

Victoria Haroutunian.<sup>30</sup> Written in the third person, *Orphan in the Sands* begins when the ship carrying hundreds of refugees, including Tourvanda, docks at Ellis Island. Much to her anguish and frustration, she was detained at Ellis Island for over two months and was almost sent back to Egypt, until finally one of her cousins showed up to fetch her. Apparently, the relatives who had signed the affidavit of financial support that allowed her to immigrate did not themselves have the proper status to be able to claim her.

But what about her life before her arrival at Ellis Island? All Virginia knew was that Victoria had had a hard life, no clothes, no shoes, and that she herself was made to live with similar material constraints, and she hated her mother for that. "What does this have to do with me?" she thought. "All I want is a new dress'...." In her young mind, she concluded, "Mayreeg is stingy. She won't spend a penny for anything!" During mother-daughter shopping trips, she was limited to one hot dog at the snack bar, even if she begged her mother for more (42-3).

Despite her mother's opposition, Virginia's father bought a piano for her. She took lessons and grew up to become an accomplished concert pianist, always dreaming of seeing her mother in the audience. "Virginia used music as an escape from the sound of her mother's harsh criticisms and frequent temper; as time continued she delighted in doing whatever her music demanded while reveling in not doing what her mother expected" (46). And mother expected too much. She was

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<sup>30</sup> At her relatives' request, Tourvanda changed her name to Victoria to sound more American, and after her marriage, she took her husband's last name.