's going to happen?

Valentina collapses. She's looking up at the ceiling.

Tom's face turns white. He slowly backs away.

Her director comes, but we almost don't recognize him. Everything in her vision is going dark. Like she's slowly being sucked down a rabbit hole.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina sits in the hospital. Her parents sit close by. Parker comes in late.

EMMANUEL PIERCE
Where were you?

Parker gestures to his soccer uniform.

CARLA PIERCE
So sports are more important than
your sister?

PARKER PIERCE
She's fine.

The DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR
Oh good, you are awake.

CARLA PIERCE
Oh, Valentina.

EMMANUEL
How are you feeling?

PARKER PIERCE
See? Fine.

The Doctor pins up some brain scans. Valentina looks at her arms and sees that she is hooked into Ivs and such.

VALENTINA PIERCE
What's going on?

CARLA PIERCE
You had a seizure.

VALENTINA PIERCE
What?

CARLA PIERCE
At your play.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Really?

Her family nods.

EMMANUEL PIERCE
Your director thinks it was because
of the stage lights.

PARKER PIERCE
Ha! Good thing you never go to the
club.

Emmanuel and Carla glare at him. Parker coughs sheepishly.

PARKER PIERCE (CONT'D)
Not that I've ever been.

They raise an eyebrow.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Okay. Weird. I feel fine now, so
can we go home? I've got studying
to do.

DOCTOR
Your scans, came back with some
abnormalities.

VALENTINA PIERCE
So....

The doctor gestures to the scans.

DOCTOR

It will take time to be sure, but
it seems likely that you have a
disorder.

Carla gasps.

VALENTINA PIERCE

Okay, so, what do I need do? Take
some kind of medicine or something?

DOCTOR

You will need to make some changes
to your routine.

VALENTINA PIERCE

Sure, whatever it takes.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIERCE HOME - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Emmanuel takes Valentina's car keys. He gives them to Parker. She climbs into the passenger seat and slams the door.

CUT TO:

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina opens her notebook. The teacher sits at the board going over equations.

Valentina looks down at her notes and sees the numbers floating on the page.

Valentina looks up at the clock. Then back to her notes.

She does a double take- everyone in the classroom sneaks glances at her and shares whispers. Everyone except Tom, who is zeroed in on his work.

The Bell rings.

INT. THEATER BACKSTAGE - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina goes through a rack of costumes while Taylor scrolls through her spreadsheet.

TAYLOR
I've added a section in the spreadsheet for walkability. Oh- and proximity to hospitals.

Valentina finishes looking through all the costumes.

TAYLOR (CONT'D)
As soon as you're better, go through and mark the ones you like.

Valentina pushes the costumes in frustration.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Where is it?

Taylor looks sheepish. She gestures to the stage wings.

INT. WINGS - DAY

Anne is dressed in Valentina's costume, talking to Tom.

ANNE
I heard she did it on purpose - you know, to get one of those "special" scholarships.

Tom looks uncomfortable.

TOM
You know...

He turns up the smolder.

TOM (CONT'D)
I would rather not talk about her.

Anne giggles. She turns to see Valentina standing there. She doesn't mind being overheard. Tom stares at the floor.

Valentina runs away.

INT. TECH BOOTH - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina finds the director.

VALENTINA PIERCE
You're giving her my part?

DIRECTOR
She *is* your understudy.

VALENTINA PIERCE
But I can perform.

He sighs and continues flipping switches on the light board.

DIRECTOR
Not according to your paperwork.

VALENTINA PIERCE
My what?

DIRECTOR
The school administration sees you
as a liability.

VALENTINA PIERCE
But, I'm fine!

DIRECTOR
Maybe. Maybe not. But if I allow
you to go on stage and something
happens, you fall off the stage. Or
maybe you pass out and trip
somebody else, it will be bad for
you, bad for me, and bad for the
school.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Oh.

DIRECTOR
The college scouts just confirmed
that they are coming opening night.

VALENTINA PIERCE
But, that means I *have* to perform.
I need a scholarship more than
ever!

DIRECTOR
It means that we can't afford to
have any accidents.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Please Mr. Galo. I know I can do
this!

The director looks at her for the first time. He sighs. Then returns his eyes to the light board and flips a switch.

DIRECTOR
I'm working on changing the
lighting pattern *just in case* you
can perform.

He sees her excitement and looks her in the eyes.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Wait. Don't get excited. I'll need
some documents from your parents
that say you are better.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Deal! I'll be ready.

Valentina turns to leave.

CUT TO:

INT. VALENTINA'S BEDROOM

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina turns to face the kitchen. Carla hands Valentina a pharmacy bag. Valentina takes the pills.

INT. VALENTINA'S CAR

CONTINUE POV:

Parker blasts loud music. He speeds through a stop sign.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Hey! Watch where you are going!

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina walks down the hall with Taylor.

TAYLOR
Have you looked yet? I know you've
been busy, but we need to apply
for housing the second that we get
a school.

Valentina sees more stares and whispers.

INT. PIERCE HOME HALLWAY - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina walks in through the front door. Her mom is setting the dinner table.

CARLA PIERCE
Just in time!

VALENTINA PIERCE
No, No time. I gotta practice.

She goes to her room.

INT. VALENTINA'S BEDROOM - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina paces the room with a script in hand.

VALENTINA PIERCE
It seems I've been falling for
miles unending and when will it
stop?

The door creaks open. Valentina turns to see Carla in the doorway.

VALENTINA PIERCE (CONT'D)
Falling in- in-

CARLA PIERCE
Hi, I wanted to hear about your
day.

VALENTINA PIERCE
Ugh. Mom! You messed me up! I have
to practice!

Carla can't decide whether to stay or not. Valentina slams the door shut.

INT. VALENTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina is staring up at her ceiling from her bed. She rolls and looks at the time on her phone. 2:39am.

EXT. PIERCE HOME - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Emanuel signs Valentina's permission slip. Slowly. As if he's hoping she will change her mind before he finishes. Valentina snatches it.

INT. THEATER STAGE - DAY

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina delivers the permission slip to the director.

He nods his approval, and signals someone to change the lights.

DIRECTOR

How's this for you?

Valentina looks around the stage for a moment.

VALENTINA PIERCE

(stage voice)

Things keep happening, strange
things happening, curios happenings
that hardly seem true.

DIRECTOR

Good.

INT. THEATER WINGS - NIGHT

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina peaks at the crowd. Her heart pounds.

Anne, dressed as the red queen, stares daggers from the opposite wings.

Tom comes up behind Valentina.

TOM

Hey, um break a leg.

He's trying hard... but still awkward.

VALENTINA PIERCE

Thanks.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

CONTINUE POV:

The lights dim as Valentina steps on stage. She looks into the dark theater seats and takes a deep BREATH.

The lights come up. Her HEART BEAT gets louder.

VALENTINA PIERCE

What is the use of a book without pictures or conversation in it?

Tom enters.

TOM

I'm late! I'm late!

Tom runs around stage. He climbs through a tree and as she follows, the lights dim slightly. She looks over to see Tom flailing his arms as though he is falling. She does the same. Tom leaves, but Valentina stands center stage.

VALENTINA PIERCE

What's going to happen? It seems I've been falling, for miles unending and when will it stop?

The lights stay constant this time. But her heart beat is so loud that colors creep into her vision with each pulse.

VALENTINA PIERCE (CONT'D)

Where am I going? I can't get my bearings. I've gone such a distance where will I end up?

The audience roars. And so does the wave of colors in her vision.

She backs away. Tries to get off stage, but she stumbles. The overhead lights are blinding. And they light up her vision with all kinds of color.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. PIERCE HOME HALLWAY

CONTINUE POV:

The front door opens and SLAMS closed.

CARLA PIERCE (O.S.)

I told you she wasn't ready.

PARKER PIERCE (O.S.)
At least she was memorable.

EMMANUEL PIERCE
She seemed fine all week.

CARLA PIERCE
How do you know? How often do we
see her these days?

Valentina walks into her room. And the voices fade.

INT. VALENTINA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CONTINUE POV:

Valentina collapses on her bed. She buries her head and SOBS.

PARKER PIERCE
Hey, is that sound what I think it
is?

Valentina is raised off her pillow. Her brother hugs her.

PARKER PIERCE (CONT'D)
It wasn't your fault.

Valentina looks over Parker's shoulder and sees herself in
the mirror.

VALENTINA PIERCE
I just... I can't do it!

The camera zooms into the mirror and passes through.

END POV.

PARKER PIERCE
Can't do what?

VALENTINA PIERCE
Everything! The Play! My Classes!
If I can't even make it through
high school, what will I do at
college?

PARKER PIERCE
Okay, so maybe you can't do what
you used to.

VALENTINA PIERCE

People are waiting for me to get
"back to normal." But I can't. I'm
not normal anymore. I'm different.

PARKER PIERCE

I hate to break it to you, but I
always thought you were different.

VALENTINA PIERCE

Hey.

Valentina laughs despite herself.

PARKER PIERCE

It never stopped you before, why
would it now. What is it that you
really want?

Valentina wipes her tears.

INT. COMMUNITY STAGE - DAY

TITLE CARD: 6 Months Later

Valentina wipes a smudge of paint of her face. She paints a backdrop.

A THEATER OWNER (50s) enters. They look impressed.

THEATER OWNER

Wow, you got a lot done today. I'm
surprised you're still here.

VALENTINA PIERCE

What time is it?

THEATER DIRECTOR

2:45.

VALENTINA PIERCE

Oh!

Valentina picks up her bag and runs outside.

EXT. COMMUNITY THEATER - DAY

Valentina runs out the door. And we see the community theater building.

EXT. CITY STREET DAY.

Valentina barely makes the bus.

She finds a seat and puts in her headphones. She opens her computer to a virtual class.

ONLINE TEACHER
Technically no.... but
philosophically speaking it is
possible.

Valentina sees Anne on the call. She does a small wave. Anne smiles big and returns the gesture.

INT. PIERCE HOME - DAY

Valentina enters.

CARLA PIERCE
Hey, you're late. Parker, why
didn't you pick up your sister from
the bus stop?

PARKER PIERCE
She likes the walk!

EMANUEL PIERCE
She might like it more, if it ended
at her car.

VALENTINA PIERCE
I could take it back you know. Sell
it and pay for college.

EMANUEL PIERCE
Or, start paying us rent.

Carla smacks her husband. Valentina walks up to her bedroom.

INT. VALENTINA'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room has been cleaned. Some of the more childish decorations have been taken down.

Valentina looks at herself in the mirror. She smiles.

THE END.