Karen Robertson dreams of only one thing: becoming a world-class pianist. Not yet graduated from high school, she toils six or seven hours every day over Beethoven and Tchaikovsky in preparation for auditions to major conservatories. Then the Great Earthquake strikes. Karen’s home is gone. Her piano is destroyed. Her beloved teacher is missing. When her father finds work at Arequipa, an isolated tuberculosis sanatorium in rural Marin County, Karen feels her dream slipping away. But hearing a distant piano on the sanatorium campus, Karen meets An Collins, a young woman orphaned by the tuberculosis that killed her mother. An leads Karen to a beautiful Mason grand; and as their long, music-filled days at the piano deepen into friendship, An confides in Karen her dream of becoming a writer and escaping Arequipa. When Karen’s teacher reappears and arranges a performance in San Francisco, Karen contrives to make An’s dream become a reality. But An unintentionally provokes a crisis that changes both women’s lives forever.