1. If you would like to put Grandma Connie’s shocking behavior to the forefront, I suggest switching ¶1-4 with ¶5-8, then rearranging the paragraphs once more so that it’s ¶5-8, ¶4,1,2,3 – let me know if that makes sense. When I cut out the paragraphs and rearranged, it made for a story that flowed well in the present, while building Grandma Connie in the beginning. This also allows it so that if you do add more details about Grandma or Grandma + Mom’s relationship, or flesh out Krissy’s character] Going to Jones Beach, my mom’s new Honda Accord found its way into a sandy ditch off Ocean Parkway. My mother didn’t make a wrong turn, she certainly didn’t veer off the side of the road, and she definitely wasn’t distracted by her mother who bickered with her in the front seat. It just happened. You know, with the road scattered everywhere, it really is easy to get lost. Suddenly, there was nothing but sand. The water was above the windshield. The lights were out, the engine was dead. When I stepped out, I thought the water was waist high. It was only to my knees. I thought it was the rocks. But it was the sand. I thought I was drowning. I thought I was going to die. I thought I was going to die.
Themes: Motherhood, Marriage; Language barriers; Love
Characters: Narrator, Mom, Victoria
Notes: I was left hanging when it came to your mother’s more human aspects outside of motherhood and shielding you. If there is more about her view on marriage or divorce or even her side of that time, I feel it would make the story more complete. It sits well on its own, but I feel like that as a final touch, especially with the ‘mending of the language barrier’. I like Victoria as a reflection of what your mom was going through then, but I feel as if she’s a ghost of a person in this; so I’d rather her completely cut out or more fleshed out.

[Word frequency change: And (x50) Was (x44) That (x18) After (x4) More (x9) Time (x11) If (x4) Only (x6) Even (x5) Never (x5)]

Questions: Pleasure of being a single mother – pleasure of the massager, is there a way to emphasize the former in either this or the next piece?