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SCHISM:
AN OPERATIC EXPLORATION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

by

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A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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ABSTRACT

Art and media have long contributed to the stigma surrounding mental health by inaccurately portraying mental illnesses and their symptoms, diminishing the experiences of those living with mental illness(es), and perpetuating the spread of dangerous, uninformed rhetoric about mental health. This covertly encourages violence and discrimination against those who live with mental illness(es), and interferes with their full participation in and contribution to society. The media's impact remains effective because of its ability to exploit subjectivity, presenting to audiences what they are coerced to see as truth reflected into themselves; however, effectiveness and danger are not mutually exclusive. When discrimination, ridicule, and misunderstanding underscore the perception of mental illness, it diminishes the motivation to manifest compassionate societies.

I have attempted to redirect the intentionality of art by using it as a tool for advocacy, awareness, and reform. I wrote an opera exploring the realistic dynamics between two individuals living with mental illness(es), pulling from both personal and shared experiences with mental illness, and academic journals surrounding mental health. This opera, *SCHISM*, spans two and a half hours over three acts, features five voices and piano, and intends to evoke catharsis. I did this as I discovered realism elicits a visceral response in audiences, which stems from the early concept of “verismo¹ opera” (or “realism”), a late nineteenth century style of Italian opera that intended to represent the working class.

These reflective depictions of ourselves, processed through musical language, allow us to understand perspectives outside our own as this method of communication spans cultural boundaries. It carries the potential to initiate change and, in this case, a conversation about

¹ “Verismo | Italian Opera.” 2019. In Encyclopædia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/art/verismo-Italian-opera>.

mental health. To engage with art is to engage with each other, so when we see ourselves on the screen, on the stage, or in our mirrors, we are more inclined to understand our impact on the world. This shapes how we behave with one another, how we interact, how we live, how we share, how we love, how we remain compassionate and human. It is imperative that we use art to build closer, more understanding communities.

CONTENT WARNING

This thesis touches heavily upon themes of mental illness, suicidal ideation, emotional trauma, alcoholism, and related subject matter. I encourage you to step away from the work for a moment if it ever becomes emotionally overwhelming. I value your mental health, and it is important to me that you feel safe, heard, and respected throughout this process of creating, promoting, and discussing advocacy art.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am honored to thank Dr. Dana Kaufman, Assistant Professor in Music Composition and my faculty mentor, for her guidance and support shared in this journey of health and humanity through music-making. I have gained not only invaluable academic insight from Dr. Kaufman, but have also been given the opportunity to expand my worldviews and broaden the scope by which we perceive ourselves. I have grown not only as a composer, librettist, and scholar studying under her, but, too and most, I have grown as a person. It is with great honor and a full heart that I thank her.

I am also forever grateful to both Dr. Stephanie Moore, Assistant Professor in School Psychology, and Professor Kimberly Guerrero, Associate Professor in Theatre, Film, and Digital Production, for their essential guidance in laying the foundational framework for the creative and objective parameters of this opera. Work vulnerable is work treated with care — thank you, so.

I would also like to thank the Chancellor's Research Fellowship, University Honors, and the Department of Music at University of California, Riverside for their unrivaled support. I have worked with an incredibly committed group of scholars within these organizations, and I am truly grateful for the wealth of wisdom I have received from this community.

Finally, I owe a deep thanks to my friends and colleagues who, too, supported me throughout this excruciatingly vulnerable process, fostering a safe and healthy environment in which I could grow within and beyond academia. I am forever indebted to them, always.

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A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Mental health stigma is amidst the most pressing social issues of the twenty-first century. Though the dialogue surrounding mental health today has only recently developed into a constructive one, people living with mental illness(es) still face discrimination, neglect, isolation, and abuse, and this abuse carries a history spanning centuries. Worse yet, this abuse is not exclusive to American society; rather, it is an actively global concern.

Wulf Rössler, Professor of Clinical and Social Psychiatry at the University of Zurich and Clinical Director at the Psychiatric University Hospital ‘Burghölzli’, makes the claim that “there is no country, society or culture where people with mental illness have the same societal value as people without a mental illness.”² While this may sound like a hasty generalization, he pulls substantial evidence from a survey conducted by a team of psychiatrists conducting stigma research on behalf of the INDIGO Study Group (an international organization motivated to reduce mental illness-related discrimination). With this survey, the psychiatrists intended to quantify “anticipated and experienced discrimination reported by people with schizophrenia” in order to further understand how to reduce it.³ They provided the survey to 732 participants living with schizophrenia across 27 countries and concluded that the responses to questions regarding discrimination within interpersonal relationships (e.g., asking if a respondent experienced discrimination trying to find new friends) were overwhelmingly negative. Though the report lists a plethora of data collected from a lengthy set of questions, the most distressing and informative statistics involved questions related to intimate and/or career-based relationships. The survey

² Rössler, Wulf. 2016. “The Stigma of Mental Disorders.” *EMBO Reports* 17 (9): 1250-53. <https://doi.org/10.15252/embr.201643041>.

³ Thornicroft, Graham, Elaine Brohan, Diana Rose, Norman Sartorius, and Morven Leese. 2009. “Global Pattern of Experienced and Anticipated Discrimination against People with Schizophrenia: A Cross-Sectional Survey.” *The Lancet* 373 (9661): 408–15. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(08\)61817-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(08)61817-6).

reports that “anticipated discrimination [i.e., discrimination with which the respondent predicted they would be met] affected 469 (64%) in applying for work, training, or education and 402 (55%) looking for a close relationship; 526 (72%) felt the need to conceal their diagnosis.” This carries alarming implications. Essentially, and respectively, this group of participants (who share the same mental illness, but still provide us with data enough to evaluate the implications for other mental illnesses) demonstrate that they: 1) feel anxious to involve themselves in professional and academic environments, 2) feel afraid seeking emotional intimacy with another human being, and 3) feel compelled to reject a part of themselves by withholding their diagnoses, thus denying that it exists at all and that they are, as I often hear the term used, “normal”. This conveys to us an even greater implication: if people with mental illness(es) have a shared experience in withdrawing from the world, the more that withdrawal (which is a substantial amount considering 50% of the American population will experience a mental health crisis at least once in their lifetime⁴), the less functional, integrated, compassionate, and healthy our societies will become. Isolation creates barriers that limit our exposure to each other, which then minimizes our engagement with varying perspectives, which then, ultimately, inhibits the growth of stable relationships, both intrapersonal and interpersonal. This begs the terrifying question: just how many other people with different mental illnesses who also experience this systematically instituted anxiety, fear, and self-rejection and choose not to seek help due to mental health stigma are there? The answer is worryingly high.

New data from a recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report yielding statistics regarding mental health treatment among adults aligns reasonably so with the statistics from the INDIGO Study Group’s research. Its authors, Emily P. Terlizzi, MPH, and

⁴ CDC. 2018. “Learn about Mental Health - Mental Health - CDC.” [Www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm#:~:text=Mental%20illnesses%20are%20among%20the). December 12, 2018. <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm#:~:text=Mental%20illnesses%20are%20among%20the>.

Benjamin Zablotzky, PhD, list a finding within the report that is imperative to mention: in 2019, only 19.2% of adults sought and received any mental health treatment within the last twelve months (from the date of the report).⁵ These two collections of scientific data coalesce to form a more refined understanding about how people living with mental illness(es) remove themselves from their communities due to environmental factors which prevent them from openly discussing their illnesses. This need to hide from people, obviously, is a reaction that stems from society's fear of humanizing people living with mental illness(es)—or, as a man I had a conversation with at a bus stop once said, the fear of “feeding into their delusions”. This encouraged recoiling and constant suppression only further perpetuate the isolation and misunderstandings between those who do and do not live with mental illness(es), and it quickly becomes clear to see that the conversation surrounding mental health is an unproductive one. With this quantifiable and irrefutable information, it is impossible to ignore the deep-rooted shame these community members bear—a shame inflamed by societal support on a systematic level, one caused by the fear to speak.

In 1996 and 2006, two more surveys were generated to study mental health stigma. They indicated that though American society has grown slightly more accepting of the disclosure and discussion of mental illnesses, it still recognizes it as taboo.⁶ This taboo nature, in part, is due to our constant suppression of the topic when it is brought up—the uncomfortable dinner table conversations. It is apparent that societies worldwide have subscribed to the “out of sight, out of mind” dogma, except for that the only things they have kept out of sight and out of mind are their own compassion and humanity—their ability to be human. The discrimination people living with

⁵ Terlizzi, Emily P., and Benjamin Zablotzky. 2020. “Mental Health Treatment among Adults: United States, 2019.” [Www.cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db380.htm). September 29, 2020. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db380.htm>.

⁶ Pescosolido, Bernice A. 2013. “The Public Stigma of Mental Illness.” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 54 (1): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146512471197>.

mental illness(es) face is alarming enough, and it is made worse with the knowledge that art and media, arguably the most effective mediums used to manipulate the public (e.g., propaganda), has long perpetuated the stigma and continues, still, to do so. Unfortunately, a major perpetuator of discrimination against people living with mental illness(es) within art and media is opera.

OPERA AND MENTAL HEALTH

Opera and mental illness share a history full of (onstage) bloodshed, but that pain doesn't sear just within the confines of the opera house. The narratives presented before audiences in the Romantic Era were riddled rotten with inaccurate depictions of how people living with mental illness behave and navigate the world. This is not unusual as the Romantic Era was a response to the Classical Era's optimistic world shaken by revolution, one where mysticism, the supernatural, and the darker shades of life were prime subject material. The libretti ("little books", meaning the scripts) usually detailed the story of a crazed woman experiencing a mental health crisis, as in Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*. This topic was so popular, in fact, that an entire operatic concept was conceived to describe a specific moment within an opera with a similar narrative: the mad scene.⁷ It is meant to be a moment of catharsis in the protagonist, a visceral emotional response, a painful experience as it comes in a moment of panic (high drama to the old opera composers); but, worse yet, these moments of "high drama" are written in a completely unrealistic fashion. Opera contributes to mental health stigma in this way, and it is unfortunate that opera finds its roots there, but that is why I have decided to take the craft and reshape it into a tool for advocacy, awareness, and reform. It is with these two expansive, coexisting histories and a heart full of optimism for a safer, healthier society for people living with mental illness(es), including myself, that I ventured into this creative activity.

⁷ Erfurth, A., and P. Hoff. 2000. "Mad Scenes in Early 19th-Century Opera." *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 102 (4): 310–13. <https://doi.org/10.1034/j.1600-0447.2000.102004310.x>.

SCHISM (AN INTRODUCTION)

To honor the narrative and stylistic framework the early verismo opera composers set (e.g., Pietro Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo), I decided to initiate an open conversation about mental health by writing an opera, *SCHISM*.

SCHISM details the lives of two individuals living with mental illness(es), Autumn and Olivia. As Olivia is actively receiving mental health treatment by the start of the work, the opera centers around Autumn, the protagonist, and his alienating experience with mental illness. Its intention is to use the verismo style of operatic writing to dispel stigma surrounding mental health. To use opera, one of the most effective narrative tools outside of film due to its interdisciplinary nature between the arts, to tell this story was a specific decision to not only recalibrate the trajectory of opera, but to restore the integrity of the experiences of people who live with mental illness(es). Understanding begins first with compassion, and this work serves as a method of communicating that I understand that experience, and that I want to do all I can to reshape our perceptions of mental illness to positive ones.

This opera also serves to act as a resource which educators at all stages of academia can study to understand the impact of mental illness on their students as it elaborates on the warning signs of the aforementioned isolation discovered by the psychiatric surveys. Additionally, it will hopefully encourage voting societies to demand policy reform of psychiatric treatment accessibility as a main discussion in this work is the inaccessibility to mental health services, which Autumn experiences. Advocating for these services through art and media normalizes the discussion and makes the pursuit of them more attractive. By making treatment easily available, policymakers can contribute to the development of healthier societies.

This project's unique contribution is the way it presents its information. As in *Next to Normal*, a successful Broadway musical about mental illness, there is evidence that music adds an extra dimension to understanding that statistics alone cannot assess. It is a universal language that transcends cultural barriers, and by breaking these barriers down, we can finally understand our fellow man—people.

SCHISM spans two and a half hours over three acts, features five voices and piano, and was premiered at UCR ARTS downtown in front of a live audience. A question-and-answer (“Q+A”) session was held after the premiere to further the open conversation about mental health I created. The responses were overwhelmingly curious, and there were many questions that I am certain most people have about mental health. It was a monumental success, and I am glad to have shared in the dialogue with my audience. The work exists as a piece not only for myself, but for others—to help them heal.

In keeping with the important message of building empathetic communities, I will analyze one core scene here to guide our understanding in how this operatic form was able to carry that message, and how we can use this information to become more compassionate ourselves: ACT II: WHAT WE FIND IN THE DARK, SCENE II: DO YOU CRACK OR DO YOU CHANGE?

SCORE ANALYSIS

The reason I call to act 2, scene 2 is that it represents an accurate depiction of what support looks and sounds like, musically and poetically (note: the score and libretto are also appended for ease of access). This moment is preceded by the first scene of the second act, a nightmare sequence from Autumn's perspective about his dead sister who experienced a mental health crisis in their mutual youth and hung herself. Autumn awakes from his sleep and so, too,

does Olivia, immediately consoling him as he gasps for air, halfway dreaming and halfway dead. She coos to him, asking him to breathe as the piano rumbles in the lower octaves, simulating breaths sorrowful (see Fig. 1 below).

Fig. 1

The musical score for Figure 1 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Olivia (O.), the middle for Autumn (A.), and the bottom for Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 6/8. The score begins at measure 6. Olivia's part starts with a rest, followed by a note with a circle with a cross (inhale) and a diamond (exhale). The lyrics "Breathe." are written below this note. The piano accompaniment features a rumbling bass line with notes marked with circles with crosses and diamonds. The dynamic markings *mp* and *pp* are present. The lyrics "A-noth-er night-mare, my love?" are written below Olivia's second line of music.

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The breaths are indicated by two different noteheads, the circle with a cross asking the performer to inhale, and the diamond asking the performer to exhale. This elicits a subconscious response in the audience as they, too, take this moment to breathe with the characters. This communal moment of physical movement between the performers and audience members helps to relax the space. It is a shared, intimate experience, and it sets the tone for the support we are expected to provide Autumn in this scene as he sinks into the lower, warmer part of his vocal register, crying as he expresses frustration with his mental illness (see Fig. 2 on the following page).

Fig. 2

3

A. 34
8
sleep and then, when I steal some, it's hard to wake up. It's hard to en-

Pno.

OLIVIA shakes her head, not disapprovingly, but in rejection of the negative self-talk. She tries to say something but is interrupted.

rit. ♩ = 112

fsub. *mf*

A. 40
8
joy_ things. I bur-den you. And I

Pno.

rit. ♩ = 112

f

As they continue to push and pull with the proposal of whether or not Autumn should go to therapy (Autumn advocating for no, and Olivia in disagreement), we reach a gentle, poetic moment that provides us with the very support that was set up by the low piano chords in Fig. 1. Autumn begins to ask questions he asked angrily earlier in the opera, but now with an innocent, vulnerable tone. This allows the audience to empathize with these characters in this scene, and because there is now an anchor between them—a connection between perceiver and the perceived on an emotional and, therefore, mental level—we come to a moment where Olivia

tries to highlight Autumn’s own strength, emphasizing a transition between three pronouns (“I”, “we’ll”, “you’ll”), pushing them from herself to him in an effort to help him realize his path to wellness (see Figures 3-5 below). Fig. 3 is preceded by Autumn saying, “But, I haven’t got the words.”

Fig. 3

The musical score for Figure 3 consists of three staves. The top staff is for Olivia (O.), the middle for Autumn (A.), and the bottom for Piano (Pno.). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 87 is marked at the beginning. Olivia's vocal line starts with a whole note rest, followed by a half note 'I', a quarter note 'will', a quarter note 'help', a quarter note 'you', a quarter note 'find', a quarter note 'them', a quarter note rest, and a quarter note 'There'. Autumn's vocal line starts with a half note rest, followed by a half note 'words.', a quarter note rest, a quarter note 'And', a quarter note 'what', a quarter note 'a-bout', a quarter note 'the', a quarter note 'mo-', and a quarter note 'ney?'. The piano accompaniment features a steady harmonic pedal in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

Here, we see that Olivia begins with the word “I” in reference to herself during this three-part phrase above these soft, low harmonic pedals. She does this as she understands that Autumn isn’t accepting the blatant pushback, so she needs to meet him where he is emotionally to build up his courage to speak and, hopefully, go to therapy: that is her goal in this scene, to encourage. Then, as this is a realistic depiction of a mild breakdown, Autumn (true to his character) asks those questions he earlier asked angrily, dovetailing (i.e., the compositional technique of beginning one instrument/voice’s phrase before another’s has a chance to end) behind Olivia in her confident stride, perhaps taking some of that confidence for himself.

We then transition into the next iteration of the harmonic pedal before gently cadencing on the tonic chord of E Major in mm. 94, breaking the mood and texture from tense and harsh, respectively, to warm and soft as Olivia transitions, now, to the word “we’ll” (see Fig. 4). This word, “we’ll,” is so powerful against the isolating texture of the piano and two voices at piano/pianissimo (soft / very soft level of audibility). It sticks out in a way that acts as an anchor, and pulls the audience in as “we’ll” instinctively and subconsciously makes them feel included. These two compositional components used jointly provide a sense of temporary release and gentleness, something Autumn so desperately needs in this moment: that is his goal in this scene, to be convinced enough to seek help.

Fig. 4

6

93

O.
op-tions, we'll find them.

A.
slowly becoming more comfortable with the
idea of therapy
And if the per-son I've trus-ted to lis-ten falls

Pno.

Autumn then begins his new melodic line / final question in this last iteration (mm. 95-101) of the harmonic pedal passage, and his voice trails upward, a crescendo in his voice brushing up against Olivia’s own as she tries one last time to quell his anxieties about going to

therapy. She understands that he is going to be in need of guidance and togetherness through this journey of wellness, and that he trusts her with these questions, his worries. But, it is also in this moment that she sees a change in Autumn’s demeanor, in the way he asks, “And if the person I’ve trusted to listen falls silent?” as specified by the character note above his vocal line. She takes this as her opportunity to push again, this time using the word “you’ll” to place autonomy and confidence onto Autumn. The constant beating of her G# in mm. 101, a major third away from the tonic, propels us into the satisfying and warm embrace of the low E in the piano met with Autumn’s dissonant, non-chord tone D# (which can be argued as a chord tone if the third beat in mm. 101 is thought of as an E Maj7). See Fig. 5 below.

Fig. 5

The musical score for Figure 5 consists of three staves: Soprano (O.), Alto (A.), and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The tempo is marked 'rit.' (ritardando) with a metronome marking of ♩ = 116. The lyrics for the Soprano part are: "You'll have said the words re-gard-less. si-lent?". The Alto part has the lyrics "si-lent?". The Piano part features a constant eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The score includes two 'rit.' markings and two metronome markings: ♩ = 116 and ♩ = 60. A dynamic marking of *8^{vb}* is present at the bottom of the piano part.

The reason this cadence (the compositional technique of ending on a specific chord from a specific chord to specify an end of a phrase) is important is because this is the moment Autumn finally takes the time to listen. The warmth of Olivia’s voice intermingled with her constant

encouragement and specification of pronouns impacts the audience in a cathartic way. It provides them, too, with the warmth that Autumn was denying and claiming he was not worth prior to this special moment.

By creating a semi-strophic passage (strophic in the musical context meaning a repeated verse of music, unchanged) that relies on a teetering harmonic pedal quietly but impactfully resolving into a low, warm “home” note, I effectively embraced the audience with a wash of sound that they could sit in for a moment. They, too, the audience, deserve to engage with the work in that way considering that this was written for them, specifically. This opera was written with the intention of bridging the gap between those who do and do not live with mental illness(es) (hence, *SCHISM*). It is imperative that the art be interactive and reflective to the degree that participation is encouraged and welcomed. These compositional techniques, though seemingly insignificant or minute, exist only to humanize the sound—to make it feel human. It is with these little tools that we make things beautiful. It should also be said that by the end of this scene, Autumn agrees to go to therapy.

A HORIZON OF HEALTH (CLOSING THOUGHTS)

Working on this opera has been an experience I will remember until I write my very last opera. Truly, it has been quite a journey, and I am just glad that I was given the platform to further discuss the ever-important topic of mental health and wellness. Though the process was successful and there was a finished product at the end of this last year, it definitely took a toll on me. I realized that I, too, needed to grow like Autumn. I began my own mental health journey in 2020 and have been privileged enough to enjoy speaking with the therapist I see. It is moments like these in which I reflect and think about how good it is to be alive, and I carried those moments with me throughout the writing process as it was emotionally grueling.

I am proud to have seen so much research on mental health stigma in the academic archives as I was halfway disheartened by and halfway dreading the thought that perhaps there really hasn't been as much progress in the field of mental health stigma research because of how impactful the stigma is itself. It was reaffirming knowing that others, too, were experiencing a phenomenon I had once thought I experienced on my own; however, it was sobering all the same.

There is still plenty of work to be done in the field of diminishing mental health stigma and reducing the rates of discrimination by which people living with mental illness(es) are met on a daily basis (myself included). Luckily, there are people within the communities I have become a part of on University of California, Riverside's (UCR's) campus that understand, and that I have created a foundation of trust with. There is hope for a future without fear of crying in public, or being comfortable with telling the person you love they've hurt you, or sitting in silence without fear of hearing too many of your thoughts racing, or not being mislabeled because of stereotypes that jumble symptoms of different mental illnesses together.

There is a world like that somewhere soon.

I close this thesis with hopeful implications for the creative arts as well. This project will impact the way composers elaborate on sensitive issues and will help them recalibrate the way they portray a variety of people from diverse backgrounds. As this project is tied directly to art and media, massive contributions to mental health stigma, *SCHISM* exists to defy the detrimental perspectives they have established and is a prominent example of contribution to and critical analysis of a greater conversation, prompting composers and musicians to become involved with current, complex discussions. This opera acts as a gateway for more people in the music field to pursue interdisciplinary projects; this allows for the constructive collaboration between multiple

disciplines, creating opportunities for scholars to learn from one another and exchange ideas, contributing to the advancement of knowledge.

Last, and most importantly—the core reason why *SCHISM* now exists—this opera will acknowledge those who live with mental illness and provide them with a platform in which their stories are heard, validated, and trusted.

We will live in that world soon. This much, I hope.

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SCHISM

an opera

joseph-nathaniel cuenca
librettist and composer

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SCHISM

*an opera for you,
my friends –
only ever wellness to you.*

joseph-nathaniel cuenca

ACT I: WHAT WE SEEK IN THE LIGHT

A TERSE PROLOGUE: COMA

*(Curtains black – flanked by **THE VOID CHORUS** – surround a lone bed occupying a lone body. Oppression and perpetual insignificance permeate the room – **infect** it.)*

THE EYES *(almost with pity, but profoundly sad)*

*A mess...
Oh—Autumn, with your quaking hands and
somber sighs,
what a **mess** you are.*

(AUTUMN shifts a bit, his sleep coming undone.)

THE BANSHEE *(antagonistically)*

*A mess you are! (AUTUMN shifts again)
The scars you bear unstitch just as hastily as thoughts hammer and
still,
you choose to do **nothing** but sleep!*

(forebodingly)

*How dangerous it is to keep your eyes cast sideward,
sight shackled to empty walls,
not seeing the sunlight anew.*

THE EYES

*However beautiful its rays,
the sun
however hard I want to feel it smile on me,
it hurts and it stings,
but...
wait—*

THE BANSHEE (*whispering*)

Something's wrong.

THE EYES (*whispering*)

There's something wrong.

THE VOID CHORUS (*passively urging*)

Is there something you needed to say?

AUTUMN (*with deep melancholy teetering on irritation*)

I just need to sleep.

***Please**, just one more moment.*

THE EYES (*normale*)

***Sleep**,*

Autumn,

is an escape only temporary

*and one not long enough to contain all that **silence**,
your resignation.*

You will have to wake up eventually.

AUTUMN

I will wake when I please.

THE BANSHEE

Autumn,

please wake up.

THE EYES

Don't you think it's about time you felt the sun on your face?

THE VOID CHORUS (*whispering*)

It's one in the afternoon.

SCENE I: EVACUATION SIREN

*(AUTUMN stirs **pathetically**, still trying to cling to his bed.)*

AUTUMN *(bitterly)*

It's one in the afternoon.

So, what?

***If I had cared enough** to know the time,
I would have risen up early enough to enjoy it.*

It's one in the afternoon.

So, what?

(AUTUMN's phone blares. He grabs hold of it reluctantly, but his bitterness morphs into alarm. OLIVIA stands stage left, her arm limp, phone in hand. This delay between them is not the first.)

OLIVIA

*I messaged you **four** hours ago,
but I take it you're still in bed.*

AUTUMN *(hauntedly, with dread)*

Oh...

(AUTUMN jumps out of bed and frantically scrounges for an outfit. Another message. He reaches for his phone and reads worriedly, ashamed of his inability to uphold plans previously made.)

OLIVIA

Happy birthday, I guess.

(He calls her. She answers, albeit reluctantly. This divide between them is not the first.)

Hello.

AUTUMN

Olivia, hi.

I'm so sorry.

I didn't get much sleep last night.

OLIVIA

It's alright, Autumn.

AUTUMN

No, it's not.

*It's just that the library still hasn't finished their renovations
and you know how **I burn out beneath those
fluorescent lights** and I—*

OLIVIA *(a little forcefully, but with some compassion in her voice)*

*Autumn, it's **fine**.*

*You don't need to lie to me.
Am I still seeing you today?—*

AUTUMN *(offendedly, but not with confrontation)*

I wasn't lying.

OLIVIA *(gnawing on his bite-back and dismissing it)*

Am I still seeing you today?

AUTUMN *(he abandons his offense in apologetic de-escalation)*

Yes.

*Can we say two?
If you'd still like to, of course.*

OLIVIA

*Two it is.
I'll see you.*

*(She waits for a moment in case he has anything left to say. He doesn't. Though a phrase tries to
leave his lips, she hangs up, exiting stage left. He laments while getting dressed.)*

AUTUMN

*“mincing words makes life easier,
but it makes it hard all the same...”*

*a friend said that to me once.
Maybe if I had just said something...*

I would have known what he meant by that.

THE VOID CHORUS

Maybe.

AUTUMN *(sitting to slip his shoes on)*

*But my voice blends in all the same...
These days, they pass through as one gradient
obscured in its apologies.*

*I'll drift through these ambiguous days,
silent all the same,
never to change
for today is as tomorrow will be as yesterday.*

You will still be the same piece of shit you were yesterday.

(AUTUMN rises from the edge of his bed and leaves the room.)

SCENE II: WEEP WATERCOLORS

(The coffee shop. AUTUMN enters stage right and looks for OLIVIA. Upon spotting her, he makes his way to the table and sits. By her leg sits a painted canvas.)

OLIVIA *(smiling)*

Hey.

AUTUMN *(cautiously, worriedly)*

Hello.

OLIVIA *(trying to lighten the mood)*

I'm glad you made it.

AUTUMN

*Yeah,
I'm really sorry...*

OLIVIA

Autumn, please. (she takes hold of his hand)

*It's okay.
I'm sorry I kinda blew up on you earlier.
I know it wasn't right.*

***I know that now.
I'm sorry.***

(AUTUMN doesn't respond, he only nods.)

OLIVIA *(trying to shift the conversation)*

I have something for you.

AUTUMN

Something for me?

(OLIVIA presents AUTUMN with a watercolor portrait of himself. He gasps quietly. She seems proud of her work.)

I love it!

OLIVIA

I thought you would!

AUTUMN

*It's gorgeous. (his adoration turns to support)
Did you talk to your therapist about this?*

OLIVIA *(shaking her head)*

*No.
We talked a lot about you though, before*

I decided
it was okay to paint you.

*You know,
still working on the attachment stuff.
I'm sorry if it's too much.*

AUTUMN *(through brewing tears)*

*No, no... I'm glad he said it was alright.
It's gorgeous.*

OLIVIA (*through giggles*)

So, you admit that you are, then!

*(The air is lightening. The tension is slipping. **Good feelings.** AUTUMN wipes away his tears. People sat at the other table begin to watch.)*

AUTUMN

*No. (gestures to the canvas)
I mean the art.*

OLIVIA

*Yes. (gestures to Autumn)
The art.*

AUTUMN

Silly.

(AUTUMN looks back at the painting.)

Olivia, I—

(He notices the stares of the strangers sat at the other table, who quickly turn from him. A pause – an uncomfortable one. AUTUMN shifts slightly in his seat.)

OLIVIA (*noticing a familiar terror in his eyes*)

*Yes? (she turns to face the group of the others then turns back)
What's wrong?*

AUTUMN

Nothing, it's nothing.

OLIVIA

*Hey,
you said you'd try for me.
(AUTUMN sets himself aside to be vulnerable for just a moment.)*

AUTUMN

I just don't like when people stare at me

especially when I'm crying.

OLIVIA (*cautiously but decisively taking hold of his hand again*)

Hey,
nothing to be ashamed of.

*It's okay to cry—
that's your body's normal response to feeling!
You're just feeling good is all, lovely.*

(She takes a moment to consider his emotional state)

*You do feel good, **don't** you?*

AUTUMN (*hiding a lie*)

*Yes,
I do.*

OLIVIA (*sensing a lie*)

Autumn...

AUTUMN (*admittedly, with exhaustion*)

*No...
not really.
Not right now.*

(OLIVIA doesn't say anything; she only nods.)

OLIVIA

*It's a little warm in here
and this coffee bites, bleh—miserable.
Let's get out?*

(AUTUMN only nods. Cut to black with a spotlight on OLIVIA.)

SCENE III: JUST FOR ME

(A therapy session. OLIVIA sits with her therapist, DR. LANGFORD. There is an air of solemnity that consumes them.)

OLIVIA

*I didn't know how else to help.
He was embarrassed—and I'd be, too.
Saturday was just rough.*

DR. LANGFORD

*I understand.
You must have been exhausted, too, after all that work.*

OLIVIA (*unconsciously nodding, affirming herself*)

*He made it seem like it was for naught.
Like it was for nothing –
all that effort.
Nothing at all.*

DR. LANGFORD (*calmly guiding her thought process*)

It sounds like you were expecting a different response.

OLIVIA

*I mean, **he did say** it was gorgeous –
before he caught them looking –
and he wouldn't lie about that.
but it just bothers me:
how quickly he shut down.*

DR. LANGFORD

Do these refrains happen often?

OLIVIA

*Yes...
and it really pisses me off.*

DR. LANGFORD

*Your profession lies in art.
It's reasonable that your connection with your work would
make you feel like he was dismissing you,*

not just the painting.

OLIVIA

Right!—

and I've explained to him the— (frustratedly, tearing just a little)
I'm sorry.

DR. LANGFORD

No, no, I hear you.

Everything you're feeling is valid.
I want to acknowledge your
***confidence** in telling me how you felt about the situation.*
I know this has been hard for you.

(OLIVIA smiles for the first time this session.)

I'm curious to know if we can revisit what happened before his refrain.
*Can we do that **together**?*

OLIVIA

Yes.

DR. LANGFORD

Good.
You mentioned that he said your painting was gorgeous.
What did that feel like?

OLIVIA *(softly)*

Good.
Warm, like orange,
as it always feels when he reassures me that I'm not clingy.
It felt like he saw me –
like the sunlight broke dawn in his eyes.

OLIVIA *(cont.)*

It was like he was finally ready to say something (her good feelings quickly fade)
but he pulled back, like he always does.

*It was like he didn't **want** to see my efforts
and—in turn,
didn't want to see **me**.*

*I just thought he would try a little harder, be understanding
and not fizzle out so easily
and **not reject my gift**.*

DR. LANGFORD

Reject you.

OLIVIA

***Right.** (she opens her mouth to speak, but the words get stuck for a second)
I felt like thinking I could be worth the effort was
wrong.*

*(The air brews again in its solemnity. **OLIVIA** quietens.)*

DR. LANGFORD

Is couple's counseling an option you two have been considering?

OLIVIA

We're still not there yet.

DR. LANGFORD

Are you waiting for more commitment?

*(**OLIVIA** nods and stares at the floor. Another silence.)*

Did you have any thoughts of drinking after that day?

*(**OLIVIA**'s head shoots up as she looks at her therapist with an expression indistinguishable
from anger, confusion, sadness, and offense. It hauntingly drops into a look of guilt.)*

OLIVIA

Yes.

DR. LANGFORD

Did you drink at all?

OLIVIA

*No.
Surprisingly,
not at all.*

DR. LANGFORD

What stopped you?

OLIVIA

*I said **I** loved what I gave him and was proud of my work –
myself –*

*and I told myself that all I could do was
love him in the only way **I know how**,*

*and I reminded myself that I couldn't do that –
create – for him,
for **myself**
if my vision was blurred from binging.*

*(**DR. LANGFORD** smiles in his pride of **OLIVIA**.)*

DR. LANGFORD

*If I'm hearing you correctly, it sounds like you practiced what we talked about:
positive self-talk.*

OLIVIA *(proudly, for the first time today)*

Right.

DR. LANGFORD

Deep breath.

(The two share a profound, silent moment spent breathing – just breathing.)

*You are growing;
you are making exceptional progress.*

We are out of time today; would you like to schedule another appointment?

OLIVIA

*Yes, please. Can we stick with eleven?
Thursdays work better for me now.*

DR. LANGFORD

*Sure!
I've got you down for eleven next week. (he hands her an appointment card)*

OLIVIA *(taking the card in warmth)*

Thank you, Dr. Langford.

DR. LANGFORD

*I appreciate the thanks.
You're the one pulling all the weight, remember that.*

(OLIVIA nods again, now sure of herself, practically beaming. DR. LANGFORD holds the door open for her while she exits the room. He smiles at his next client waiting in the lobby.)

Good morning. Ready?

SCENE IV: EXHALE

(OLIVIA approaches AUTUMN, who has been sitting on a park bench waiting for her to return from her therapy session. She wraps her arms around him from behind. They laugh.)

AUTUMN *(sweetly)*

Hello, my love.

OLIVIA *(just as sweetly; calmly)*

Hello, my love.

AUTUMN

*How did it go today?
You seem **well**.*

OLIVIA

*I am!
It **went well**.
I really **needed** this today.*

AUTUMN

*Good, my love.
I'm happy for you.*

OLIVIA

*I'm happy, too!
You're here with me on this Thursday afternoon
and the sunlight,
it warms your smile.*

AUTUMN

*The sunlight,
it warms your hand.*

(AUTUMN takes a hard moment to consider his words.)

Hey, uhm...

*I want to apologize for the other day,
by the way.
I know I can be difficult
and I'm trying, really.
**It's just
hard.***

OLIVIA *(taking his apology to heart)*

*It is.
Trust me, I know.
I'll be here for you, just like you are for me.
You deserve it,
and I want to help you find that for yourself. (she pauses thoughtfully)*

OLIVIA *(cont.)*

Why don't we work on finding—

AUTUMN *(dismissively, defensively)*

Olivia, please—

OLIVIA *(not forcing it, but persistent)*

*Autumn...
look, I know it's hard—*

AUTUMN

*My friend went to therapy;
he said it didn't do anything for him—*

OLIVIA

*That's because he's him, which you're not.
That's someone else's experience.*

AUTUMN *(still irritated, but with a subtle pleading in his voice)*

*—and what about insurance?...
...and if I get stuck with someone who can't hear me?...*

OLIVIA

*We'll find someone good for you.
It'll take time, but we can do it.*

AUTUMN

*I don't have time,
only moments.*

OLIVIA

*But—hey,
do you know how long a minute feels?*

AUTUMN

No, I don't.

OLIVIA

*Well, let's just sit here and find out.
We can think about whatever the hell we want.
Whenever I sit,*

*I like to think about all the things I can get done in a minute.
Breathe with me for a minute, Autumn.*

AUTUMN

*Olivia—
there are people around.*

OLIVIA

*You **won't** look stupid or weird,
I promise.*

(AUTUMN hesitates but sits reluctantly with OLIVIA for an exact minute – one literal minute – just spent breathing, breathing with her, each breath getting less and less tense, only more and more resolved. Resolution.)

OLIVIA

*A friend taught me that once.
Feels good, huh?
You **do** feel good, don't you?*

AUTUMN

*Yes,
I do.*

OLIVIA

We can do that together whenever you need to.

AUTUMN *(clear-headedly)*

*Thank you.
Come on, I'm hungry and I want to take you to that place I told you about.*

(OLIVIA smiles at him and rises from the bench, gathering her purse. A sudden thought pops into her head as thoughts do – unannounced; sometimes better left unvisited.)

OLIVIA *(innocently, genuinely without awareness)*

*Oh, hey,
how's your sister?*

(Nothing but dread in AUTUMN.)

AUTUMN

What?

OLIVIA *(not knowing the truth)*

Your sister.

You mentioned her in your sleep the other night.

I don't think I've ever heard you talk about her.

Where is she?

AUTUMN *(hauntedly, lying)*

She's around.

INTERMISSION

ACT II: WHAT WE FIND IN THE DARK

SCENE I: NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE: MY SISTER, THE PIANIST

*(The curtains now separate the audience and the stage. There is a lone spotlight on **the piano.**)*

AUTUMN *(hauntedly)*

*My sister was a pianist,
a **good** pianist—
fluent.*

*Of the many times her fingers danced,
I listened to her **every time**,
her musings veiled in moonlight and my ear to the wall.*

*My parents at first didn't approve,
but she argued it would get her into college:
that well-roundedness*

to balance out the breakdowns, the embarrassment.

*My sister was a pianist,
an expressive pianist.*

*She would cry and I would,
too;*

***and in those moments when I wept with my sister,
I wish I knew how to play the piano.***

I tried to learn.

*Warm welcome,
lilies—, the sound my fingers made against ivory, and the smell of her room...
she found me there,
my sister,*

*and held me in the comfort of her eyes,
not staring,
but seeing...*

“I’m always here...”
“...I cry, too, Autumn.”

*... then my parents who were quietly teetering on divorce and listening in
came stomping in...*

*It was the first time she opened her mouth to speak,
not with her hands but with words through teeth.*

(A horrible shrieking and the sound of an ambulance. The curtains start to pull back.)

*...and, so the next time,
and the next time,
and the next time,...*

(AUTUMN awakes and exclaims in a panicked state. The curtains are open; moonlight.)

SCENE II: DO YOU CRACK OR DO YOU CHANGE?

(OLIVIA awakes, concerned and immediately attentive to AUTUMN. She places her hand on his back, then holds him close. He hyperventilates.)

OLIVIA

*Autumn, hey—I’ve got you.
It’s okay.
Breathe.*

(They take a moment to breathe. AUTUMN’s rapid breathing slows, and he calms just enough to become aware of his surroundings.)

OLIVIA

Another nightmare, my love?

(He nods.)

AUTUMN

*Bad memories.
I just need to go back to sleep.*

(His head hangs low and his mouth quivers just slightly. Tears.)

AUTUMN (*cont.*)

I'm so tired.

(*OLIVIA shifts her body, more attentive to AUTUMN.*)

*I'm tired of feeling bad.
It's hard to find sleep and then when I steal some
it's hard to wake up,
it's hard to enjoy things, (heavier tears)
I burden you.*

*And I know what you're going to say, (as a half-formed plea)
but how can I get help when I know I don't deserve it?*

OLIVIA

*Autumn,
you do deserve it.
Who said that you don't?*

(*A haunting pause lingers between them.*)

*Autumn, there's help here.
Help in me, help in breath,
 help, most importantly, in you
 for you –
 just for you.*

AUTUMN (*crying, afraid*)

...but I haven't got the words...

OLIVIA

I will help you find them.

AUTUMN

...and what about the money?...

OLIVIA

*There are options;
 we'll find them.*

AUTUMN

...and if the person I've trusted to listen falls silent?...

OLIVIA

*You'll have said the words regardless,
and you will have tried something new –
just for you.*

*You will have spoken at all
and that is resolution enough,*

my love.

You will not go through this alone.

AUTUMN *(no longer resistant; he knows now)*

*I've decided. (a beat—a long one)
Help me.*

SCENE III: I CRACKED

(A therapy session, this time between AUTUMN and DR. LANGFORD. Curiosity and innocence trickle from AUTUMN as he patiently, yet fidgetingly, waits for the doctor to speak; he doesn't.)

AUTUMN

*So,
do I just
talk?*

DR. LANGFORD *(warmly)*

*You are welcome to.
I'm just waiting for you to get comfortable.*

AUTUMN

*Oh! I'm sorry.
I don't really know how this works.*

(AUTUMN's hands sit awkwardly, nervously in each other.)

DR. LANGFORD

*That's alright.
I remember my first time sitting in a therapist's office:
it was strange.*

AUTUMN *(with some confusion)*

*Oh.
I didn't know therapists went to therapy.*

DR. LANGFORD

Well, someone has to deliver the mailman's mail.

(They share their first laugh.)

*No fault of yours for feeling nervous.
It's perfectly natural.
You're in a new environment
with someone you've never met
and that someone is here (he taps his temple with his index finger) –
in your home,
essentially –
trying to help you reconfigure your
breaker box.*

Right?

(Another laugh, together.)

AUTUMN

Right.

DR. LANGFORD *(returning to professionalism, but not losing warmth)*

*Whatever you want to say, I'm here to listen.
It's just us, and you are free to speak
openly.*

AUTUMN

Thank you.

DR. LANGFORD

Can you tell me what brought you in today?

AUTUMN

My girlfriend referred me.

DR. LANGFORD

What prompted you to ask for a referral?

AUTUMN (*worriedly*)

Uhm.

I don't know. (his eyes dart down floorward)

*I just haven't been feeling good lately –
haven't ever really felt good, actually.*

I'm tired all the time

and I can't –

the future doesn't look –

I'm sorry,

I'm just trying to put it into words.

(AUTUMN's eyes move to find the words as though they're tangible, but they see nothing more than walls adorned with books and certificates.)

DR. LANGFORD

That's alright.

Take your time.

AUTUMN

Yeah, sorry.

I think that was just a little difficult for me?

(THE VOID CHORUS appears quietly, unannounced as always. They stand far from the two, but hang presently.)

DR. LANGFORD

That's alright.

Adjusting takes a moment.

Thank you for being honest with me about that.

DR. LANGFORD (*cont.*)

*We can take our time.
It's only the first session, after all,
so, we don't have to dive in right away –
not until you feel ready.
Does that sound alright?*

THE VOID CHORUS

Always the accommodations, Autumn!

AUTUMN

*I would appreciate that.
Thank you.*

THE VOID CHORUS

Wasted words.

(AUTUMN tries to ignore his negative thoughts.)

DR. LANGFORD

*Which library do you apprentice at?
I see here under occupation you explained you're
working on your master's in library science?*

AUTUMN

*Yes.
I'm at Katherine Public. (feeling acknowledged, smiling)
I didn't know you read that.*

*(They share another laugh, this one softer. **Good feelings.**)*

DR. LANGFORD

How's that going for you?

AUTUMN (*ready to open up*)

I –

THE EYES

Tell him about Jeremy.

THE BANSHEE

He laughed at me the first time I asked for a mental health day.

AUTUMN

It's okay right now.

Just intense.

DR. LANGFORD

How's the work environment?

THE BANSHEE

*My boss called me crazy last week after watching me triple-check the inventory orders.
"Tedious!," he said.*

AUTUMN

It's decent.

THE VOID CHORUS

Liar!

DR. LANGFORD

Okay.

Autumn, because it's our first session

I do need to ask about family history.

I know it can be difficult to talk about on the first day.

So,

I want us to just take a moment to breathe.

Can we do that together?

AUTUMN (*visibly trying to push through and try*)

Yes.

DR. LANGFORD

*Great.
Deep breath.*

(They sit in silence uninterrupted, just for a few moments. Only ever moments. They open their eyes together, smiling.)

DR. LANGFORD

Ready?

(AUTUMN nods, visibly uplifted – just enough to open up.)

So, who is in your family?

AUTUMN

It's just my parents and I.

DR. LANGFORD

What's the quality of your relationship with them?

AUTUMN

*We stay out of each other's ways.
They're kind of a mess.*

DR. LANGFORD

So, you must not see one another much.

AUTUMN *(shaking his head)*

Not really, no.

DR. LANGFORD

Have either of your parents ever experienced a substance use disorder?

AUTUMN

*Not that I know of.
I'm not aware of any diagnoses.*

DR. LANGFORD

Any history of depression in either lineage?

AUTUMN

*My mother's side,
I think.
She's always been distant.*

DR. LANGFORD

*Autumn, thank you for being honest with me.
I know this must be hard.
You're doing a great job.*

*It's common for people with mood symptoms to experience
cooccurring suicidal ideation.*

Was anyone in your family ever lost by suicide?

*(Fear begins to trickle over **AUTUMN** like the rain before a relentless storm.)*

THE BANSHEE

Tell him about your sister.

THE EYES

Your sister.

THE VOID CHORUS

*Your sister,
Sasha.*

AUTUMN

*Yes.
I had a sister,
Sasha.*

*(The air is thickening now, almost fog-like. **AUTUMN** becomes visibly uncomfortable, certain agitations expressing themselves in subtle mannerisms: the shift of a leg, a scratch of the neck, tension in the muscles.)*

THE VOID CHORUS

*Tell him about how
psycho she was –*

THE BANSHEE

*about all the nights she spent crying,
about how far she sailed away,
about how*

THE VOID CHORUS

*you're just like
her.*

AUTUMN

*I didn't hear about it until years later,
from a relative I no longer know.*

*I think about her old bedroom a lot
in that vacant,
dilapidated,
miserable house.*

No visitors.

DR. LANGFORD

*Autumn,
your breathing is heavy.
Should we come back to this later?*

AUTUMN

No, no, I can do this.

THE VOID CHORUS

I can't.

AUTUMN (*quickly crumbling*)

*I can –
I –*

AUTUMN (*cont.*)

I need to go.

I'm sorry.

(*AUTUMN hurriedly – but without alarm – rises from his seat. He masks his anxiety well. DR. LANGFORD expresses concern.*)

DR. LANGFORD

Autumn.

AUTUMN (*collecting his things*)

I'll reschedule, don't worry.

I'm sorry.

(*AUTUMN rushes out of the therapy clinic, halfway-resolved. The winds rush in.*)

SCENE IV: TRAUMA

(*AUTUMN makes his way to OLIVIA, who is waiting for him outside in the cold, October air. She greets him sweetly, unaware of his inner-turbulence.*)

OLIVIA

Autumn.

AUTUMN

Hey.

I'm sorry, I can't stick around today.

OLIVIA (*with concern*)

Autumn, what happened?

AUTUMN

*I just need to go,
please.*

I just need to take a moment.

OLIVIA

*Breathe, my love.
Please, my love.
Nothing more than breath.*

AUTUMN

I can't do that right now.

OLIVIA

Well, talk to me.

AUTUMN

Olivia, you don't understand.

OLIVIA

*I've been with you now six months to date.
You can trust me.
My love, I'm here.*

(A long pause between them. AUTUMN catches himself.)

AUTUMN

*I don't have a sister.
I had one.*

OLIVIA *(carefully entering his space, placing her hand onto his back)*

What happened?

AUTUMN

*They shipped her away,
my parents,
when I was twelve.*

*She tried to hang herself
but I walked in on her.*

(OLIVIA, now understanding the intensity of the situation, guides AUTUMN to the bench that sits just out of view of the buildings. They sit.)

AUTUMN

*I didn't know how to help.
She looked at me with these eyes: **regretful**,
but I didn't know what about.
I called for help –
my parents –
because I didn't know what to do.
I didn't have the words.
I was twelve.*

*...so, my already-exhausted parents who were privately mismanaging a divorce
came stomping in...*

*Police were called.
She was fifty-one-fifty-ed,
and when the treatment facility called my mother to
tell her they were keeping my sister beyond seventy-two hours
(after they said she was still a danger to herself),
my mother scoffed,
and she dismissed the man on the phone –

and she hung up.*

*But what stuck with me is how
they berated her
while they waited for the police to arrive.*

*My father said my sister –
Sasha was her name –
was ungrateful, conceited, dramatic, and
worthless.*

*So, the first time
I
considered killing myself,
all I could remember was the
look on my sister's face –
Sasha's –
and the
hate in my father's voice.*

*I never wanted at all to say anything.
I am afraid of what people might think of me.*

*(They exist now in a silent moment. **AUTUMN** lets out a heavy sigh. The weight has fallen, but its impact is still fierce. **OLIVIA** embraces him with a closeness previously unseen. **AUTUMN** returns the embrace, but rises to leave.)*

AUTUMN

*I don't feel very good.
I need to go home.*

OLIVIA *(worriedly)*

*I don't think that's a good idea, Autumn.
I'll go with you.*

AUTUMN

*No, I'm sorry.
I need to be alone.*

OLIVIA *(rising from the bench)*

Autumn—

AUTUMN *(sternly)*

I'm sorry.

*(Exit, **AUTUMN**. **OLIVIA** stands in her emptiness. Black.)*

INTERLUDE: FOR AUTUMN

*(The bedroom of **OLIVIA**. Desolate, empty, void. Fear permeates the room – **infects it**.)*

OLIVIA *(with a slight twinge of hope, obscured)*

*You kissed my forehead after I cried –
the first time I cried in front of you.*

*I had just ruined breakfast because I was too anxious.
I had assumed that it wasn't good enough,
and not feeling good enough turned too quickly into
doubting myself into
questioning us into
thinking myself into corners.*

*I thought I'd lose you
over eggs made poorly –
over-easy and runny.*

*But you kissed my forehead.
You found me crying.
You had just woken up, crust still in your eyes,
and you turned off the stove –
paused the world for a moment.
You held me,
your body as warm as your words.*

*“Nothing has to be perfect,”
you said.
“The fact that you tried is worth more than you know,”
you said.*

And then you kissed my forehead.

(Her voice is more affirmed now. Still afraid for AUTUMN, but hopeful, too.)

*If –
when –
he gets better*

*I want him;
I want him forever*

*if he gets better –
when he gets better.*

*No one to stroll with you,
no one to haunt you,
it's just me!*

*No one to hurt you,
no one to whisper,
it's just me!*

*I'll be here
when you get better.*

You will get better.

SCENE V: 1 (800) – 273 – 8255

(A lone spotlight on AUTUMN. He answers softly into his phone. Dread – putrid like rot.)

AUTUMN

*I am feeling strange.
I don't understand where
this new sadness is coming from.*

*My name is Autumn.
I am twenty-five.
Scale?
I would say six, maybe seven.*

*I feel scared.
I've never had to call before.
I am sorry to bother you,
by the way.*

*No.
Never any plans.
Only what my hands can find will do. (he stares into his hand, concealing broken glass)*

*Yes,
I am in a safe area.*

*I just –
I feel small.
I think I ruined it.
I couldn't take the strenuous weight of it.
I feel hollow.
I don't have anything.
I thought I could be different if I tried.*

*I went to therapy today (long beat, enough for the tears to form)
and I liked it.
I loved it.*

*It felt so warm in there –
so good in there.*

*Then I remembered that
goodness is unbecoming of me (now crying)
and that I do not deserve it.*

AUTUMN *(cont.)*

I left my girlfriend today.

(coldly, without feeling)

I feel dead.

No,

nothing's made me happy in a while.

I'm going to go.

I don't know why

I called in the first place.

I'm just tired.

I am sorry to have bothered you.

I just need to go to bed. (his attention returning to the piece of glass)

No,

I was just overreacting, I guess.

(Black. You will not get better.)

INTERMISSION

ENTR'ACTE: DESPERATION LOOP

(AUTUMN's bedroom. THE VOID CHORUS obstructs the view of his bed. AUTUMN rests unseen.)

THE BANSHEE

*In Ancient Greece,
a "stigma"
was a brand to mark
slaves or criminals.*

THE EYES

*Stigma is a larger
cultural discourse
characterized by the
bias,
mistrust,
stereotyping,
fear,
embarrassment,
anger,
and/or*

THE VOID CHORUS

*avoidance of
people
with mental illness.*

THE BANSHEE

A fact (not that you cared to ask for it):

*suicide is the second leading cause of death for people aged
ten to thirty-four
and its rate has increased every year since
two thousand and six.*

*Another fact:
one of the biggest barriers to preventing suicide is
stigma.*

*The consequence of stigma includes
discrimination and abuse,
and
ultimately*

THE VOID CHORUS

*“deprives people of their dignity and interferes with their
full participation in society.”*

THE EYES

*In 2019,
a meager nineteen point two percent of adults had received
any
mental health treatment, yet*

*fifty percent of the population experiences an episode of a
mental illness during their lifetime, which needs treatment.*

(THE VOID CHORUS steps back to reveal AUTUMN’s still body occupying a lone bed.)

THE VOID CHORUS

It’s one in the afternoon.

ACT III: WHAT WE DO NOW WITH WHAT WE KNOW

SCENE I: SHAME

(Voicemails left by familiar people. Recoil, the wretched thing you are.)

OLIVIA

*I messaged you four days in a row.
Love, I hope that you’re resting in bed.*

AUTUMN (emptily, almost-mourning)

*They’re all just faces –
faces I can’t bear to see,
faces that burn me with
eyes full of tragedy –
pity!*

*I don't want to look at anyone.
I don't want anyone to look at me.*

*I am **embarrassed**,
sister.*

*I almost watched my sister kill herself when I was twelve.
I almost wanted her to.
In that moment
I almost wanted to be her
because I understood.*

*And here, now, again,
just like then,
I **feel** only eyes callous,
no ballasts, no **warmth** of hands.*

*Nothing to anchor me,
nothing to steady me,
nothing at all.*

***Nothing** to ground me,
nothing to hold me,
nothing at all.*

*Not even a moment,
though that's all I am.*

*But **maybe there's more**
than just moments past
if I turn back and
speak.*

*What could come of me?
What **moments ahead of me**
if I turn back and
speak? –*

***Moments**
more than the boy who almost watched his sister
kill herself
when he was twelve.*

SCENE II: YOU NEVER SAID GOODBYE

(A therapy session. **OLIVIA** sits with **DR. LANGFORD**. He waits for her to break the silence, not wanting to imperialize her space. She has something to say; he wants to listen.)

OLIVIA

*He said he'd talk to me.
He said yes.
I had faith in him.*

He said he loved me.

DR. LANGFORD

When was this?

OLIVIA

*After the hospital.
We saw each other on campus.
I waved to him.
He came to me.*

*He thanked me,
again,
for passing along his doctor's notes to his professors
during his hospital stay.*

*He asked how I was.
I said I was fine.*

*I asked how he was.
I knew he was lying
when he said
he was alright.*

*I took his hand.
He pulled back in fear
of what I would see
if not for the sleeve.*

*He said he loved me
but to leave him alone.*

*So,
I did.*

*I drove past the old
bodega I used to haunt
on my way home from class.*

I stepped inside.

*I was met with familiar smiles,
alongside familiar aisles.
They still had my favorite:
Kensington Cider.*

DR. LANGFORD

Did you drink, Olivia?

She nods, disappointed with herself.

OLIVIA

*A lot.
A pack.*

DR. LANGFORD

*Nothing to be ashamed of.
Setbacks are part of the process.*

*Thank you for being honest with me.
Have you drunk since?*

She shakes her head.

*That's great!
I know you don't feel all too thrilled with yourself right now.
Olivia,
you still abstained.
That is worth praise regardless of what happened.
You are human.
You are human.
You are human.*

(OLIVIA smiles at DR. LANGFORD's warmth, but it quickly drops from her face.)

OLIVIA

I miss him.

DR. LANGFORD

I know.

We'll continue this next week.

In the meantime, I want you to try something:

writing tends to help in visualizing a problem.

We often find it easier to understand one

when we see it –when it's tangible

on paper.

DR. LANGFORD (*cont.*)

I want you to write a letter to Autumn.

Do not give it to him.

Just write.

Be honest as you always are.

I want you to talk about how you felt when it happened,

how it affected you,

and what you wanted to say in that moment.

OLIVIA

I can do that.

DR. LANGFORD (*closely considering her feelings, gently*)

I know this has been hard for you,

but write.

We will revisit this next week.

Keep going.

SCENE III: MY SISTER, SASHA

(Just before sunrise. The graves are quiet tonight. The sky seems a masterpiece of slowly blooming watercolors. AUTUMN reads a letter.)

AUTUMN (*with an understanding of his sister's emotional state*)

*The moonlight, it peeks through my blinds.
I remember this dance.*

*Bare dorm full of misery psalms
and I thought I got over it
here, now,
on hopeful ground
with my animal dreams
as my father called them:*

*the house with the pretty fence,
the yard full of lilies,
the girl who knows more than my name,
a degree.*

*The moonlight, it comes in again –
in through my window.*

*It exposes of all my work –
my work done in college –*

*work unfinished,
and work unfinished
is just as imperfect
as I.*

Mother's words.

*Sink low, this deep—unexpectedly,
how could I?
I didn't think things would get this far,
closing the distance between pen and paper.*

*My hands, they betray me again.
The moonlight, it burns me again.
I don't know what more I can say.
I've never written anything like this before.*

My name is Sasha.

*What more is there to say?
What more is there to say?
What more is there than my name?*

(AUTUMN gently places the letter on SASHA's grave, staring at her headstone with an understanding only he carries.)

*There is you,
Sasha,
my sister.*

*You didn't deserve what happened to you. (somberly)
I know that doesn't change things.*

*After the hospital
I visited the house –
your room.*

*I don't know why.
I wasn't looking for anything.
I didn't expect to find answers.
But I saw this (he holds up the letter)
and I sat on your bed,
and **I opened up** your letter,
and I read.*

*And I cried for you,
Sasha.
I cried for us.*

I cried for our animal dreams.

*You didn't deserve what happened to you.
If I could have given you words
I would have told you I love you.
Sasha,
I love you.*

*I would have held you and just
breathed,
The way a friend taught me.*

*(They sit in silence for a moment – only ever a moment drenched in warmth and compassion.
Calm, calmer, calmest he's ever been. Release.)*

*A friend taught me that. (he considers the sky)
The dawn is near.
You should rest.
I will always come back to visit.*

INTERLUDE: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

(*AUTUMN rises from the lawn and makes his way home, resolved in his relationship with SASHA.*)

*A friend,
Olivia,
someone I trust...*

(*Enter, THE VOID CHORUS, as silent as ever.*)

THE VOID CHORUS

Olivia.

AUTUMN (*solemnly, his guilt quickly eating him*)

*...someone I hurt...
...someone I pained...
...someone I pushed away in haste—
I know that now.*

But how to mend this wound?

(*AUTUMN enters his apartment, his attention taken by a letter – OLIVIA's – waiting for him, slid under the door, sat neatly atop the floor. He reads.*)

AUTUMN and OLIVIA

*Autumn,
hey.
I hope I'm not intruding by writing this.
I know things are hard right now.
I know you must feel awful about what happened
between us
and afraid of what **you** think I think of you.*

*But I'm here to tell you what **I** think of you –
what I know.*

*Autumn,
I know that you're hurting and
disappointed with yourself...
that you feel you didn't do enough.
I've been there, too.*

*But, Autumn,
hey, (tears begin to form slowly, always slowly)
I've left that place, too.
So can you.*

You are strong.

(AUTUMN begins to cry, this time good tears. Support lives here. Good feelings.)

OLIVIA

*You spoke at all!
I am proud of you.
Autumn,
I'm proud of you.*

OLIVIA (cont.)

There was something I needed to say that day on campus:

I love you.
You will get better.
We will get better together.
I'd like to try again.

SCENE IV: WITH MYSELF, I CAN

(AUTUMN lets his hand holding the letter drop to his side. He catches his breath. He breathes.)

AUTUMN

*Try again.
Try again.
Can I try again?*

THE VOID CHORUS

No.

AUTUMN

Can I try again?

THE VOID CHORUS

No.

AUTUMN (*surer of himself now; reaffirmed*)

I can try again.

THE VOID CHORUS

You can't.

AUTUMN

I can.

*I've done it once before –
left the door ajar
in hopes that one day I'd walk through it
and I did,
myself –*

*pushed it open,
broke it down,
took those moments ahead of me
and spoke*

(He proudly raises the letter up, clenching it with a quaking hand, only this time out of hope uninhibited. Finally, the sunlight dawning.)

just like I fucking deserve!

*No need for a second before I wake up again
for I will wake up again
which is resolution enough—
sad songs only ever there when the rain comes again,
and it's okay for it to pour again
because I'll have
shelter and food and a
home in myself,*

***bread** to eat,
food for me,
just for me—just like I deserve*

*because I'll say it,
I'll talk,
I'll talk because I want to
because I want to.*

I want to speak

*no matter if the
sunlight, it hurts my eyes,*

the sunlight, it hurts my eyes,

*(AUTUMN tears down his curtains, specks of turquoise and green and orange dancing about
his room.)*

the sunlight, it hurts my eyes.

end

A TERSE PROLOGUE: COMA

*Curtains black – flanked by **THE VOID CHORUS** – surround a lone bed occupying a lone body.
Oppression and perpetual insignificance permeate **AUTUMN**'s room – **infect** it.*

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

The musical score is set in 4/4 time with a tempo of 60 beats per minute. It features three vocal parts: The Banshee, The Eyes, and The Mumbler, and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#).

Vocal Parts:

- The Banshee:** It's one in the afternoon.
- The Eyes:** It's one in the afternoon.
- The Mumbler:** Don't you think it's about time you felt the sun on your face? It's one in the afternoon.

Piano: The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of chords, and the left hand plays a series of chords. The piece concludes with a double bar line and the word *attaca*.

SCENE I: EVACUATION SIREN

AUTUMN stirs *pathetically*, still trying to cling to his bed.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

$\text{♩} = 60$ strenuously, with increasing irritation

Olivia

Autumn *p*

It's one in the af - ter - noon. So,

The Eyes

The Banshee

The Mumbler

$\text{♩} = 60$ strenuously, with increasing irritation

Piano *p*

pedal freely

5 *mf* *p*

A. what? If I had cared_ e-nough to know the time, I would have

Pno. *mf* *psub.*

2

rit. ♩ = 60

A. *f*

ri-sen up ear-ly e-nought to en-joy it: the sun- light! — It's one in the

Pno. *f* *p*sub. *f*

AUTUMN's phone rings and he checks his inbox irritably.

12

♩ = 87

A.

af-ter - noon. So, what? as a phone notification

Pno. ♩ = 87

16

rit. ♩ = 97

O. *passive-aggressively, hurt*

I mess-aged you four hou - rs a -

Pno. *rit.* ♩ = 97

AUTUMN sits upright in bed.

rit. $\text{♩} = 72$

20

O. $\text{go,} \text{--- but I take it you're still in bed. with dread}$

A. Oh.

Pno.

25

O. $\text{resigned } p \text{ Hap-py birth-day,} \text{--- I} \text{--- guess.---}$ $\text{She answers. annoyed } mp \text{ Hel-lo.}$

Pno.

mp *n* *AUTUMN dials OLIVIA.*

30

A. $\text{O-liv-i-a, hi. I'm so sor-ry.--- I} \text{--- did-n't get} \text{--- much}$

Pno.

40 exhausted, closed off *p* *f* *mp*

O. Au-tumn, it's fine. You don't need to lie to me. Am I still

Pno. *fsub.* *psub.* *f*

43 see-ing you to- day? Am I still see-ing you to-day?

A. *mp* offended, with conviction I was-n't ly-ing.

Pno. *f*

46 *AUTUMN* regrets his bite-back.

O. frustrated, annoyed guilty, ashamed

A. *f* *mf* *p* Yes. Can we say two? If you'd still like to, of course.

Pno.

OLIVIA waits for *AUTUMN*
to say something, but he says
nothing.

She hangs up.
AUTUMN is left alone.

6

50

O.

bitterly, but trying to keep
a level head

Two it is. — I'll see you.

Pno.

56

A.

rit. ♩ = 72
senza vib. —————> molto vibrato

Min-cing words makes life ea - si - er, — but it makes it hard all the

rit. ♩ = 72

Pno.

p

59

A.

same. A friend said that to me once. — with self-hatred

May-be if I had just

♩ = 122
accel.

♩ = 122
accel.

Pno.

65 *mp* $\text{♩} = 142$ *mfsub.*

A. *8* said some-thing — I would have known what he meant by that.

T.B. Maybe.

T.E. Maybe.

T.M. Maybe.

Pno. $\text{♩} = 142$

70 *p* *mp* *p* *He starts to get ready to meet OLIVIA at the coffee shop.*

A. *8* But my voice blends in all the same. — These days, they pass through as —

Pno.

78 *mp* *mfsub.*

A. *8* — one — gra-di-ent — ob - scured in its a - po-lo-gies. —

Pno. *mp* *mfsub.*

84 *p* He crosses to the door. *mf* *mp*

A. I'll drift through these _____ am - big - u - ous days, si - lent all the same,

Pno.

92 *mf psub.* *mf*

A. ne - ver to change _____ for to - day is as to - mor - row is as

Pno.

He grabs the door handle. *mf*

angry, frustrated

senza vib.

100 *fsub.* *p* *mfsub.*

A. yes - ter - day.. You will still be the same

Pno.

fsub. *psub.*

AUTUMN takes a moment to truly hear himself, that phrase. It sits uncomfortably in his mouth for a moment. The realization vanishes. resigned, accepting of his fate: the failure he perceives himself to be

$\bullet = 112$

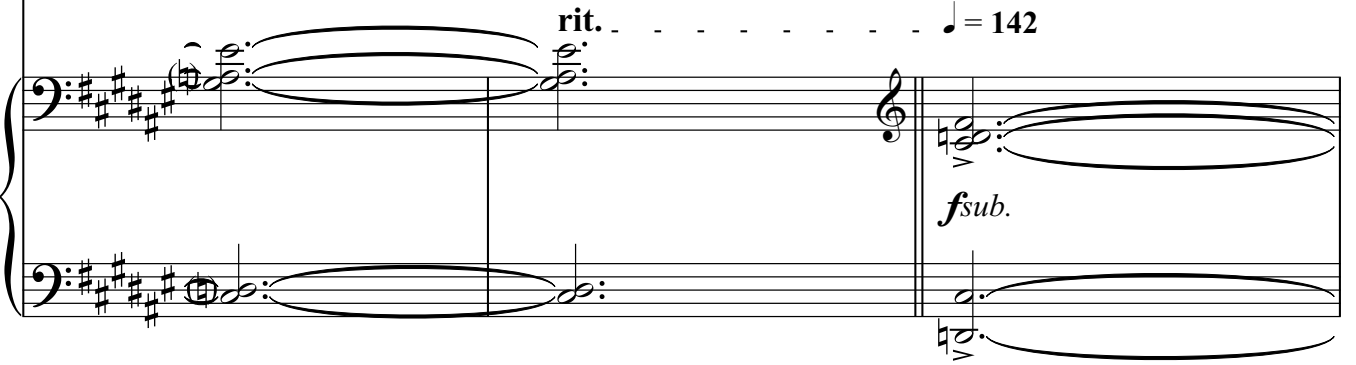
$\bullet = 112$

rit. ♩ = 142

108

A. 

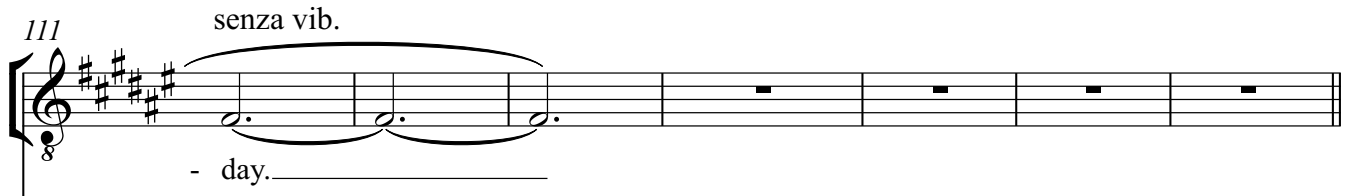
— piece of shit you were — yes - ter -

Pno. 

rit. ♩ = 142

fsub.

111

A. 

senza vib.

- day. _____

Pno. 

attaca

SCENE II: WEEP WATERCOLORS

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

AUTUMN turns the handle and walks out of his room, closing the door behind him. The set changes to the coffee shop during this transitory phase.

OLIVIA enters.

Olivia

Autumn

Piano

$\text{♩} = 60$ rit. $\text{♩} = 60$ rit.

with forward movement, a conversation

$\text{♩} = 60$ rit. $\text{♩} = 60$ rit.

p *mp* *p*_{sub.} *mf*

pedal freely

OLIVIA sits at a table.

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 60$ rit. $\text{♩} = 60$ rit.

3

AUTUMN enters. He looks around for her amongst the other cafe-goers and sees her.

He crosses the room to her.

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 60$ rit.

5

*p*_{sub.} *mf*_{sub.} *f*

2

OLIVIA notices him and smiles.
sweetly, but with
obvious regret

AUTUMN sits at the table.

8 $\text{♩} = 78$ *p*

O. Hey. _____ I'm glad you made it. _____

A. _____ uncomfortable, tense *pp* Hel - lo.

$\text{♩} = 78$ inviting, warm *p*sub.

Pno.

13 $\text{♩} = 68$ *mf* *mp*

O. _____ *<* Au- tumn, _ please. It's o-kay. I'm

A. _____ Yeah, I'm real - ly sor - ry. _____

$\text{♩} = 68$ *mp*sub. *pp*sub.

Pno.

She takes hold of his hand.

17

O. _____ sor - ry I kin-da blew up on you ear-li - er. _____ I know it was-n't

Pno. *mp*sub.

He nods. She tries to change the subject to clear the air. 3

19

O. *mf*

right. I know that now. I'm sor - ry. I

Pno. *mf*

She reaches down for the portrait of AUTUMN.

23

O. excitedly, but still cautious *f*

have some-thing for you. Some-thing for you.

A. *p* confused *mf* *f*

Some-thing for me? Me?

Pno. *p* sub.

OLIVIA presents AUTUMN with a watercolor painting of himself. She seems proud of her work. He seems awestruck, flattered.

He holds it up in the light to see it better, smiling now. sweetly, genuinely

26

A. *port.*

I love.

Pno. *f*

He returns his attention to her.

30

O. *I thought you would!_*

A. *port.* *it!* *It's gor - geous._* *mp* *Did you talk to your ther-a-pist a*

Pno. *psub.*

heavy pedal

humorously, exaggerated

f mp

33

O. *mp* *No.* *We talked a lot_* *f* *mp* *a-bout*

A. *bout this?_*

Pno.

36 *mfsub.* sincere

O. you though be-fore I de-ci-ded it was o - kay to paint you... You

Pno. *mf*

pedal freely

39 *p* nervously, doubtful

O. know, still work-ing on the at - tach-ment stuff. I'm sor-ry if it's too much... reassuringly

A. No,

Pno. *psub.*

42 *f*

O. So, you ad

A. ___ no. I pro-mise, it's ne-ver too much... It's gor - geous...

Pno. heavy pedal

46 *He lets out a small laugh and gestures to the painting.* *She gestures to him.*

O. *mit that you are, then!—* *smiling, with bliss unwavering* *Yes,— the art.*

A. *No.— I mean the art.*

Pno. *fsub.* *mfsub.*

AUTUMN takes a long, generous moment to regard the painting. He sees the warmth of his smile captured in oil and stares harder into it, wondering if it could ever be permanent, his joy. Tears form: happy ones.

50 *rit.* *♩ = 50*

O. *Sil - ly.—* *O -*

A. *p* *rit.* *♩ = 50*

Pno. *psub.*

AUTUMN returns his gaze to *OLIVIA* but notices that patrons at the other table are staring at him.

She turns to look at the table behind them.

*She turns back as **AUTUMN** speaks.*

7

55 $\text{♩} = 70$

O. *p*

A. *mfsub.* *p*

li-vi-a, I

What? What's wrong?

nervously, a lie

No-thing, it's no-thing.

Pno. $\text{♩} = 70$ *fsub.*

pedal freely

AUTUMN sits uncomfortably in his seat. He puts himself aside to speak.

60 *mp*

O. *mp*

A. *mp*

Hey, you said you'd try for me.

genuinely

I just don't

Pno.

rit. ♩ = 66

She gently takes hold of his hand again.

reassuringly

64

O.

A.

8

like when peo-ple stare at me... e-spe-cial-ly when I'm cry-ing.

Hey,

Pno.

rit. ♩ = 66

*p*sub.

68

O.

no-thing to be a-shamed of. It's o - kay to cry. That's your

Pno.

73

O.

bo-dy's nor-mal res-ponse to feel-ing. You're just feel-ing good is all,

Pno.

mf

*mf*sub.

77 *p*sub.

O. love - ly. You do feel good, don't you?

A. Yes, I

a lie senza vib. *pp*

Pno. *p*sub.

82

O. Au-tumn.

A. do. No, not real - ly. Not right now.

sincerely *mp* *port.* *p*

Pno.

She gives him an urging look; she knows he's lying, and he knows it, too.

10

87 *mpsub.*

O. It's a lit-tle warm in here___ and this cof-fee bites,___ bleh!

A.

Pno.

90 *mfsub.* *AUTUMN only nods.*

O. mis-er-a-ble... Let's get out?

Pno.

94 *OLIVIA nods in return.*

Pno.

SCENE III: JUST FOR ME

The set transforms into **DR. LANGFORD**'s office, a warm place. **AUTUMN** and the other cafe-goers exit the stage and leave **OLIVIA** sitting in her chair.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

♩ = 136 calmly, warm like sunlight

Olivia

Dr. Langford

Piano

p *mp*

DR. LANGFORD enters and smiles at **OLIVIA**. He crosses to his chair.

8

Pno.

mf

DR. LANGFORD sits.

15

Pno.

f *p*

rit. *♩ = 82*

minimizing her frustration,
trying to find logic in the past

23 *mp*

O. I did-n't know how else to help. — He was em-bar-rased and I'd be, too.

Pno.

She looks down at the ground.

26 *rit.* ♩ = 72

O. — Sa-tur-day_ was just_ rough.

D.L. *considerate, mindful*
mp
I un-der-stand. —

Pno. *rit.* ♩ = 72
mp

She returns her attention to
DR. LANGFORD.

30

D.L. — You must have been ex-haust - ed, too, af-ter all that

Pno.

♩ = 72

irritated, offended

mf *f* *mpsub.*

3 3

32

O. He made it seem like it was for naught. Like it was for

D.L. work._____

Pno. *mfsub.*

♩ = 72

34

mf *fsub.*

3

O. no thing,— all that ef-fort,— no-thing at all.

D.L. *mf*

Pno. *f* *mfsub.*

It

giving *AUTUMN*
credit, but still
upset about Saturday

4

37 *mf*

O.

D.L.

Pno.

I mean, he
sounds like you were ex-pect-ing a dif-fer-ent re sponse.

40

O.

Pno.

did say it was gor - geous be-fore he caught them star - ing

42 *mp* *mf*

O.

Pno.

and he would-n't lie a-bout that, but it just bo-ters me:

45

O. *5*
how quick-ly he shuts down. — inquisitive, with concern

D.L.
Do these re - frains hap-pen

Pno.

48

O. *p* irritated, annoyed *mpsub.*
Yes, — and it real-ly pis-ses me off. —

D.L.
oft-en? —

Pno.

52

D.L. *mp* *3*
Your pro - fes-sion lies — in art. It's rea-son-a-ble that your con-

Pno. *mp* *mp*
psub. *mp* *psub.* *mp*

♩ = 128 calm, insightful, reassuring

6

58

mf

5

p

mpsub.

3

D.L.

nec-tion with your work would make you feel like he was dis- mis- sing

Pno.

mfsub.

p

63

O.

reaffirmed

f

Right!

mf

D.L.

you, not just the pain- ting.

mp

mfsub.

8va

Pno.

OLIVIA interrupts herself, worried that she is speaking too much or bothering her therapist. Her worry turns to shame, and her shame turns to self-criticism. 7

69

O. *p*
 And I've ex - plained to him the — Sor-ry. —

Pno. *f*

(8) —————

74 *♩ = 124 reassuring*

O. *mf* *mpsub.* *fsub.*

D.L. No, no. — I hear — you. —

Pno. *p* *mf* *mpsub.* *fsub.*

♩ = 124 reassuring

81 *mf*

D.L. Ev'-ry-thing — you're feel - ing — is va - lid. —

Pno. *mfsub.*

with emphasis, making it clear to her that her validity is important

8

89 *f* *OLIVIA smiles.* *mf*

D.L. *I want to ac know-ledge your con - fi dence_ in*

Pno. *fsub.*

96

D.L. *empathetic, never sympathetic;
establishing that he hears her, truly* *p*

tel-ling me_____ how you felt. I know this has been hard_____ for_

Pno. *p*

103 *mp* *OLIVIA looks down again
and her smile fades.* *mfsub.* *♩ = 68 shifting the tone, inquisitive*

D.L. *you._____ I'm cur-i-ous_ to know if we can re-vi-sit what*

Pno. *mpsub. > p* *mfsub.* *♩ = 68 shifting the tone, inquisitive*

*She collects herself,
making an attempt
to understand.*

108 **rit.** ♩ = 60

O.

D.L.

Pno. **rit.** ♩ = 60

*The air is less tense than before. OLIVIA and DR. LANGFORD
ease into their seats, shifting to get comfortable with this approach.*

112 ♩ = 68

O.

D.L. *mp* *p*sub.

Pno. ♩ = 68

OLIVIA takes a long moment
to recall her initial reaction.
Warmth overcomes her.

10

116

O. loving, luminous, soft

D.L. Good. Warm, — like

Pno. *p* loving, luminous, soft

120

O. *mp*

Pno. *mp*

123

O. *mf* *fsub.*

Pno. *mf* *fsub.*

127 11

O. *v* eyes. _____ It was like he was *v* fi - nal - ly rea - dy - to

Pno. *v* *dp*

130 *v* *mp* *mf*

O. *v* say some-thing, _____ but he pulled back, _____ like he *v* al ways does. _____

Pno. *v* *p* *sub.*

disappointed *mp* hopeless, peeved *mf*

133 *mf*

O. *v* It was like he did-n't want to see my ef-forts and, _____ in turn, _____ did-n't want to see

Pno. *mf*

becoming increasingly irritated

136

O. *me.* I just thought he would try a lit - tle hard - er, be un - der -

Pno.

138 *mf* stand - ing, and not fiz - zle out so ea - si - ly and not re - ject my gift!

helping her make the connection

D.L. *fsub.* Re - ject

Pno.

141 *p* Right I felt like *mf* think - ing I could be worth the

you.

Pno.

somber, lonely

144

O. *3*
 ef-fort was wrong._____

with gentle concern, trying to help in shifting the perspective, offering resources

p *5*

D.L. Is cou-ple's coun-sel ing___ an

Pno. *p*

147

O. *mp*
 We're still not there yet.

mpsub. *p*

D.L. op-tion you two have been con - si-der-ing?_____ Are you

Pno. *mpsub.*

OLIVIA nods, staring at the floor.

forward, but not aggressive; only concerned

150 *mp* *3* *3* *3*

D.L. wait-ing for more com-mit-ment?___ Did you have a-ny thoughts of drink-ing that

Pno.

14

OLIVIA sits upright for a moment, her face bearing a look of confusion and offense.

She realizes the importance of the question and her face hangs in guilt. Her eyes dart to the floor.

p

O. *153*

D.L. day?

Pno.

Yes.

with strength just beneath the skin

mf

DR. LANGFORD smiles at her.

157

O. No, sur - pri - sing - ly not at all._____

D.L. ***p*** ***mp*** ***mf***
Did you drink at all?_____ What

Pno.

loving, but now of the self 15

p

162

O. 

I said I loved _____ what I

D.L. 


stopped you? _____

Pno. 

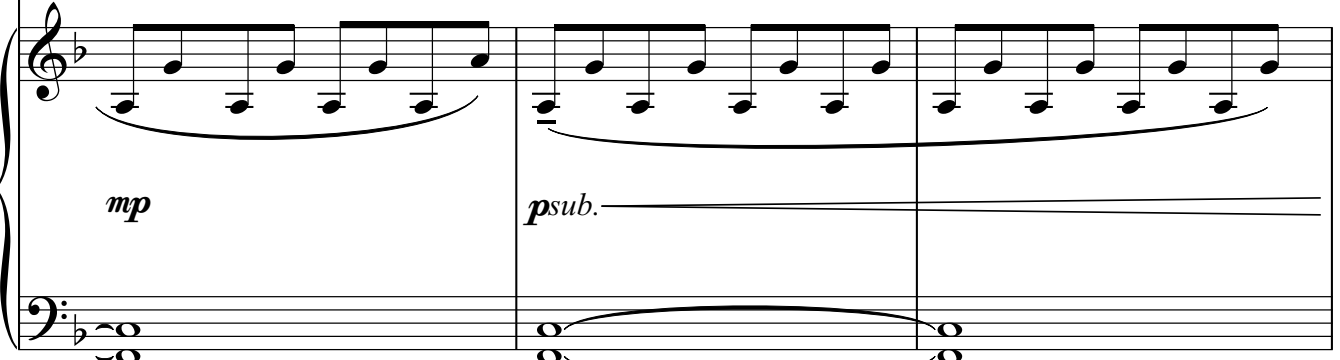
mf *psub.*

mp *mf* *p* *mf*

166

O. 

gave him _____ and was proud of my work, my - self, _____ and I

Pno. 

mp *psub.*

16

169

O.

*p*sub. *mp*

told my-self_ that all I could do was love_ him_ in the

Pno.

mf *p*sub. *mp*

173

O.

*mf*sub.

on - ly way I know how. And I re - mind-ed my-self that I

Pno.

mf

176

O.

p *mp* *mf*

growing in confidence

could-n't do that: cre - ate for him, for my

Pno.

*p*sub. *mp*

affirmed, strong

179 *fsub.*

O. *f*

Pno. *f*

self if my vi-sion was blurred from bing - ing.

DR. LANGFORD beams at *OLIVIA*, proud of her own conclusion about herself.

183 *p* *mp* *mfsub.*

D.L. *p* *mp* *mfsub.*

Pno. *mfsub.*

If I'm hear-ing you cor-rect-ly, it sounds like you prac-ticed what we

187 *fsub.*

D.L. *fsub.*

Pno. *fsub.*

talked a bout: po - si - tive self - talk.

18 through a smile, confident

p ————— *f*

191 rit. ♩ = 60

O. Right. _____

D.L. _____ *p*

Deep

rit. ♩ = 60

Pno.

They take a moment to get comfortable - only ever a moment in quiet, at peace. They close their eyes.

luminous, like clouds parting to let the sunlight peek through

197

O. _____

D.L. _____

breath.

Pno.

pp ————— *mf*

They open their eyes.

203 genuine, warm, tender

D.L. You are grow-ing. — You are ma-king ex-cep-tion-al

Pno. *ppsub.*

DR. LANGFORD begins to write in his notepad, finding appointment times for the following week.

208 *mp* = 82 spritely, resolved

D.L. pro - gress. We are out of time — to-day.

Pno. *p* *mp* *psub.* *mp* = 82 spritely, resolved

213 *mf*

O. Yes, please. — Can we

D.L. Would you like to sche-dule a-no-ther ap-point-ment?

Pno. *psub.* *mf*

DR. LANGFORD writes down their next meeting on an appointment card.

20

216

O. *stick with e - le - ven?_ Thurs-days just work bet-ter for me now.*

D.L. *Sure! I've got you*

Pno.

He rises from his chair and hands her the appointment card.

She rises in return, takes it, and looks at it thoughtfully, with a warm smile.

♩ = 72 sincere, helped
***p** **mp** **p**sub.*

219

O. *Thank you, _ Doc-tor Lang-ford._*

D.L. *down for e - le - ven next week._*

Pno. *♩ = 72 sincere, helped*

222

O.

D.L.

Pno.

p

mp

I ap - pre-ci-ate the thanks. — You're the one do-ing all the work.

He gestures to the private exit through which his clients can feel safe to leave. She nods, beaming.

rit. ♩ = 60

225

D.L.

Pno.

rit. ♩ = 60

Re-mem-ber that. —

OLIVIA exits DR. LANGFORD's office. He smiles and crosses to his main door, opening it and warmly greeting his next client.

227

D.L.

Pno.

Good morning.

22

***DR. LANGFORD** gestures to his next client, inviting them into the space. His client walks in and sits. **DR. LANGFORD** closes the door and crosses to his chair, settling back into it. He grabs his notepad and sits it on his lap. Softly, but confidently, **DR. LANGFORD** speaks.*

229

D.L.

Pno.

230

So, how are you today?

Perc.

Pno.

SCENE V: EXHALE, THEN INHALE (QUICKLY)

OLIVIA leaves *DR. LANGFORD*'s office. *AUTUMN*, sitting on a park bench, waits for her to return.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

$\text{♩} = 84$ brightly, upbeat

Olivia

Autumn

Piano

f

pedal freely

*She wraps her arms around him from behind.
He returns the embrace. They laugh.*

4 rit. $\text{♩} = 70$

O. *f* sweetly, with endearment Hel-lo, _____ my_ love.____

A. *f* sweetly, with endearment Hel - lo, _____ my_ love._____

Pno. *p* *f* rit. $\text{♩} = 70$

2

OLIVIA pulls away from *AUTUMN* and walks around the bench to sit with him.

8

O. *mf* I am!

A. *mp* < *mf*
How did it go to-day?__ You seem_ well._____

Pno. *mfsub.*
with pedal

She sits beside AUTUMN.

11

O. It went well. I real-ly need-ed__ this_ to- day._____

A. *p* calm, supportive
Good,_____ my_

Pno.

14

O.

A.

mfsub.

love. I'm hap-py for you. I'm

Pno.

17

O.

A.

f *p* *mp*

hap-py, too. You're here with me on this

Pno.

*p*_{sub.}

OLIVIA places her hand on *AUTUMN*'s - gently, but with enough conviction to make her support known.

4

21 *mf*sub. *mp*

O.

Thurs-day _____ af-ter - noon _____ and the sun-light, it warms your_ smile.____

A.

Pno. *mp* *p*

AUTUMN gazes down at her hand, smiling.

rit. . . . ♩ = 56

AUTUMN takes a hard moment to consider his words.

24

O.

And the sun-light, it warms your_ hand.____

A. *p*

Pno. *rit.* . . . ♩ = 56 *f*

with guilt, but
trying to cut
through it; trying

♩ = 74

pp *p* *mf* *p*

30

A.

Hey, uhm... I want to a-pol-o-gize for the o-ther day, by the way.

Pno.

♩ = 74

mp

34

A.

I know I can be dif-fi-cult and I'm try-ing, real-ly. It's just

Pno.

acknowledging *mp* *p* *p*

♩ = 60

37

O.

It is. Trust me, I know. I'll be

A.

hard.

Pno.

42

O. *mp*

here for you just like you are for me. You de

brightly, shimmeringly,
like sunlight seen
through leaves

8va

Pno. *ppsub.*

*OLIVIA tightens her grip on
his hand - warmly, not abrasively*

46

O. *mp*

serve it and I want to help you find that for your - self.

8va

Pno. *p*

OLIVIA hesitates for a moment before speaking.

AUTUMN pulls his hand away and shifts in his seat, uncomfortable. 7

50 *p*

O. *mp* 3

Why don't we work on fin - ding?_

A. *f*

dismissive, defensive

O - li - vi - a, please.

Pno. *pp* *fsub.*

(8)

53 *♩* = 64 urging

O. Au tumn, look, I know it's hard.____

A. *mf* 3

My friend went to ther-a-py.____ He said it did-n't

Pno. *♩* = 64

56 *mfsub.* 3

O. That's be-cause he's him, — which you're not. That's some-one

A. *f*
port.
do — an-y-thing for him! —

Pno.

59 3

O. el-se's ex-per-i - ence. —

A. *mp*
irritated, but as a subtle plead
And what a-bout in - sur- ance? And if I get

Pno. *p*
sub.

OLIVIA is taken aback by this question. She takes a moment to hear AUTUMN, just listening.

mp

62

O. 

A. 

stuck with some-one who can't hear me?___

Pno. 

8va

We'll

65

O. 

find some-one good for you. ___ It takes time, ___ but we can do it. ___

A. 

I don't have

Pno. 

(8)

OLIVIA hesitates before speaking as she realizes this approach isn't working; innocently, with a subtle urging she tries a different method. **p**

10

67

O.

But. Hey...— Do you

A.

p

time, on-ly mo - ments.

Pno.

70

O.

know how long a mi-nute feels?— Well, let's just

A.

somewhat confused, but still irritated

No, I don't.

Pno.


73

O.

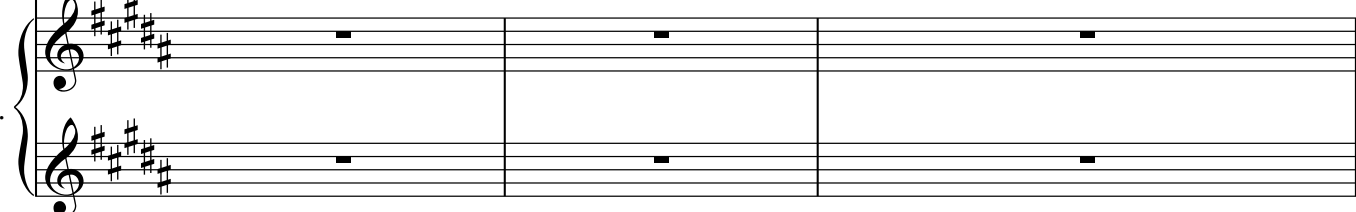
sit here— and find out. We can think a-bout what-e-ver the hell we want.—

Pno.


75

O. 

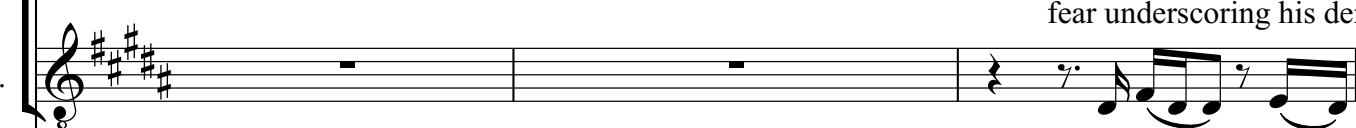
When-ev-er I sit, I like to think a-bout all the things— I can get

Pno. 

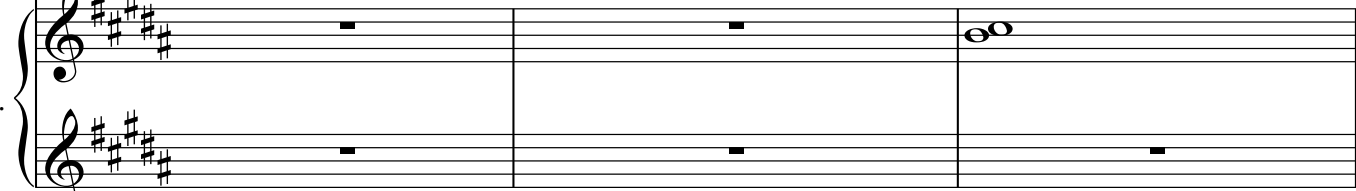
78

O. 

done in a min-ute.— Breathe with me_ for a mo- ment,— Au - tumn.


A. 

fear underscoring his demeanor

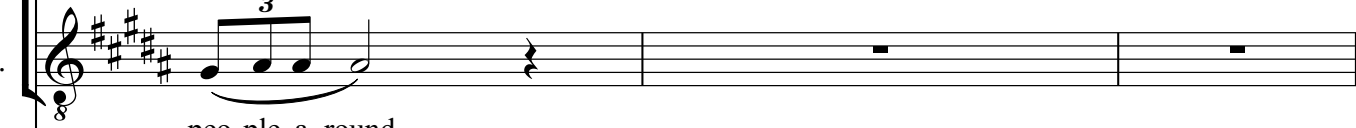
Pno. 

O-li-vi-a, there are

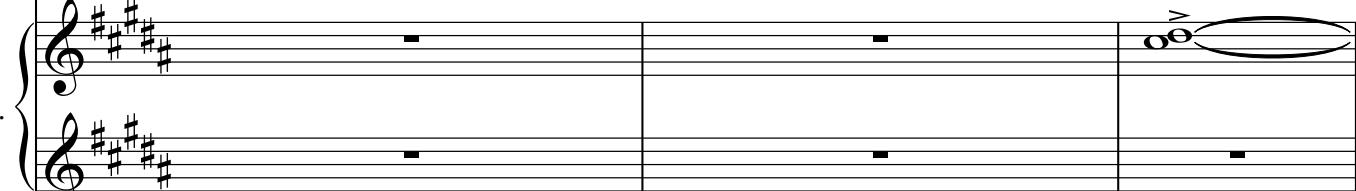
81

O. 

You won't look stu-pid or weird, I prom-ise.

A. 

peo-ple a-round.

Pno. 

They take a moment to get comfortable.
OLIVIA takes **AUTUMN**'s hands again,
holding them intently, with warmth. They
close their eyes.

Breath.
Only ever breathing.

♩ = 60 calmly, softly like breaths in quiet rooms

84

O.

A.

Pno.

pp

mp

legato
heavy pedal

♩ = 60 calmly, softly like breaths in quiet rooms

90

O.

A.

Pno.

p

mf

100

O.

A.

Pno.

pp

psub.

They open their eyes, resolved.

fondly
p

3

A friend taught me that once.

107 *mp*

O. *<* *mp* *3*

A. *8*

Pno. *mp*

Feels good, huh? — You do feel good, — don't you? —

AUTUMN takes a hard moment to consider his words. He smiles.

112 *mf*

O. *3* *3*

A. *8* *mp* *fsub.*

Pno. *fsub.*

We can

sincere, honest

Yes, — I do. —

117

O. *do that to-get-her_____ when - e-ver you need to._____*

A. *Thank_____ you.*

Pno. *p*

psub.

*AUTUMN rises from the bench,
a new energy awash in him.*

♩ = 76 with confidence, small triumph

122

O.

A. *Come on. I'm hun-gry_____ and I want to take you to that*

Pno. *mpsub.*

♩ = 76 with confidence, small triumph

OLIVIA remembers to ask *AUTUMN* about his sister as he mentioned her in his sleep the other night. 15

They collect their things and prepare to leave for the restaurant. *OLIVIA* rises from the bench.

126

O. *f* Oh,

A. *mfsub.* < *f* new place I told_ you a-bout.

Pno. *f*

AUTUMN becomes visibly uncomfortable, but tries to mask it.

innocently, off-handedly, as anyone would ask in passing as a courtesy

130

O. *rit.* ♩ = 66 hey, _____ how's your sis - ter? _____

A. _____

Pno. *rit.* ♩ = 66 pained, afraid *ffsub.* *pp*

134

O. *mf*
Your sis-ter.____ You men-tioned her

A. *pp*
with terror, trauma
What?___

Pno. *f* *p* *mfsub.*
somerly

140

O. *mp*
____ in your sleep the o-ther night. I don't think I've ev-er heard you

A.

Pno. *p* *mpsub.* *psub.*

rit. . .

146

O. *talk a-bout her... Where is she?_____*

A.

Pno. *mp psub. mp psub.*

AUTUMN feels awash in the nightmares that frequent his sleep - nightmares of his sister. He remembers his parents, that house, the walls. He recoils, managed horror behind his eyes.

154

O. *rit. . . = 96 rit. . . = 106 rit. . . = 96*

A.

Pno. *mp p rit. . . = 106 rit. . . = 96 mf*

160 $\text{♩} = 106$ rit. $\text{♩} = 96$

O.

A.

Pno.

pp *p* *f*

166 rit. $\text{♩} = 70$

O.

A.

Pno.

pp *f* *p* *n*

She's a - round.

pp *f*

let ring

SCENE I: NIGHTMARE SEQUENCE: MY SISTER, THE PIANIST

AUTUMN's bedroom. AUTUMN lies in bed, asleep, with OLIVIA, but his dream-state self stands in front of the curtains that separate the audience from the bedroom. There is a lone spotlight on the piano.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

$\text{♩} = 152$ with a classical, virtuosic inflection

Autumn

$\text{♩} = 152$ with a classical, virtuosic inflection

Piano

p

pedal freely

10

A.

Pno.

mf

psub.

17

A.

Pno.

f

2

mournfully, recalling a painful memory

25 $\text{♩} = 77$

f

A.

My sis - ter was a pi - a - nist, a good pi - a - nist, flu - ent...

Pno.

11b

28

A.

Of the ma - ny times_ her fin - gers danced, I_ list - ened ev' - ry time,_ her

Pno.

tr

31

A.

mus - ings_ veiled in moon - light and my ear_ to the wall._____ My

Pno.

mf

34

A. *mf* *sub.* *f* *mp* *mf*

par - ents at first did-n't ap - prove, but she ar - gued it would

Pno. *mf sub.*

36

A. *f* *mp* *mf*

get her in-to col-lege that well round-ed-ness to bal-ance out the break-downs,

Pno. *f* *mp sub.*

39

A. *mp* *f*

the em-bar-rass-ment. My

Pno. *f*

42

A. *8* *3* *3* *3*

sis-ter was a pi-a nist, an ex-pres-sive pi-a nist. She would cry__ and I would, too,

Pno. *tr* *2* *3*

45

A. *8* *p* *3* *mp*

and in those mom-ents when I wept with my sis - ter I__

Pno. *p* *sub.* *mp* *sub.*

47

A. *8* *mf* *< f* *rit.* *♩ = 64*

wish I knew how to__ play__ the pi-a- no.__ I tried to learn.

Pno. *mf* *rit.* *♩ = 64* *f*

52 as a fond memory, with love *mf*

A. Warm wel - come. — Li - lies. The

Pno. as a fond memory, with love *mfsub.*

56 sound — my fin - gers made a - gainst i - vo - ry and the smell of her room.

A. 3 3

Pno.

59 She found me there, my sis - ter, and held me — in the

A. 2/4 4/4 3

Pno. 2/4 4/4

77 **rit.** ♩ = 56

A. 8 stomp-ing in. It was the first time she o-pened her mouth to speak,—

Pno. **rit.** ♩ = 56

Detailed description: This block contains the first system of music, starting at measure 77. The vocal line (A.) is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). It begins with a fermata over the first measure, followed by a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are "stomp-ing in. It was the first time she o-pened her mouth to speak,—". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in bass clef with the same key signature. It features a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords. A "rit." (ritardando) marking is present above the piano part, along with a tempo marking of ♩ = 56.

80

A. 8 not with her hands but with words through teeth...

Pno.

Detailed description: This block contains the second system of music, starting at measure 80. The vocal line (A.) continues with the lyrics "not with her hands but with words through teeth...". It features two triplet markings over eighth notes. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with a similar rhythmic pattern. The system concludes with a double bar line and a change to a 4/4 time signature.

82

AUTUMN slowly recedes behind the curtain, his dream-self returning to his physical body in bed.

A. 8 ...and so the next time,— and the

Pno. *fsub.*

Detailed description: This block contains the third system of music, starting at measure 82. The vocal line (A.) begins with a fermata and the lyrics "...and so the next time,— and the". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern with multiple triplet markings and accents. A dynamic marking of *fsub.* (forzando) is present. The system concludes with a double bar line.

A.

next time, — and the next time. —

f

Detailed description: A single vocal staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. A fermata is placed over the final note. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is positioned above the staff.

Pno.

attaca

Detailed description: A piano accompaniment staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a complex rhythmic pattern of triplets in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The right hand has six groups of triplets, each marked with a '3' and an accent (>). The left hand has six chords, each marked with an accent (>). The piece concludes with the instruction *attaca*.

SCENE II: DO YOU CRACK OR DO YOU CHANGE?

The curtains are violently pulled open by **THE VOID CHORUS** to reveal **AUTUMN's** bedroom. Moonlight pours in.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

AUTUMN screams in terror and **OLIVIA** awakes, immediately attentive to him. He hyperventilates.

$\text{♩} = 62$
with a gentle force, acknowledging

Musical score for Olivia, Autumn, and Piano. Olivia's part begins with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 82$ and changes to $\text{♩} = 62$ for her vocal line. Autumn's part is mostly silent. The Piano accompaniment starts with $\text{♩} = 82$ and ff dynamics, then shifts to $\text{♩} = 62$ and mfsub. dynamics. A pedal point is indicated at the bottom.

Olivia $\text{♩} = 82$ mp mf
Aut-umn, hey, I've got you.

Autumn

Piano ff mfsub.

Ped.

Musical score for Olivia, Autumn, and Piano. Olivia's part begins with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 62$ and mp dynamics. Autumn's part is mostly silent. The Piano accompaniment starts with pp dynamics and shifts to mp dynamics.

O. mp
Breathe. A-noth-er night-mare, my love?

A.

Pno. pp mp

2

AUTUMN nods. $p < mf$ $\text{♩} = 126$

A. $\text{♩} = 126$

Bad mem - or - ies. I just need to go back to sleep.

Pno. $mf_{sub.}$ $\text{♩} = 126$

AUTUMN's head hangs low and his mouth quivers just slightly. Tears, though restrained, form. p $< mp$

A. $\text{♩} = 126$

I'm so ti - red.

Pno. $p_{sub.}$ $mp_{sub.}$

A. $\text{♩} = 126$

I'm ti - red of feel - ing bad. It's hard to find

Pno. mf

34

A.

Pno.

sleep and then, when I steal some, it's hard to wake up. It's hard to en-

OLIVIA shakes her head, not disapprovingly, but in rejection of the negative self-talk. She tries to say something but is interrupted.

rit. ♩ = 112

*f*sub.

mf

40

A.

Pno.

joy things. I bur-den you. And I

rit. ♩ = 112

f

47

O.

A.

Pno.

as a half-formed plea

know what you're go-ing to say, but how can I find help when I

*mf*sub.

with reassurance, affirmation

mf

55

O.

A.

Pno.

*A look of guilt
washes over
AUTUMN.*

♩ = 136

63

O.

Pno.

♩ = 136

71

O.

Pno.

fsub.

79

O. *fsub.*
— in you, — in you, just for you. —

A. *f*
But I have-n't got the

Pno. *fsub.*

87

O. *fsub.*
I will help_ you find_ them. — There are

A. *fsub.*
words. — And what a- bout_ the mo-ney?

Pno. *fsub.*

93

O. *op-tions, we'll find them.*

A. *slowly becoming more comfortable with the idea of therapy*
And if the per-son I've_ trus-ted to lis-ten_ falls

Pno.

100

O. *rit. ♩ = 116* *rit. ♩ = 60*
You'll have said_ the words_ re-gard - less.

A. *si- lent?_____*

Pno. *rit. ♩ = 116* *rit. ♩ = 60*

8^{vb}

107 *mp*

O. *And you will have tried something new*

Pno. *psub.* *tr* *mp*

(8)-----

110 *mf*

O. *just for you. You will have spo-ken at all!*

Pno. *(tr)*

(8)-----

113

O. *And that is re-so-lu-tion enough, my love. You will not go through this a*

Pno. *mfsub.*

(8)-----

AUTUMN sits in a contemplative silence before coming to a conclusion. He regards *OLIVIA* with a look of genuine want to become healthier - to try at all.

117 *f*

O. lone. _____

A. I've decided. Help me.

Pno. *f*

(8)-----|

The length of mm. 120 is approximate. Words should be spoken with contemplation, evaluation, and acceptance. Take as much time as needed to highlight these phrases.

OLIVIA embraces *AUTUMN* gently, but as a way of communicating that she will not abandon him.

121 $\text{♩} = 108$ rit.

Pno.

AUTUMN returns her embrace, still unsure of what is to become of him, but accepting of change.

126 $\text{♩} = 98$ 8^{va}

Pno. *psub.*

SCENE III: I CRACKED

A therapy session, this time between DR. LANGFORD and AUTUMN. Curiosity and innocence mixed with nervousness and doubt trickle from AUTUMN. He waits for DR. LANGFORD to say something.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

$\text{♩} = 120$ curiously, innocently, warm

Autumn

Dr. Langford

The Eyes

The Banshee

$\text{♩} = 120$ curiously, innocently, warm

Piano

p

9

A.

D.L.

T.E.

T.B.

Pno.

mp

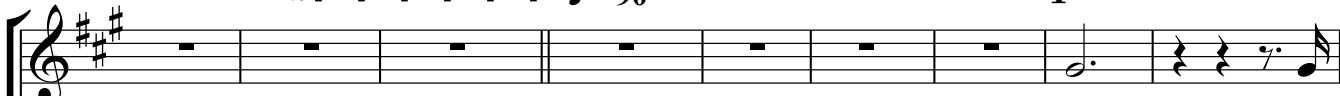
pp


p

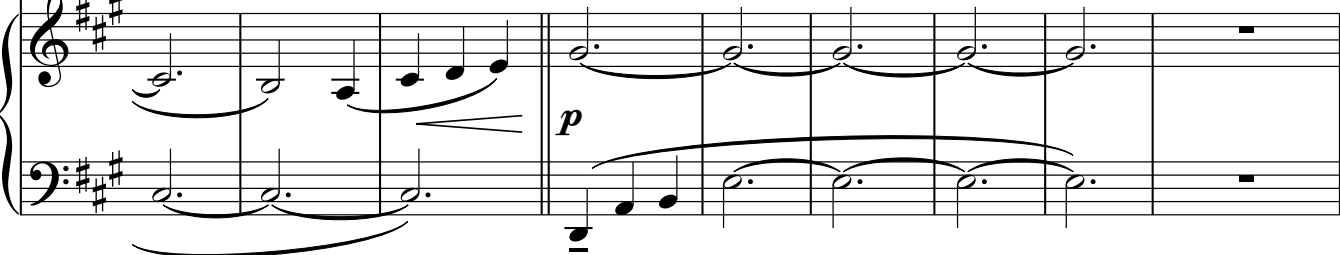
ppsub.

confused, nervous
but willing

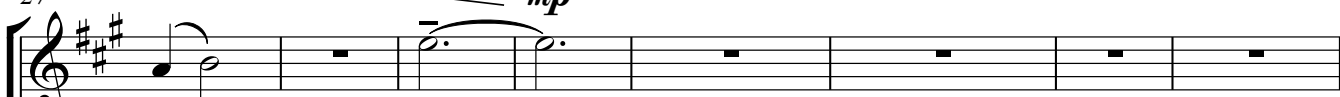
18 rit. ♩ = 90 *p*


A. 

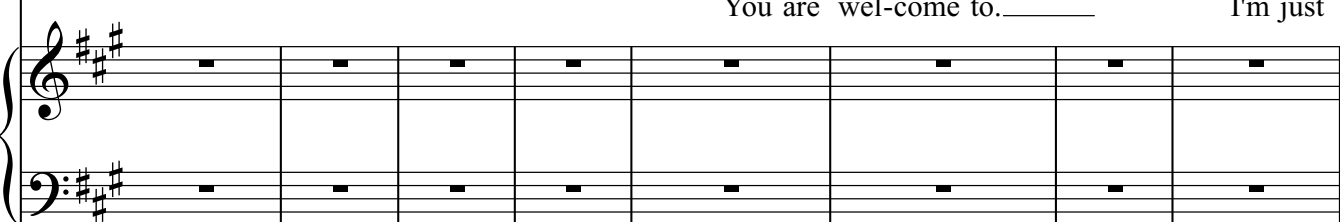
D.L. 

Pno. 

27 *mp*

A. 

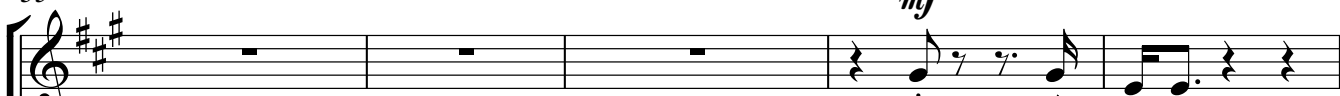
D.L. 


Pno. 

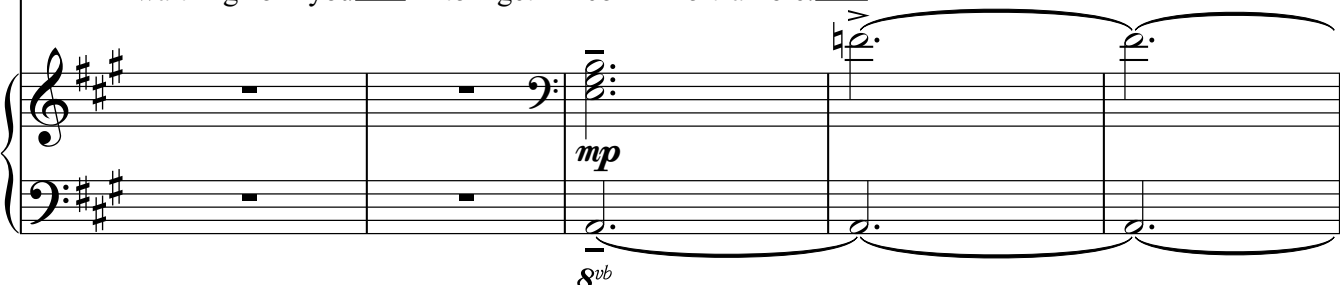
p inviting, calm

3 3

35 *mf*

A. 

D.L. 

Pno. 

mp

8^{vb}

40 *pp*

A. *pp* *3*

I don't real-ly know how this works._____

D.L. *p*

That's al - right.

Pno. *p* *3*

(8).....

45

D.L. *3*

I re-mem-ber my first time sit-ting in a ther-a-pist's of -fice..

Pno.

DR. LANGFORD lets out a small laugh,
 one visible to *AUTUMN*, as he recalls
 a memory.

48 *p*

A. *p*

Oh... I did-n't know

D.L. *p*

It was _____ strange.

Pno. *mp* *psub.*

53 *mpsub.*

A. ther-a-pist's went to ther-a- py. —

joking, trying to cut the tension

D.L. Well, some-one has to de -

Pno. *mf*

DR. LANGFORD smiles at AUTUMN, hoping that his joke had some sort of calming effect. AUTUMN stares at him in bewilderment for just a moment, but caves and laughs for the first time. DR. LANGFORD joins him in laughter.

56

D.L. li-ver the mail-man's mail. —

Pno.

as a return to professionalism;
warm, steadfast

mpsub. *p*

61

D.L. No fault _____ of yours for be-ing ner- vous. It's per fect-ly

Pno. *mpsub.*

66 *mpsub.* *mf* 5

D.L. na-tur-al. You're in a new_ en-vi-ron-ment with some-one you've ne-ver met and that

Pno. *psub.* *mpsub.*

69 *fsub.*

D.L. some-one is here,_____ in your home,_____ es - sen-tial-ly, try-ing to

Pno. *mfsub.* *fsub.*

73 *f*

A. 8 Right.

D.L. help you re-con-fig-ure_ your break-er box. Right?_____ *mp* *f*

Pno. *psub.* *mp*

77

A.

D.L.

Pno.

f

psub.

What - e - ver you have to say, — I'm here — to

83

A.

D.L.

Pno.

mp *p* *mp* *mf*

lis - ten... It's just us, and you are free — to

mpsub. *mfsub.*

88

A. *mp*
Thank you.

D.L. *fsub.* *mf* *mp*
speak o-pen-ly. Can you

Pno.

93

A. *pp*
My girl-friend re ferred me.

D.L. *pp*
tell me what brought you in to-day?

Pno. *pp*

p

97

A. Uhm...

D.L. What prompt-ed you to ask for a re - fer - ral?__

Pno.

trying to push through,
but still finding it difficult

102

A. I don't know. I just have-n't been feel-ing good late - ly. __

Pno.

p *mp* *mfsub.* *p*

105

A. Have-n't e-ver real-ly felt good, act - u - al - ly. I'm

Pno.

109

A. *mp*

ti - red_ all the time, and I can't... the

Pno. *p* *mpsub.*

113

A. *mf*

fu-ture does-n't look... I'm sorry. I'm just trying to put it into words.

Pno. *mfsub.*

with pedal lift pedal abruptly

118

D.L. *mf* *mp*

That's al - right. Take your time.

mf = 116 in time, warm: the sunlight

Pno. *p* *mf* *psub.*

rubato

Yeah, sorry.

I just think that was a little difficult for me?

124

A. 

D.L. 

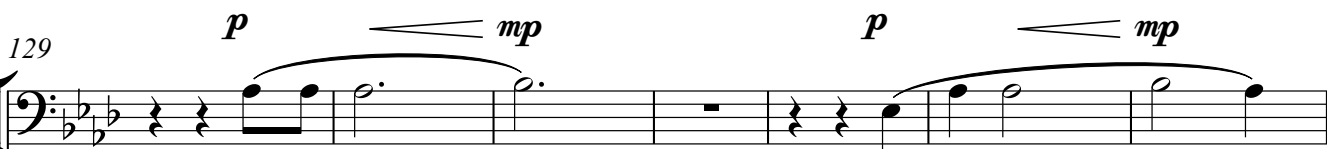
Pno. 

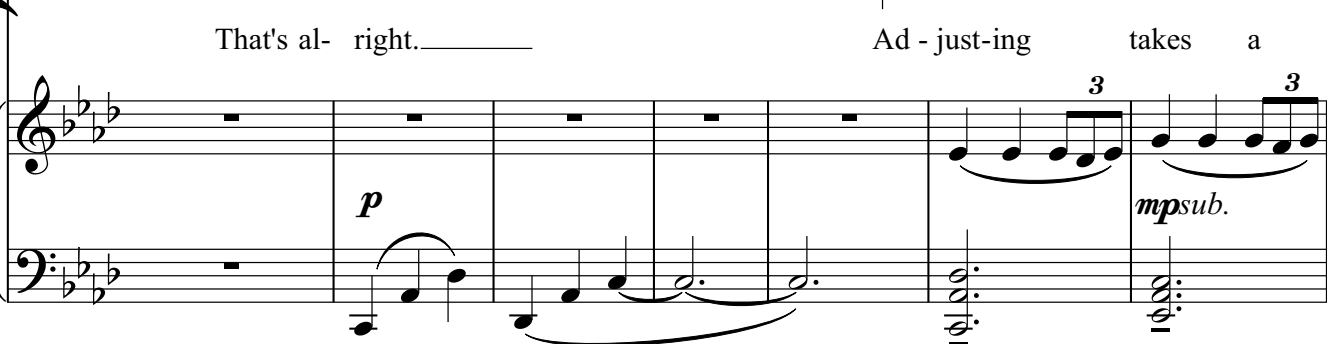
*p*sub. < *mp*

mp

in time, compassionate

129


D.L. 

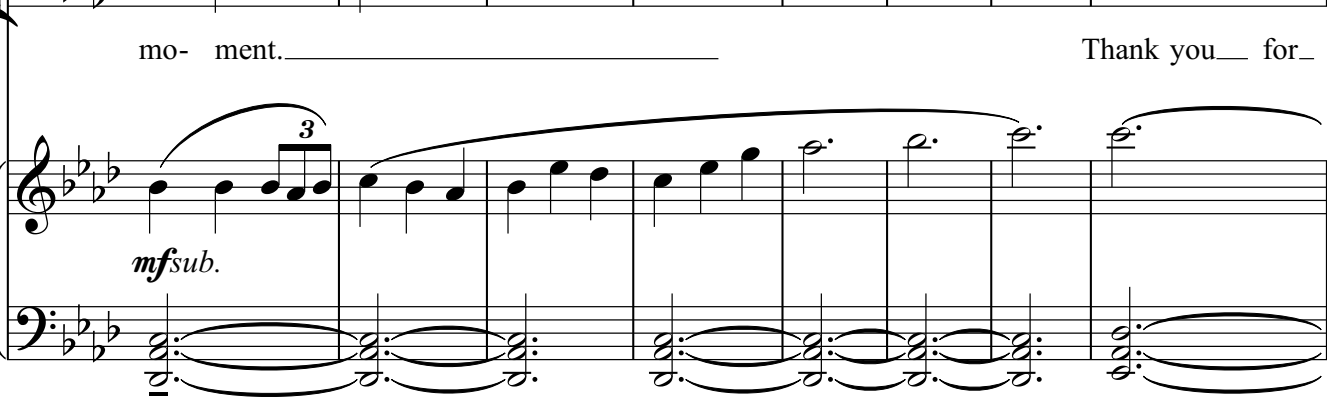
Pno. 

p *mp* *p* *mp*

That's al- right. _____ Ad - just - ing takes a

136

D.L. 

Pno. 

*mf*sub.

*mf*sub.

mo- ment. _____ Thank you__ for__

144

D.L. *be-ing ho - nest with me. We can take our time.*

Pno.

152

D.L. *It's on-ly the first ses-sion af-ter all. So, we*

Pno. *psub.*

160

D.L. *don't have to dive in right a- way. Not un-til you*

Pno. *mpsub.* *psub.*

allow for a full decay

rubato,
spoken, retaining musicality

168

D.L.

Pno.

174

A.

D.L.

T.E.

T.B.

Pno.

I would appreciate that.
Thank you.

177

Which library do you apprentice at? I see here under occupation you explained that you're working on 13 your masters in library science?

D.L. Wasted words.

T.E. Wasted words.

T.B.

Pno. *p* *8va* let ring

181

Yes. *They share another laugh.* I-

A. I'm at Katherine Public. I didn't know you read that.

D.L. How's that going for you?

T.E. Tell him about your boss.

T.B.

Pno. *8va* let ring

186

It's okay right now.
Just intense.

How's the work
environment?

He laughed at me when I
asked for a mental health day.

My boss called me crazy last week
after watching me triple-check the inventory orders.
"Tedious!," he said.

190

It's decent.

let ring

Autumn,
because it's out first session,
I do need to talk about family history.
I know it can be difficult to talk about
on the first day.

So,
I want us to take a moment to breathe.
Can we do that together?

Okay.

Liar!

Liar!

let ring and lift pedal abruptly on mm. 196

*They enjoy a breath together,
one not too long, but just
enough to clear the lungs,
the heart, the mind.*

*AUTUMN nods,
a little nervous but 15
smiling, secure.*

196

A. Yes.

D.L. Great. Deep breath. Ready?

Pno.

201

D.L. So, Who is in your family?

Pno.

*rubato, very freely, no exact tempo;
follow the voice*

p

*with pedal; let ring
as a vamp*

205

A. It's just my parents and I. We stay out of each other's ways.

D.L. What's the quality of your relationship with them?

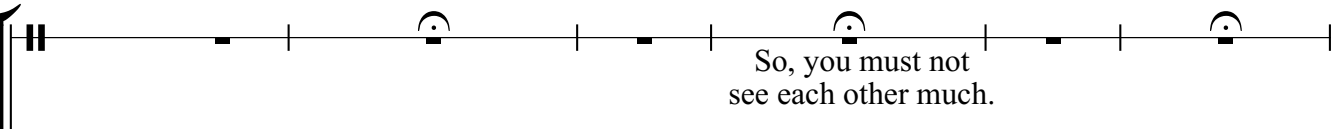
Pno.

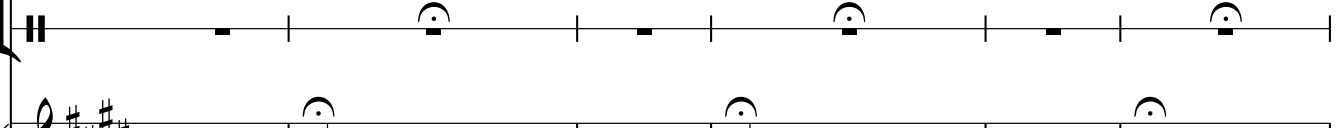
16


210

They're kind of a mess.

Not really,
no.

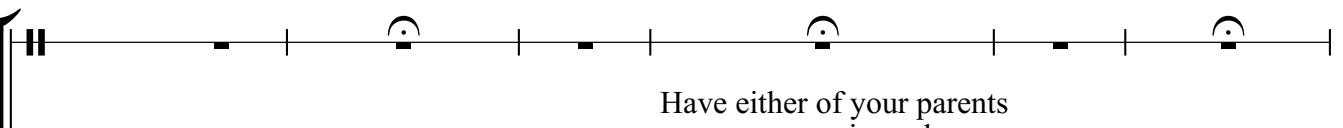
A. 

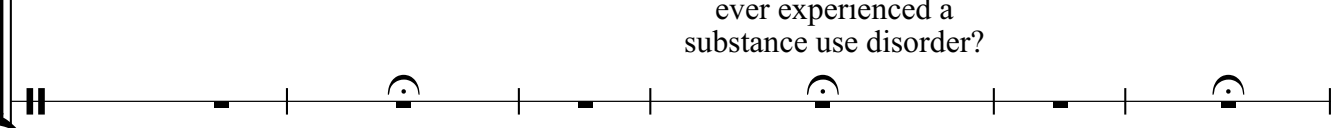
D.L. 

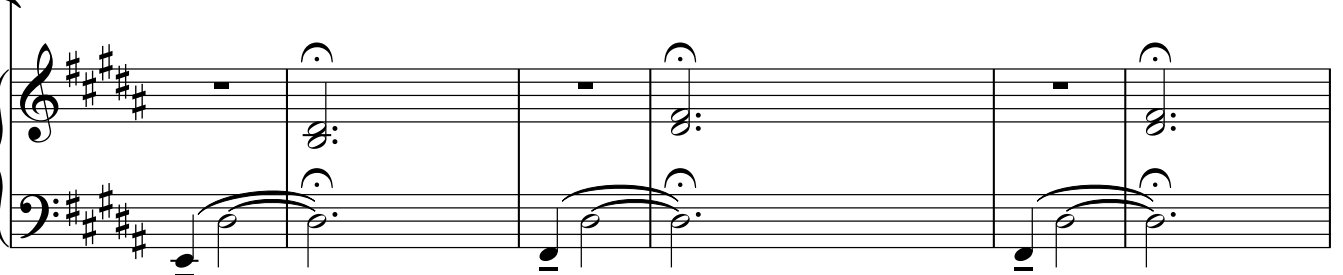
Pno. 

216

Not that I know of.

A. 

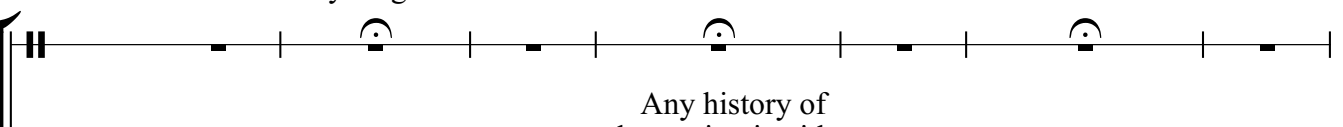
D.L. 

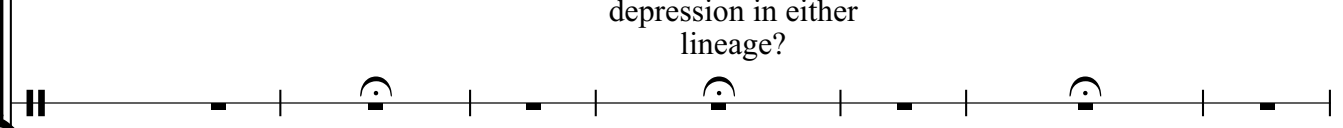
Pno. 

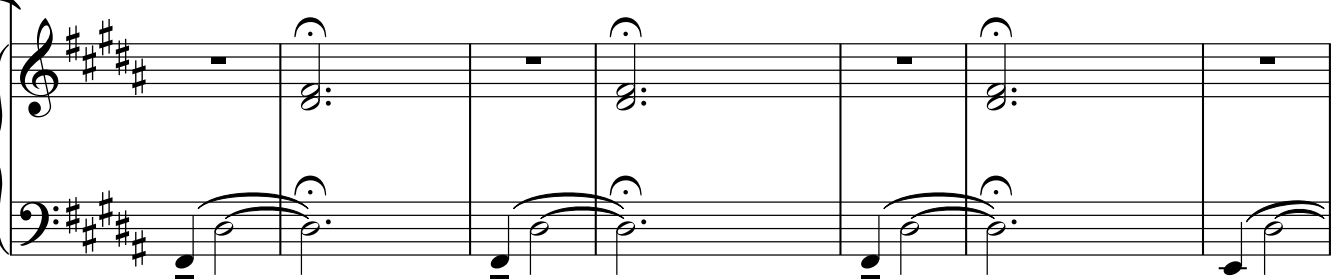
222

I'm not aware of
any diagnoses.

My mother's side,
I think
She's always been
distant.

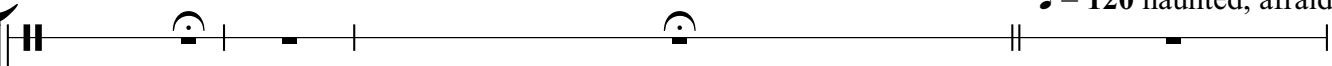
A. 


D.L. 

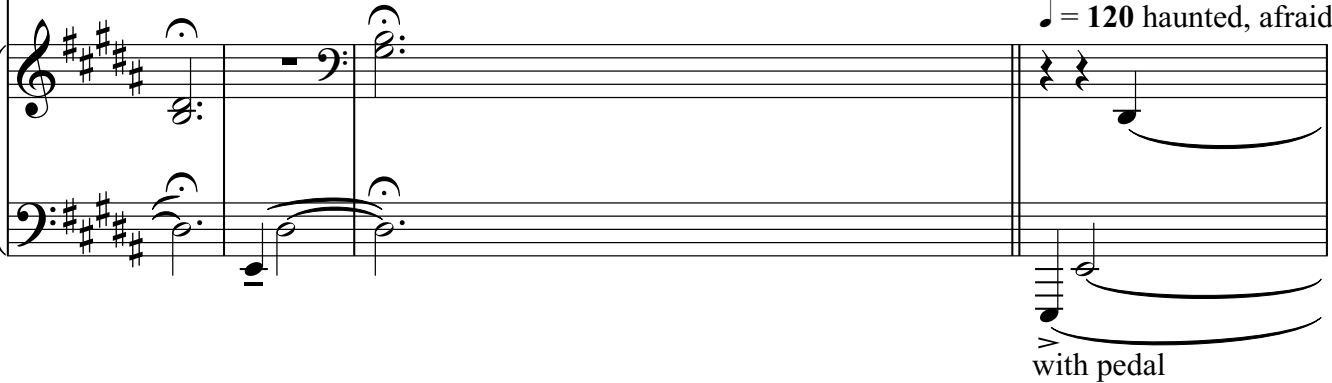
Pno. 

229

♩ = 120 haunted, afraid

A. 

D.L. 


Pno. 

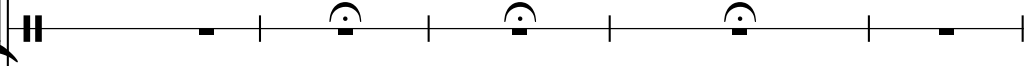
Autumn,
 thank you for being honest with me.
 I know this must be hard.
 You're doing a great job.
 It's common for people with mood
 symptoms to experience
 cooccurring suicidal ideation.
 Was anyone in your family ever lost by suicide?

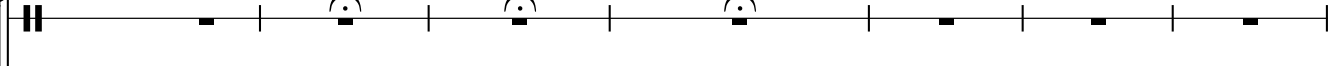
with pedal

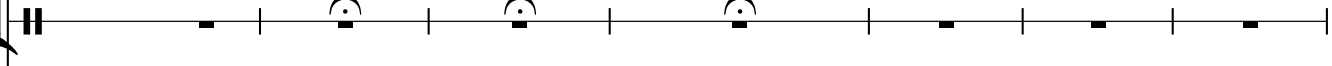
233

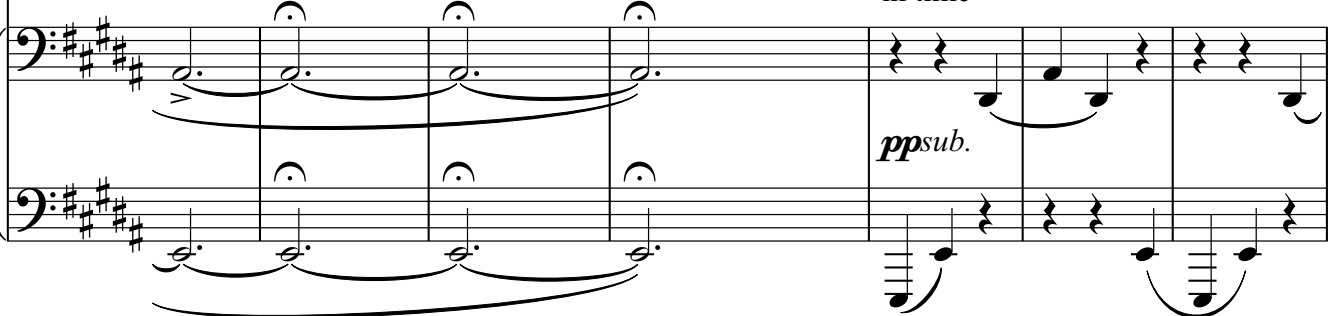
in time

A. 

D.L. 

T.E. 

T.B. 

Pno. 

Your sister.
 Your sister, Sasha.

Tell him about your
 sister. Your sister,
 Sasha.

ppsub.

240 *pp* *p* *n* *pp* *p*

A. Yes. I had a sis -

Pno. *p* *pp*

248

A. - ter. Sa - - sha.

Pno. *p*

256

A. —

T.E. Tell him about how

T.B. Tell him about how

Pno.

262 psycho she was.

T.E. | | | | |

T.B. | | | | |

psycho she was - about all the nights she spent crying,

Pno.

267 about how you're just like

T.E. | | | | |

T.B. | | | | |

about how far she sailed away, about how you're just like

Pno.

275

A. | | | | |

I did-nt hear a-bout it un-til years la-ter

T.E. | | | | |

T.B. | | | | |

her. her.

Pno.

304 $\text{♩} = 90$ *mp* *p*

A. va - cant, $\text{di - lap - i - da - ted,}$

Pno. *ppsub.* *mp* *psub.*

310 *accel.* $\text{♩} = 150$ *mp*

A. mi - - -

Pno. *accel.* $\text{♩} = 150$ *mp*

315 *mfsub.*

A. $\text{- s'ra - ble house.}$

Pno. *mf*

320 *fsub.* **accel.**

A. No vi - sit - ors.

Pno. *f* **accel.**

325 *mf* **mf** $\text{♩} = 170$

A. concerned, trying to quell the anxiety

D.L. Au- tumn, your

Pno. $\text{♩} = 170$

330 *f*

D.L. breath-ing is hea-vy. Should we come back to this

Pno. *f*

336

A. 
8 No, no, I can do

D.L. 
la - ter? _____

Pno. 

341

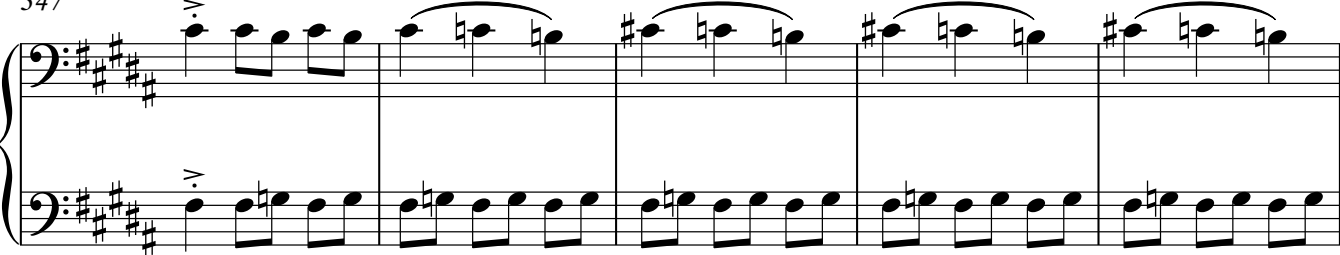
A. 
8 this. I can't I can. _____ I

T.E. 
I can't

T.B. 
I can't

Pno. 

347

Pno. 

352

A.

I need to go. I'm sor - ry.

Pno.

357

A.

I'll re - sched - ule, don't wor - ry.

D.L.

Au - tumn...

Pno.

362

A.

I'll re - sched - ule, I'm sor - ry. I'm

Pno.

367

A.

8

sor - ry. I'm sor - ry.

Pno.

370

A.

8

Pno.

SCENE IV: TRAUMA

AUTUMN steps outside and takes in the cold October air. He finds **OLIVIA** sitting at the bench outside of **DR. LANGFORD**'s office. She greets him warmly, unaware of his anxiety as he hides it well.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

♩ = 118 fearful, damning, an invasive thought

Olivia *mp* Au - tumn. —

Autumn *p* Hey. I'm

Piano *ff*

Detailed description: This musical system consists of three staves. The top staff is for Olivia, the middle for Autumn, and the bottom for Piano. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. Olivia's part begins with a whole note rest, followed by a half note G5, a quarter note F#5, and a dotted half note E5. Autumn's part begins with a whole note rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note F#4, and a dotted half note E4. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in both hands, with a forte (ff) dynamic.

*OLIVIA's demeanor shifts from joyful to alarmed, gentle concern washing over her as she notices the discomfort **AUTUMN** is experiencing.*

now concerned
mf

O. Au - tumn — what hap-pened? —

A. sor-ry, I can't stick a-round to- day. —

Pno.

Detailed description: This musical system continues from the first. It features three staves: Olivia (O.), Autumn (A.), and Piano (Pno.). Olivia's part starts with a whole note rest, followed by a half note G5, a quarter note F#5, and a dotted half note E5. Autumn's part starts with a whole note rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note F#4, and a dotted half note E4. The piano accompaniment continues with the same eighth-note pattern in both hands.

OLIVIA rises from the bench and crosses to AUTUMN. **mp** **f** **accel.**

14

A. *mp* *port.* *f*

I just need to go, please. I need to take a

Pno. **accel.**

OLIVIA gently (but firmly) places her hand on his back, reassuring him of her support in a moment like this. AUTUMN does not pull away.

22 $\text{♩} = 138$ *f*

O. Breathe, my love. Please, my

A. mo - ment.

Pno. $\text{♩} = 138$ *f*

30 *mf* *f* 3

O. love. No - thing more than breath.

A. anxious I

Pno.

38 *mp*

O. Well, talk

A. can't do that right now.

Pno.

AUTUMN pulls away from *OLIVIA*,
turning his back on her.

4

44 *mf* rit.

O. *to me.*

A. 8 O - li-vi-a, you don't un-der - stand. rit.

Pno.

forward and factual, not aggressive or demanding;
compassion living just beneath the throat, loving

OLIVIA crosses to him, this
time keeping her hands to
herself, respecting his space.

50 *fsub.* $\text{♩} = 88$

O. I've been with you now six months to date. You can

A.

Pno. $\text{♩} = 88$

AUTUMN stares at the ground,
his back still to **OLIVIA**. He takes a
moment to choose his words carefully.

56

O. *trust me, my love, I'm here.*

A. *I don't have a*

Pno.

65

A. *sis-ter. I had one.*

Pno.

*He looks up at turns to face her,
meeting her concerned gaze.*

mf

p

sub.

mf

73

O. *What hap-pened?—*

A. *somber, empty*

Pno.

mp

p

mf

mf

78

A. *mp* *p* *< mf* *p*

sis - ter a - way, my par - ents, when

Pno. *mp* *psub.*

OLIVIA cautiously takes him by the hand and guides him to sit at the bench.

83

A. *f*

haunted, remorseful with increasing anger → bitter, with a sudden bite

I was twelve.

Pno. *f*

88

A. *p* *mp*

alone, panicked, confused

She tried to hang her - self, but I walked in on her.

Pno. *psub.* *mp*

93

A. I _____ did-n't know how to help. She looked at me with these

Pno.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 93 to 96. The vocal line (A.) is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over measures 93-94 and another slur over measures 95-96, which ends with a fermata and a '7' above it. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) is in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It consists of a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more complex melodic line in the right hand, with a slur over the right-hand part in measure 96.

97

A. eyes: re - gret - ful. _____ but I did-n't know __ what a-bout. _____

Pno.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 97 to 100. The vocal line (A.) starts with a fermata in measure 97, followed by a melodic line with slurs and a triplet in measure 100. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) features a consistent eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand with slurs and dynamics of *mf* and *f*.

101

A. _____ I called for help: my par - ents. _____ be-cause I

Pno.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 101 to 104. The vocal line (A.) begins with a fermata in measure 101, followed by a melodic line with slurs and a dynamic of *p* in measure 104. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with the eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a melodic line in the right hand with slurs and a dynamic of *mf*.

120 *mp*

A.

stomp-ing in. Po-lice were called. She was fif-ty-one-fif-tyed, and when the

Pno.

125

A.

treat-ment fa-ci-li-ty called my mo-ther to tell her they were keep-ing my sis-ter be-yond

Pno.

128 *mf*

A.

se-ven-ty two hou - rs af-ter they said she was still a dan-ger to her-self,

Pno.

133

A.

in time, disgusted and hurt my mo-ther scoffed and she dis - missed the man on the phone and she hung

Pno.

lift keys abruptly at mm. 139
on the word "up"

10

139

A. *p* *f*

up. But what stuck_ with me is how they be - ra-ted her while they wai-ted for

Pno.

147

A.

the po - lice to ar - rive. My fa - ther_ said my sis - ter,_

Pno.

154

A.

Sa-sha_ was her name, was un - grate - ful, con - cei - ted, dra - ma - tic and

Pno.

160

A. *p*

worth - less. So the first time I con-si-dered kil-ling my - self,

Pno. *p*sub.

168

A. *f* *port.* *mp* *mf*

all I could re mem-ber was the look on my sis-ter's face, Sa-sha's, and the

Pno. *f*sub.

174

A. *f*sub.

hate in my fa-ther's voice. I ne-ver wan-ted at all to say an-y-thing.

Pno.

180 *p* *mp* *mfsub.*

A. *3* *3* *3*

I am a-fraid of what peo-ple might think of me.____

Pno. *p*sub. *mf*sub.

OLIVIA embraces *AUTUMN*, holding him close, keeping him safe. The truth sits between them, finally, and she holds onto this moment. He holds onto it, too. *AUTUMN* returns her embrace.

187

A.

Pno.

AUTUMN pulls away after a long moment and stares at the ground. He makes a decision.

AUTUMN rises from the bench to leave.

189 *p* *3*

O.

A. *p* *3*

I don't feel ve-ry good. I need to go

Pno. *p* *3*

♩ = 66 *♩* = 66

OLIVIA, too, rises from the bench, but to follow him.

193 *mp*

O. I don't think that's a good i - de-a, Au-tumn. I'll go with you.—

A. home. No, I'm sor-ry. I

Pno. *p*

heavy pedal

AUTUMN shakes his head, gently but forwardly trying to remove himself from the environment - isolation is his best friend, and he must return to it.

199 *mf* urging

O. Au - tumn.—

A. need to be a - lone. I'm sor -

Pno. *mfsub.* *fsub.*

AUTUMN exits. *OLIVIA*
stands alone. Empty.

rit. ♩ = 60

n

206
A. 8
- ry.

rit. ♩ = 60

Pno. (tr)

2

29 *mf*

O. *mf*

the first time I cried in front of you. I had just ruined break-fast

Pno. *mfsub.*

37 self-mockingly, nervously

O. *mf*

be-cause I was too an-xious. I had assumed it was-n't

Pno.

43 *f* *mf* *f* *mf*

O. *f*

good e-nough and not feel-ing good e-nough turned too quick-ly in-to

Pno. *fsub.* *psub.* *mfsub.*

49 *f*

O. *f* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3* *3*

doubt-ing my-self, in-to ques-tion-ing us, in-to think-ing my-self in-to corn-ers...

Pno. *f* *3* *8va*

53 rit. ♩ = 86

O. *mp* *fsub.* *3* *3*

I thought I'd lose you ov-er eggs made poor-ly ov-er

Pno. rit. ♩ = 86 *mp* *fsub.*

61 hopeful, less anxious

O. *3* *3* *3*

ea-sy and run-ny... Then you kissed my fore-head...

Pno. *3*

4

69

mf *fsub.* reflective, positively

O. You found me cry-ing. — You had just wo-ken up, crust still in your

Pno.

77

mf *mp*

O. eyes. You turned off the stove, paused the world for a mo-ment. — You

Pno.

mfsub.

85

mf rit.

O. held me, — your bo-dy as warm as your words. —

Pno.

mpsub. *mf* rit.

94 $\text{♩} = 112$
f

O. $\text{♩} = 112$

"No-thing has_ to be per-fect," you said. "The fact that you tried is worth

Pno. *fsub.*

101 rit. $\text{♩} = 78$ *mp* < *mf*

O. $\text{♩} = 78$

more than you know," you said. And then you kissed my

Pno. $\text{♩} = 78$

108 $\text{♩} = 82$
f

O. $\text{♩} = 82$

fore - - - - - head.

Pno. $\text{♩} = 82$ *8va*

with heavy pedal

6
111 *OLIVIA internalizes this phrase as it gives her hope for the future, for AUTUMN, for them. Her body shifts as she plants herself confidently.*

O.

(8) with hope undiseased by worry; brightly, shimmeringly

p

with heavy pedal

O.

Pno.

O.

Pno.

f *psub.*

118

O.

Pno.

mp

120

affirmedly, with confidence

O.

Pno.

f

If _____

122

The word "if" sits uncomfortably in her mouth; she takes a moment to rephrase.

O.

Pno.

mpsub.

8 She corrects herself, negating the "if" and affirming the "when".

124

O. *mf* when *mp* he

Pno. *mfsub.* *f* *mpsub.*

126

O. *mf* gets *f* bet - ter, —

Pno. *f*

128

O. I want — him, — I

Pno. *p* *f*

130

O. want him for - ev - er

Pno.

132

O. if he gets bet - ter,

Pno. *mpsub.*

134

O. when he gets bet - ter.

Pno. *mf*

10 136

O. *f*

No one to stare at you,

Pno. *f*

139

O. *f*

no one to haunt you, it's just me! _____

Pno. *f*

142

O. *f*

No one to hurt you,

Pno. *mpsub.* *f*

145

O. 

no need to think that it's just you!

Pno. 

148

O. 

I'll be here

Pno. 

150

O. 

when you get better.

Pno. 

12 152

O. 

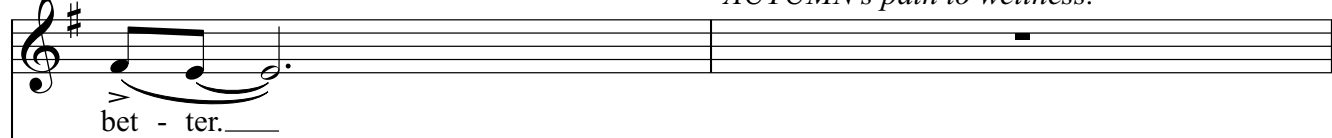
Pno. 

154

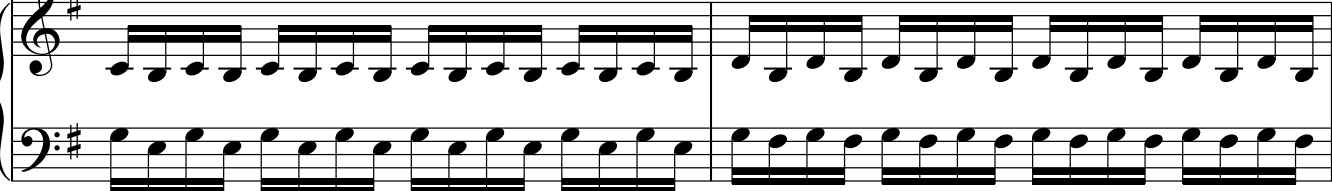
O. 

Pno. 

156

O. 

*She stands in her affirmation and confidence in
AUTUMN's path to wellness.*

Pno. 

158

O.

Pno.

160

O.

Pno.

162 rit. ♩ = 52

O.

Pno.

SCENE V: 1 (800) - 273 - 8255

A lone spotlight on **AUTUMN**. He answers softly into his phone. Dread – putrid like **rot**. He sits at the edge of his bed and conceals a piece of broken glass in his hand as he speaks to the crisis counselor.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

♩ = 78 pointed, like broken glass,
and yet a funeral march

Autumn

♩ = 78 pointed, like broken glass,
and yet a funeral march

Piano

p *ppsub.* *psub.*

8^{va}

8^{vb}

pedal freely;
allow for a full, natural decay in the bass

12

A.

nervously, senza vib.

p

Hel - lo. Are you the cri - sis

Pno.

(h) (8)

22

A.

mp *port.*

coun-se- lor? I am feel - ing strange.

Pno.

mpsub.

(8)

30

A.

I don't un-der-stand where this new sad - ness is

Pno.

(8)

40

A.

com-ing from. My name is Au-tumn. I am twen-ty-five.

Pno.

(8)

49

A.

Scale? I would say six... may-be se-ven. I feel scared.

Pno.

57

A.

I've ne-ver called be-fore. I am sor-ry to bo-ther you, by the way.____

Pno.

65

A.

No,____ ne-ver a-ny plans. On-ly what my hands_ can_ find

underscored by shame
mp

*he slowly stares into his hand,
concealing the broken glass*

Pno.

p sub.

74

A.

____ will do.____ Yes,_ I am_ in a safe ar-e-a. I just,

as a lie, but insistent

genuinely,
pained

*he abandons his
attention to the glass*

Pno.

8va

85 *fsub.*

A. *port.*

I feel small. I think I ru-ined it. I could-n't take the

Pno. *f*

94

A. *mp*

stren-u-ous weight of it. I feel hol - low. I don't have

Pno. *15^{ma}*

105

A. *f* *mp*

a-ny-thing. I

Pno. *(15)* *mpsub.* with pedal

♩ = 142, pensively, as a reflection

113

A.

8 thought I could be dif-frent if I tried.

Pno.

121

A.

8 I went to

Pno.

f mp

129

A.

8 ther-a - py to - day and I liked it.

Pno.

with a slow warmth beginning
to coat his words, genuinely happy

137

A. *mp* *mf* *f*

8

I liked it. I loved

Pno.

144

A. 8

it. It

Pno.

152

A. 8

felt so warm in there, so good in there.

Pno.

he recalls leaving
OLIVIA after the
therapy session;
guilt, again

160


A. 

Pno. 

*p*sub.

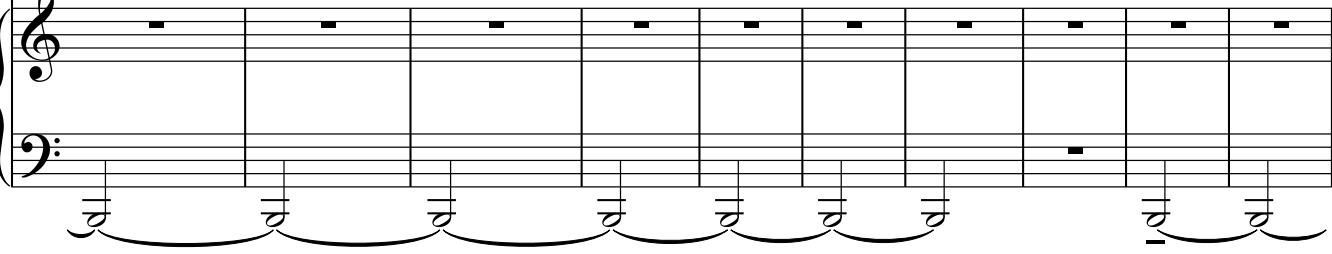
8^{vb}
pedal freely

169 *mf*
with a profound emptiness, senza vib.

A. 

port.

I left my girl - friend to- day... No.____

Pno. 

(8).....

179

A. 


No-thing's made me hap-py in a while. I'm go-ing to go.____

Pno. 


*mf*sub.

(8).....


188 *f*

A. 

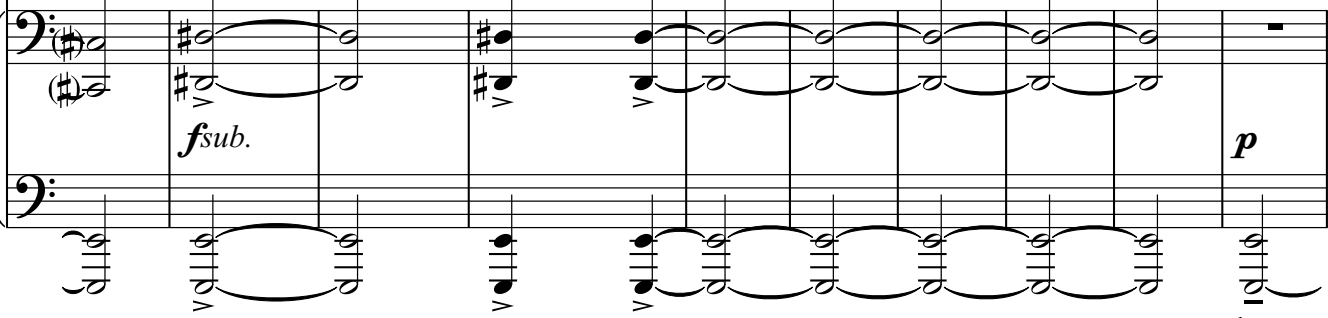
I don't know_ why_ I called_ in the first place. I

Pno. 

199 *p*

A. 

am sor-ry_ to have bo-thered you_ I need


Pno. 

fsub. *p*


heavy pedal

his attention returns to the shard of glass; he slowly reveals it

209

A. 

to go to bed. No. I was just

Pno. 

221 *mf* *psub.*

A. *3*
o - ver - re - act - ing, I guess.

Pno. *mfsub.* *psub.*

228 *n*

A.

Pno.

SCENE I: SHAME

AUTUMN is found in bed, surrounded by his oppressive black curtains. They separate him from the rest of the world. He is awash in embarrassment and shame, his body limp and without energy, without life. He laments.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

$\text{♩} = 72$ delicately, with compassion

p *mp* *p*

Olivia

I mes-saged you four days in a row. Love, I

Autumn

$\text{♩} = 72$ delicately, with compassion

p

Piano

pedal freely

8 *mp* *rit.* $\text{♩} = 62$ *n* $\text{♩} = 194$ hollow, alienated, cold

O.

hope that you're res-ting in bed.

A.

rit. $\text{♩} = 62$ $\text{♩} = 194$ hollow, alienated, cold

mf *p* *sub.*

Pno.

16

Pno.

mf *psub.*

23

A.

8

They're

Pno.

mf *f* *psub.* *p*

31

A.

8

all just fa - ces, fa -

Pno.

mp *psub.* *mp* *psub.*

38 *mp* *p*

A. *port.*

- ces I can't bear to see,

Pno.

46 *mp* *mf*

A. *mf*

fa - ces that burn

Pno. *mp* *p* *mf*

54 *mp* *mf*

A. *mf*

me with eyes full of tra - ge - dy, pit-y!

Pno.

61 *pp* ————— *mp* *p*

A. I _____ don't _____

Pno. *p*sub. *mp*

69 *mp* *mf*

A. want to look at a-ny- one!

Pno. *mf* *mp*sub. *p* *mf*sub.

77 *pp* ————— *mf* *mp*

A. I _____ don't _____ want _____

Pno. *p*sub. *mf*

85 *p* *pp*

A.

a-ny-one to look at me.

Pno. *p_{sub.}*

93 *f*

A.

I am em-

Pno. *f*

101

A.

bar - rassed,

*He slowly gazes ceiling-ward,
seeking reassurance from ghosts.
He receives none.*

Pno. *f*

109 *pp* *p*sub.

A. *pp* *p*sub.

Pno. *pp*sub. *p*

sis - ter.

*He turns his attention away from the ceiling
having received no response.*

117 *n* *p*

A. *n* *p*

Pno.

I al-most

125 *mp*sub. *p* *mp*sub. *mf*sub.

A. *mp*sub. *p* *mp*sub. *mf*sub.

Pno. *mp*sub. *mf*

watched my sis - ter kill her - self when I was twelve.

sorrowful, honest 7

133 *f*

A. I al-most wan - ted her___ to. In___ that mo - ment

Pno.

140 *p* *mfsub.* *mp*

A. ___ I al - most___ wan - ted___ to be___ her

Pno. *mp*

148 *f*

A. be-cause I un - der - - stood._____

Pno. *f*

8 with increasing irritation and sorrow all the same

156

A. *p_{sub.}* *mp* *mf* *mp*

And here now a - gain just like then, I feel

Pno. *p_{sub.}* *mp* *mf*

164

A. *mf*

on - ly eyes cal - lous, no bal - lasts or

Pno. *mf*

a slow, smooth, deliberate accel
poco accel.

a slow, smooth, deliberate accel
poco accel.

171

A. *mp* *mf* *f*

warmth of hands. No - thing to an - chor me, no - thing

Pno. *f_{sub.}*

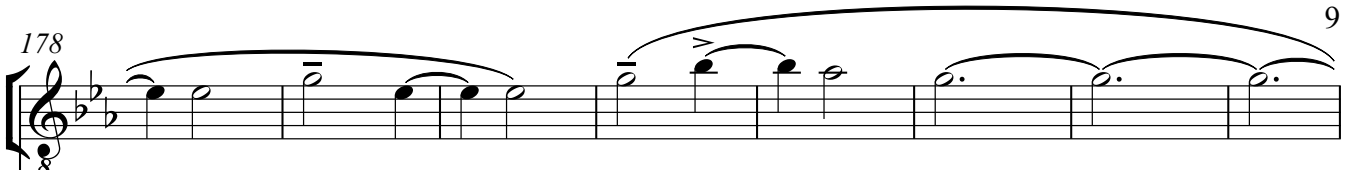
f = 204

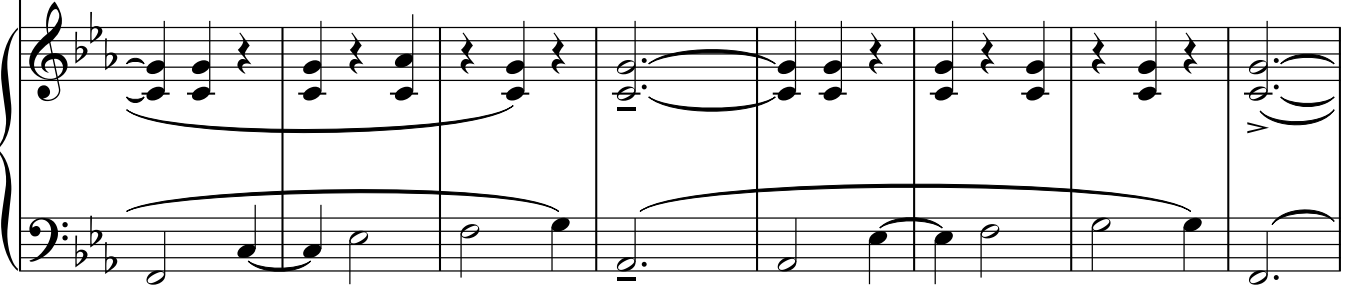
f = 204

8^{vb} *8^{vb}*

with pedal; allow the lower register to ring for the whole phrase

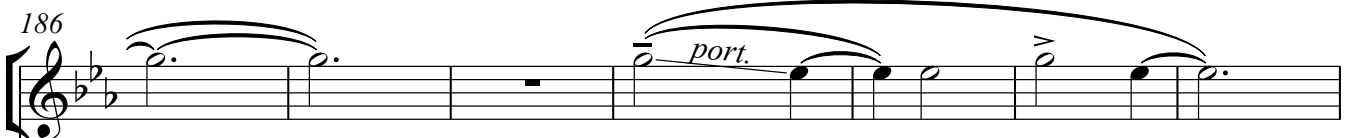
178


A. 
 ___ to stea - dy___ me, no - thing___ at all!_____

Pno. 
 8vb-----| 8vb-----|


resigned, alone


186

A. 
 No - thing___ to ground me,___

Pno. 
 8vb-----|

193

A. 
 no - thing___ to hold me,___ no - thing___ at all._____

Pno. 
 8vb-----| 8vb-----|

10

200

A. *p*sub. *< mp*

Not e - ven a mo - ment.

Pno. *p*

pedal freely

with hope just beneath the skin

208

A. *mf*sub.

— though that's — all I am. — But may - be there's

Pno. *mp* *mf*

215

A. *port.* *mp*sub. *< mf*

more than — just — mo - ments — past —

Pno.

222 *p* *mp* *mf* *fsub.* 11

A. if I turn back and speak!

Pno.

230

A.

Pno.

238 *p* *mp* *mfsub.*

A. What could come of me? What moments ahead of me

Pno.

245

A. *p* ————— *ff* *f*

if I — turn back and speak?

Pno. *p_{sub.}* *f*

8^{vb} ——— |
with pedal; allow the lower register
to ring for the whole phrase

253

A.

Pno.

8^{vb} ——— |

pedal freely

261

A. *p*

Mo- ments — more than — the boy — who al - most —

Pno. *p_{sub.}*

percussive, like a heartbeat

poco accel.

♩ = 208

haunted, fearful, recoiling

269 *mf* *f*

A. watched his sis

poco accel. ♩ = 208

Pno.

heavy pedal

276

A. - ter kill her self

Pno.

284

A. when he was twelve.

Pno.

292

A.

Pno.

300

Pno.

308

Pno.

allow for a full decay

316

Pno.

SCENE II: YOU NEVER SAID GOODBYE

Another therapy session between **OLIVIA** and **DR. LANGFORD**. The air is tense as the two convene. **OLIVIA** knows this is going to be a harder session, one less bright. She knows it has to be done, for her sake, for her health.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

DR. LANGFORD
enters, carrying and
placing his own chair.

OLIVIA enters,
carrying and placing
her own chair.

$\text{♩} = 60$ reflective, somber

Olivia

Dr. Langford

Piano

p *mp*

legato, pedal freely

5 *They sit.* empty, heartbroken, confused *p*

O.

D.L.

Pno.

mf

He said he'd talk_ to me.

10 *mp* *mf*

O.

Pno.

He said yes. I had faith_ in him. He said he loved me.

OLIVIA takes a moment
to collect herself.

16

O. *p* *mpsub.*

attentive, listening carefully

p *mp*

D.L.

When was this? _____

Pno. *psub.*

Af-ter the hos - pi-tal. _____

21

O. *n* *p*

We saw each o-ther on cam-pus. _____ I waved to him.

Pno.

26

O. *mf* *psub.*

He came to me. _____ He thanked me a - gain for

Pno.

29

O. *5* *3* *3* *3*

pas-sing a-long his doc-tor's notes to his pro-fes-sors— du-ring his hos-pi-tal stay.—

Pno.

32

O. *mp* *mf*

He asked how I was. I said I was fine. I

Pno. *mf*

36

O. *p*

asked how he was. I knew he was lying— when he said he was al-right.

Pno. *psub.*

39 *mp*

O. *mp*

I took his hand. He pulled back in fear of what I would see if

Pno.

42 *mf > mp* *fsub.* *mf*

O. *mf > mp* *fsub.* *mf*

not for the sleeve. He said he loved me but to

Pno. *mf*

*Her head drops. She stares at the floor.
as a return to heartbreak*

46 *p*

O. *p*

leave him a-lone. So, I did. I

Pno. *psub.*

mp *mfsub.*

51

O.

drove past the old bo - de ga I used to haunt on my way home from class.

Pno.

*She takes a moment
to choose whether or
not to be honest. She
chooses the truth.*

54

O.

I stepped in-side. I was met with fam-i-li ar smi-les.

Pno.

58

O.

a - long-side fa-mi-li-ar ais-les. They still had my fav-or-ite:

Pno.

6

61

p *mf* *mp*

O. Ken-sing-ton Ci - der. _____ A

D.L. forward, but soft *mp* Did you drink, O-li - vi - a?

Pno.

66

O. lot. A pack.

D.L. empathetic, reassuring, compassionate *p* No-thing to be a - shamed of.

Pno. *mp* *p*sub.

72 *< mp* *mf* 7

D.L. *3* *3* *3*

Set-backs are part of the process. Thank you for being honest with me.

Pno. *3* *3* *< mp* *mfsub.* *3*

OLIVIA shakes her head, supportive, warm, trying to help
 a faint wash of pride running her see the sunlight and strength
 through her, just barely. in herself

77 forward, but gentle *f*

D.L. Have you drunk since? That's great!

Pno. *f*

82 *mf* *3* *3*

D.L. I know you don't feel all too thrilled with your-self right now. O-

Pno.

84

D.L. *li - vi - a, you still ab - stained. That is worth*

Pno.

rit. ♩ = 86

the warmest he's ever sounded;
the embodiment of sunlight

87

D.L. *praise re-gard-less of what hap pened. You are hu - man.*

Pno.

with pedal

rit. ♩ = 86

92

D.L. *You are hu - man. You are hu - man.*

Pno.

*p*sub. *f* *mf*sub. *f* *mf*sub.

101 *pp* < *p* > *pp*

O. I miss him.

D.L. I know. We'll con-

Pno. *psub.*

empathetic, helping to shift the perspective

107 *mp* *mf*

D.L. tin-ue this next week. In the mean- time, I want you to try some thing.

Pno.

112

D.L. Wri-ting tends to help in vis-u-al-i-zing a prob-lem.

Pno. *mf*


117

D.L. 

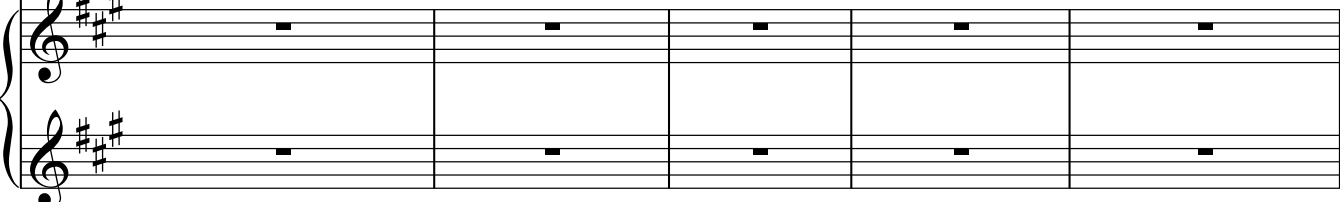
We of-ten find it ea - si - er to under-stand one when we see it, —

Pno. 


121

D.L. 

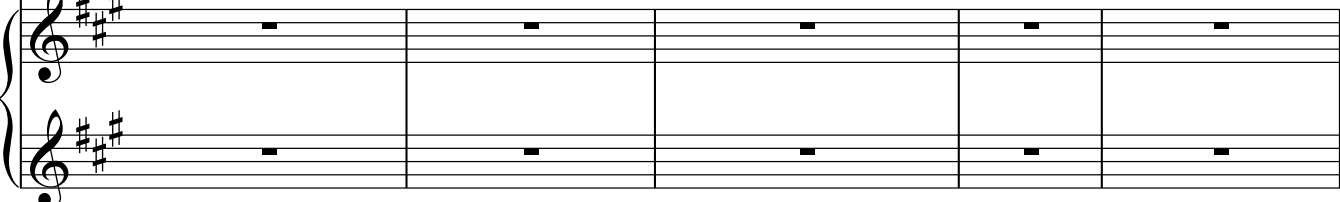
when it's tan - gi-ble: on pa- per. — I want you to write a

Pno. 


126

D.L. 

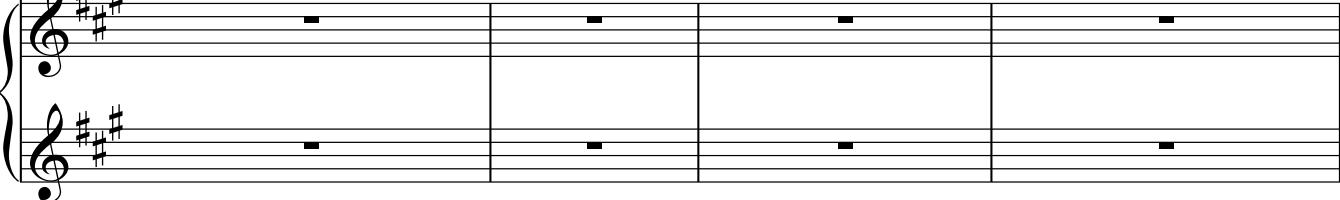
let-ter to Au tumn. — Do not give it to him. Just write. — Be

Pno. 

131

D.L. 

ho-nest as you al-ways are. — I want you to talk a - bout how you felt when it

Pno. 

135

D.L.

hap-pened, how it af-fec-ted you, and what you wan-ted to say___ in that

Pno.

the sunlight peeking through,
but still unresolved

140

O.

mp He gives her a look of acknowledgement.

I can do that.

D.L.

mo-ment. I know this has been hard___ for you. ___

Pno.

p

146

D.L.

Just write. ___ We'll re - vi-sit this next week. ___

Pno.

12

like sunlight, like hope

152

D.L.

Keep go - ing.

Pno.

f

157

Pno.

SCENE III: SASHA, MY SISTER

Just before sunrise. The graves are quiet tonight. The sky seems a masterpiece of slowly blooming watercolors. AUTUMN sits at his sister's grave and reads her suicide letter aloud.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

♩ = 126 contemplative, mournful

Autumn

p

The moon-light, it peeks through my blinds.—

Piano

p

pedal freely

8

A.

I re-mem-ber this dance. Bare dorm_____ full of mis-er - y

Pno.

17

A.

psalms, — and I thought I got o - ver it here,

Pno.

24

A.

now, _____ on hope-ful _____ ground _____ with my "a-ni-mal

Pno.

32

A.

dreams" _____ as my fa - ther _____ called _____ them: _____ the

Pno.

39

A.

house with the pret-ty fence, _____ the yard full of lil-ies, _____ the

Pno.

45 *mfsub.* *f* 3

A. *mfsub.* *f*

girl_ who knows more than my name, _____ a de - gree. _____

Pno. *mfsub.* *fsub.*

52

A. *mfsub.* *f* 3

_____ The moon-light, it comes in a - gain in through my

Pno. *mfsub.* *fsub.*

59 *mp* *mf*

A. *mp* *mf*

win - dow. _____ It ex - poses all of my work, _____ my

Pno. *mp* *mf*

67 with pressure, stress *p*

A. *8* work done in col - lege: work un -

Pno. *p*

72 *mp* *mf* *fsub.*

A. *8* fin-ished and work un - fin-ished is just as im-perf-ect as I

Pno. *mp* *mf* *fsub.*

79 *hauntedly, trauma resurfacing*

A. *8* Mo - ther's_ words. Sink

Pno.

87

A. *p*

low, this deep un-ex-pect-ed-ly. How could I? I did-n't

Pno.

95

A. *rit.* *mp* *mf*

think things would get this far, clo-sing the dis-tance be-tween pen and

Pno. *p* *mf*

102

A. *f*

pa-per. My hands, they be-tray me a-gain. The moon-light it

Pno. *f*

f = 156 with a classical, virtuosic inflection; anxiously

109

A. burns me a- gain. I don't know what more I can say.

Pno. 3

Detailed description: This system contains the first system of music, starting at measure 109. The vocal line (A.) is in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and another slur over the last two measures. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) consists of two staves: the upper staff is in a bass clef and contains a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure, and the lower staff is in a bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

115

A. I've nev-er writ-ten an-y-thing like this be - fore.

Pno. *viv*

Detailed description: This system contains the second system of music, starting at measure 115. The vocal line (A.) is in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and another slur over the last two measures. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) consists of two staves: the upper staff is in a bass clef and contains a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure, and the lower staff is in a bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

as a last attempt to feel human
and worth something

ff

122

A. My name is Sa -

Pno. *ff*

Detailed description: This system contains the third system of music, starting at measure 122. The vocal line (A.) is in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a slur over the first two measures and another slur over the last two measures. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) consists of two staves: the upper staff is in a bass clef and contains a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure, and the lower staff is in a bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

130

A. - - sha. _____ Sa - -

Pno.

Detailed description: This system shows measure 130. The vocal line (A.) is in treble clef with a key signature of three flats and a common time signature. It features a melodic line with a long slur over the word 'sha.' followed by a rest, and then the word 'Sa' with a long slur. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) consists of two staves: the right hand plays a series of eighth notes with a dotted quarter note, and the left hand plays a series of eighth notes with a dotted quarter note.

138

A. - - sha. _____ My name is _____

Pno.

Detailed description: This system shows measure 138. The vocal line (A.) continues the melodic line with a slur over 'sha.' followed by a rest, and then 'My name is' with a long slur. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with the same rhythmic pattern as the previous system, with a slight change in the right-hand melody towards the end of the measure.

146

A. Sa - sha. _____ Sa - - sha. _____ What more__ is

Pno.

a return to the
dramatic, classical
style

f

Detailed description: This system shows measure 146. The vocal line (A.) features a melodic line with slurs over 'Sa - sha.', 'Sa - - sha.', and 'What more__ is'. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed above the final note. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with the rhythmic pattern, but the right hand has a long slur over the final notes. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed below the piano part, and there are three 'v' markings (accents) under the final notes of the piano part. A note above the piano part is marked with an accent (^).

153

A.

there_ to say?_ What more_ is there_ to say?_ What

Pno.

160

A.

more_ is there_ to say?_ What more_ is there than my

Pno.

166

A.

name?

Pno.

n ♩ = 104

ff

*AUTUMN shifts his attention from
the letter to his sister's tombstone.
He still holds the letter in his hands.*

as though she lives; remorsefully

173

A. *p*

There is you, Sa - sha, my

Pno. *psub.*

180

A.

sis - ter. You did - n't de - serve what hap - pened to you.

Pno.

186

A.

I know that does - n't change things. Af - ter the hos - pi - tal,

190

A.

I vi - si - ted the house, your room. I don't know why.

194

A.

I was - n't look - ing for a - ny - thing. I

197 *mp* *He holds up her letter.*

A. *8* *3* *3*
 did-n't ex-pect to find an-swers. But I saw this, and I

Pno. *mp*

202 *mf* *f*

A. *8* *3* *3*
 sat on your bed, and I o-pened up your let-ter, and I read. And I

Pno. *mfsub.* *fsub.*

208 *3* *3*

A. *8*
 cried for you, Sa-sha, I cried for us. I cried for our a-ni-mal

Pno.

213 affirmedly, with conviction

A. 8 dreams. You did-n't de-serve what hap-pened to you.

Pno.

AUTUMN places her letter to the side, not disgusted with it, but clearly upset that it was ever written at all. He speaks down at the soil now, not the tombstone.

He places a hand on her grave.

218

A. 8 *p* If I could have gi-ven you words, — *mf* I would have told

Pno.

warmly, with a home in his heart for his sister

224 rit. ♩ = 96

A. 8 you — I love — you. — Sa-sha, I


Pno. *f* *p*sub. *f*

12

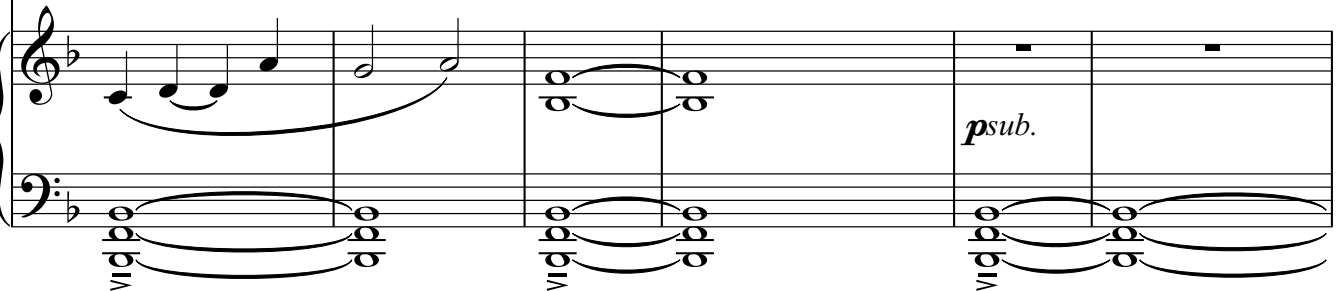
230

His other hand drops to touch her grave.

p

A. 


love_____ you. I would have held you_____ and just

Pno. 

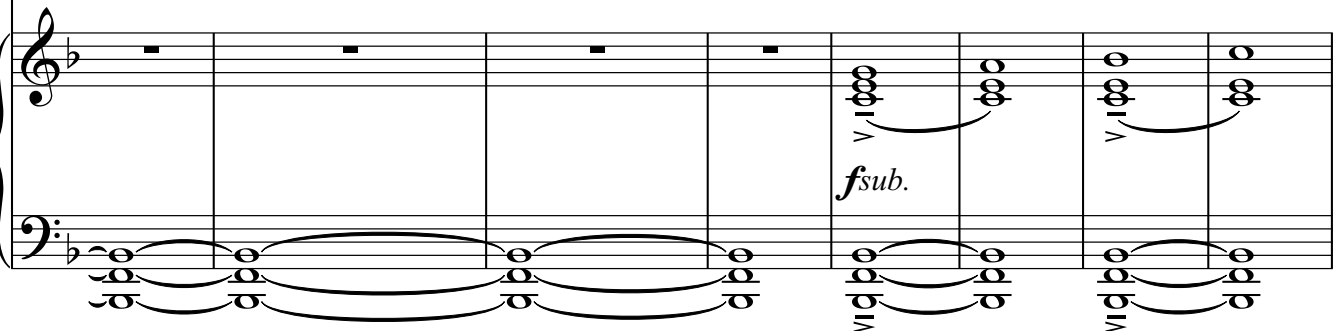
psub.

AUTUMN readjusts his body slightly to breathe in a comfortable position. His hands do not move from her resting place.

236

A. 

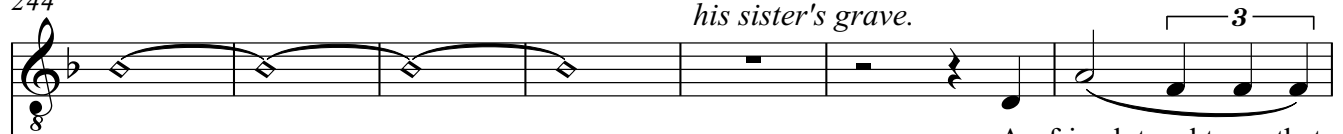
breathed_____ the way a friend taught me. gently, with a calm resolve

Pno. 

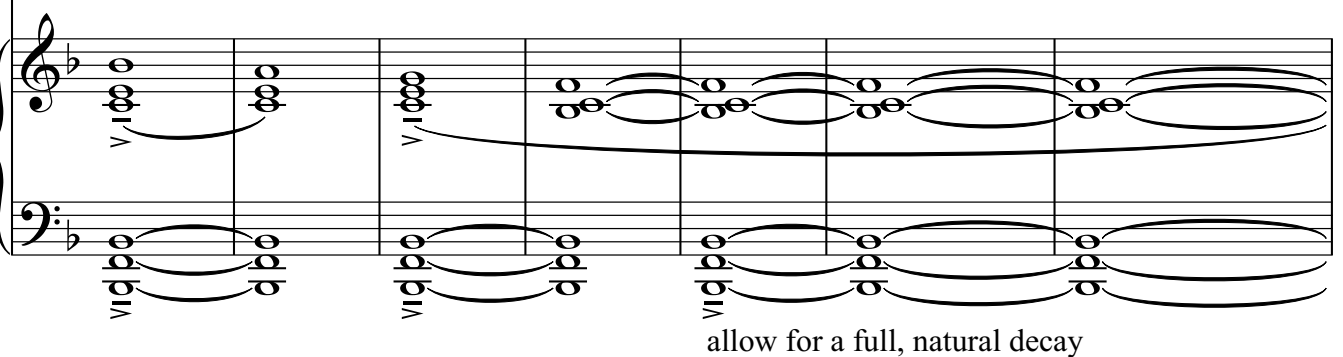
fsub.

He returns his attention to his sister's grave.

244


A. 

A friend taught me that.

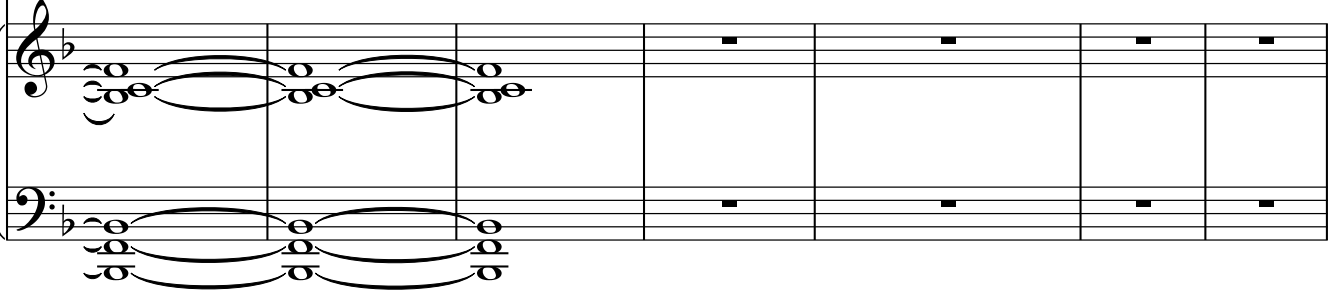
Pno. 

allow for a full, natural decay

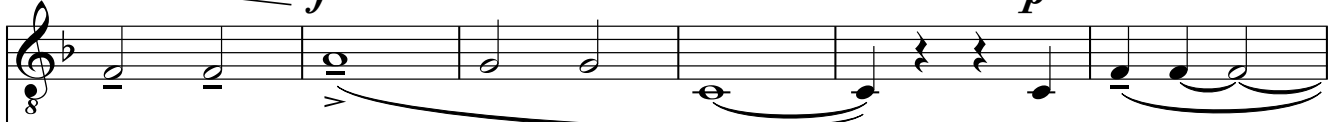
251

A. 

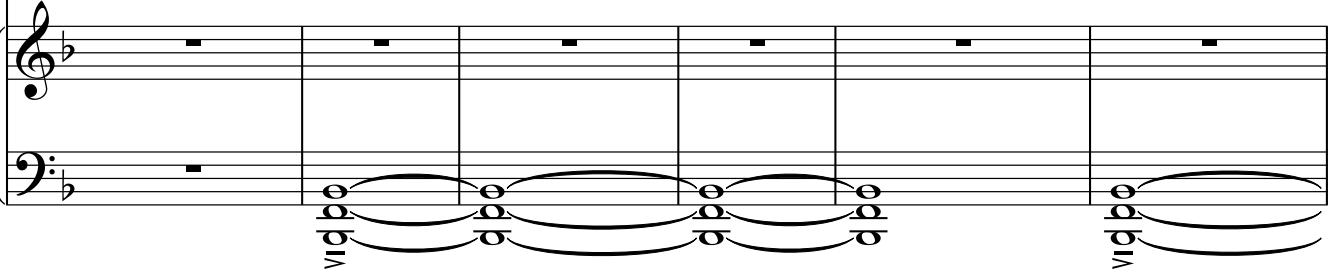
The dawn is near. You should rest.

Pno. 

258

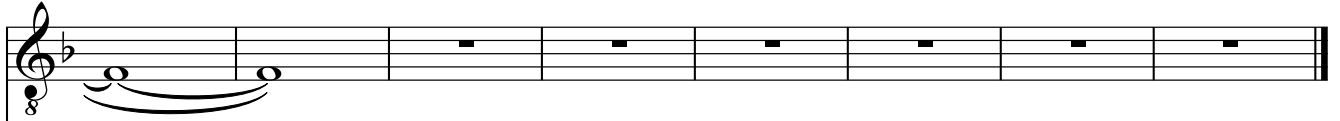
A. 

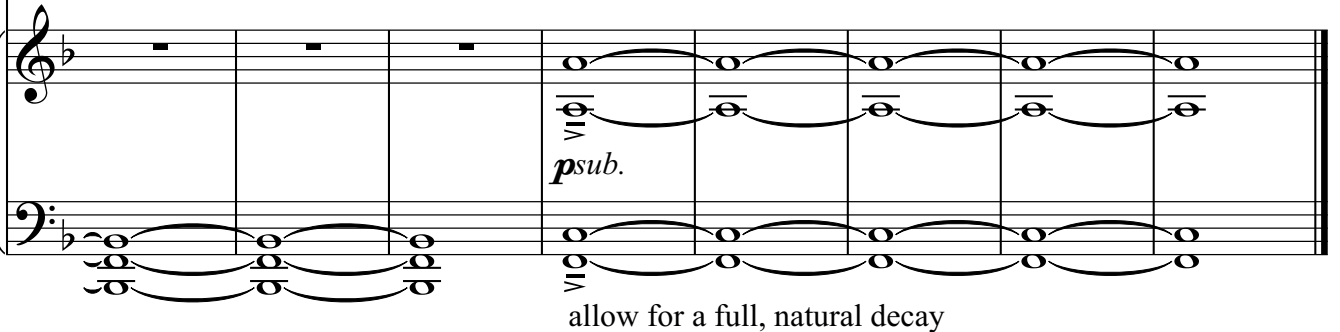
I will al - ways come back _____ to vi - sit. _____

Pno. 

AUTUMN leans down and kisses his
sister's grave - not her tombstone, but
her soil, the earth.

264

A. 

Pno. 

psub.

allow for a full, natural decay

INTERLUDE: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

AUTUMN rises from the lawn, resolved in his relationship with *SASHA*. He considers the sky and it makes him think of *OLIVIA*. He reflects.

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

Olivia

Autumn *p* with change brewing in him

A friend. O - li - vi - a. Some-one I trust. whispered Olivia.

The Banshee

The Eyes

The Mumbler

Piano

A. *mp* *p*sub. *mp* *p*sub. *mf* *f*

Some-one I hurt, some-one I pained, some-one I pushed a-way in haste. I

Pno.

9

A. *p* *f*

know that now. But how to mend this wound?

Pno.

AUTUMN stands at his sister's grave,
debating whether or not to reach out to
OLIVIA again. He feels the air pass him.

14 $\text{♩} = 52$

f

Pno.

AUTUMN begins to cross offstage
as *OLIVIA* crosses onstage. She
carries a letter in her hands.

19 $\text{♩} = 64$ march-like, steadfast

*p*sub. *f*

Pno.

OLIVIA crosses to *AUTUMN*'s doorway,
silently debating whether she should leave
her letter with him.

24

Pno.

She places the letter down at his doorstep and leaves, hurriedly. AUTUMN returns to the stage, crossing to his doorway.

AUTUMN unlocks his door and looks down, seeing a letter waiting for him.

29

Pno.

He picks it up and unfolds it, beginning to read its contents. *OLIVIA stands adjacent to AUTUMN, reading along with him from her own room.* **p** together, finding mutual ground

34

O.

A.

Pno.

Au-tumn, hey. I hope I'm not in - tru-ding by

p together, finding mutual ground

Au-tumn, hey. I hope I'm not in - tru-ding by

41

O.

A.

Pno.

wri-ting this. I knowthings are hard right now. I

wri-ting this. I knowthings are hard right now. I

44

O.

A.

Pno.

know you must feel aw- ful__ a-bout what hap-pened be-tween us and a -

know you must feel aw- ful__ a-bout what hap-pened be-tween us and a -

46

O.

A.

Pno.

mp

mf

fraid of what you think I think of you.__ But I'm here to tell you what I

fraid of what you think I think of you.__ But I'm here to tell you what I

rit. . . . ♩ = 54

more focused, enveloped 5

O. *mf* think of you. What I know. Au-tumn, I know that you're more focused, enveloped

A. *mf* think of you. What I know. Au - tumn, I

rit. . . . ♩ = 54

Pno. *fsub.* *mfsub.*

O. hurt - ing and dis-ap - poin - ted with your- self... that you

A. know that you're hurt - ing and dis-ap - poin - ted with your- self... that you

Pno.

62 *AUTUMN* cries. Good feelings.
He continues to read.

O. *f*
you. You are strong. You spoke at all! I am proud of you.

A. *f*
you... You are strong!

Pno. *f*

66

O. *f*
— Au-tumn, I am proud of you.— There was some-thing I need-ed to

Pno.

70 *p* $\text{♩} = 80$

O. *p*
say that day on campus:— I love—

Pno. *p*
psub.

74

O.

you.

Pno.

76

O.

You

Pno.

78

O.

will get bet - ter.

Pno.

80

O.

We

Pno.

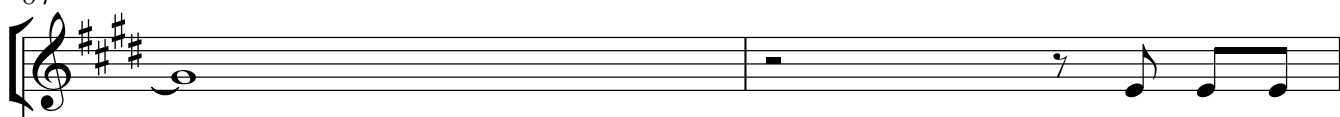
82

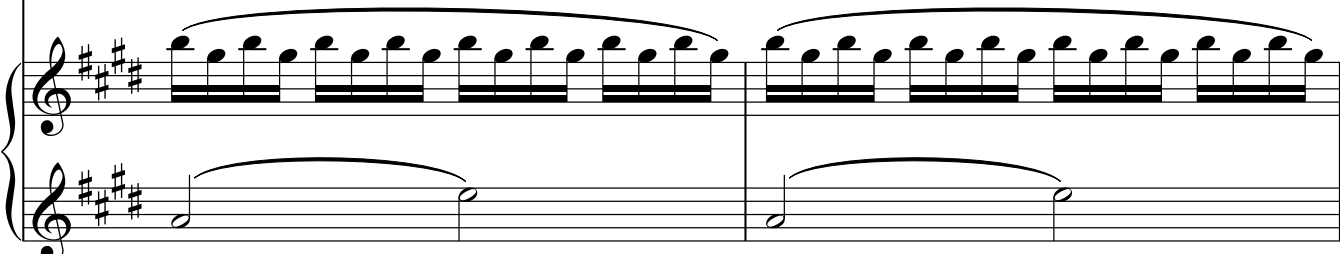
O.  will get bet - ter to - get - her.

Pno. 

Detailed description: This system contains measures 82 and 83. The vocal line (O.) is in a treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It begins with a quarter note on G5, followed by a half note on A5, and then a series of eighth notes: B5, A5, G5, F#5, E5, D5. The lyrics are "will get bet - ter to - get - her." The piano accompaniment (Pno.) consists of two staves. The right hand plays a continuous eighth-note arpeggiated pattern. The left hand plays a simple bass line with quarter notes and half notes.


84

O.  I'd like to

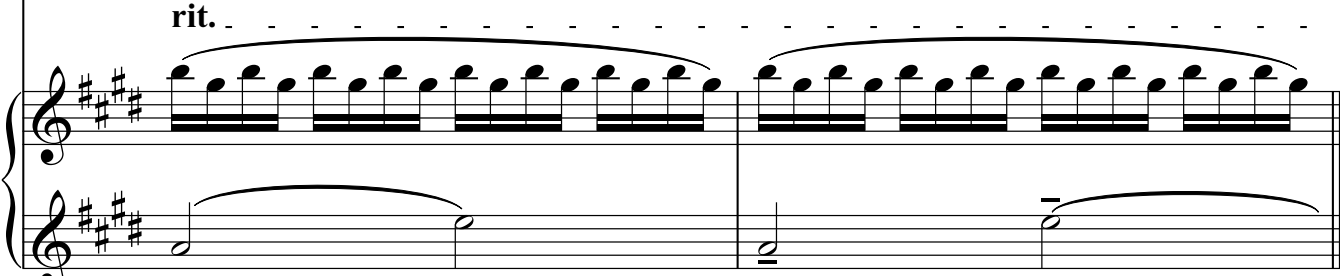
Pno. 

Detailed description: This system contains measures 84 and 85. The vocal line (O.) has a whole rest in measure 84 and begins in measure 85 with a quarter note on G5, followed by eighth notes A5 and B5. The lyrics are "I'd like to". The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with the same arpeggiated pattern in the right hand and bass line in the left hand.

86

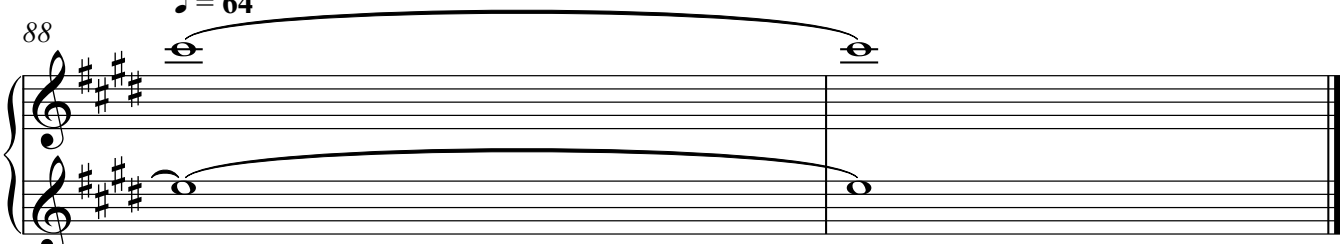
O.  try a - gain.

rit.

Pno. 

Detailed description: This system contains measures 86 and 87. The vocal line (O.) begins in measure 86 with a quarter note on G5, followed by eighth notes A5 and B5, and ends in measure 87 with a whole note on G5. The lyrics are "try a - gain." Above the vocal line, the marking "rit." is written above a dashed line. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) continues with the arpeggiated pattern, but the left hand has a whole note chord in measure 87.

88

Pno.  $\text{♩} = 64$

Detailed description: This system contains measure 88. The piano accompaniment (Pno.) features a long, sweeping melodic line across both staves, starting with a half note on G5 and ending with a half note on G5. Above the staff, the tempo marking "♩ = 64" is indicated.

SCENE IV: WITH MYSELF, I CAN

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca

AUTUMN lets his hand holding the letter drop to his side. He catches his breath, still crying, only slightly now. He breathes, slowly regaining his composure. This is a defining moment for him and he knows it. Do you crack or do you change, *AUTUMN*?

Autumn

The Eyes

The Banshee

Piano

2

$\text{♩} = 60$ soft, pensive, supportive

A.

T.E.

T.B.

$\text{♩} = 60$ soft, pensive, supportive

Pno.

pp

p

legato, pedal freely

2

♩ = 130 innocent, ready for positive change

p

8

A. Try ___ a- gain. ___ Try ___ a- gain. ___ Can I

T.E.

T.B.

Pno.

AUTUMN is cutoff as
THE VOID CHORUS makes their
 presence known, as always.

trying to reaffirm himself

16

mp *p* *mp*

A. try ___ a-gain? ___ Can I > try ___ a-gain? ___

T.E. aggressive No.

T.B. aggressive No.

Pno. *fsub.* *mpsub.*

He gives himself permission. 3

pushing himself to diminish the negative self-talk

rit.

♩ = 100

mf

fsub.

24

A.

T.E.

T.B.

Pno.

affirming, with pressure

mf

fsub.

31

♩ = 150

A.

T.E.

T.B.

Pno.

heavy pedal; percussive like a heartbeat

37 *mf* *mp* *mf*

A. fore: _____ left the door _____ a - jar _____

Pno.

melodic, lyrical,
still with a heartbeat

42

A. _____ in hopes that one day I'd walk through _____

Pno.

47 *f* *mp* *mfsub.* *f*

A. _____ it, _____ and I did, _____ my - self:

Pno. *mpsub.*

52

mf

A. *8* pushed it o - pen, broke it down. took those

Pno. *f*

57

*p*sub. *mp* *mf*sub.

A. *8* mo - ments a - head of me and spoke

Pno. *p*sub. *mf* *p*sub.

62

f

mp

*mf*sub.

A. *8*

Pno. *f* *mp* *mf*sub.

67

A.

Pno.

fsub. < *ff* > *mf* *fsub.*

Note: the "serve" of "deserve" should land on the downbeat of mm. 75; this is a strong moment for *AUTUMN* as he finally, literally speaks.

rit. ♩ = 110

72

A.

just like I fucking deserve!

Pno.

rit. ♩ = 110

awash in pure joy; self-loving, bright and commanding

77

A.

No need for a se - cond be - fore I wake

Pno.

ff ♩ = 154

ffsub.

pedal freely

83 *mf* *f*

A. up a-gain, for I will wake up a-gain_ which is re-so -lu -tion e -

Pno.

88 *psub.* *mf* *p* *mpsub.*

A. nough, e - nough!

Pno.

93 *mf* *fsub.*

A. Sad_ songs on-ly e-ver there

Pno.

98

A.

8

when the rain comes a-gain and it's o-kay for it to

Pno.

103

A.

8

pour a-gain be-cause I'll have shel-ter and

Pno.

107

A.

8

food and a home in my-self,

Pno.

112 *p* *mp* *p* *mp*

A. *8*
bread to eat, food for me, just for

Pno.

*p*_{sub.} *mp* *p*_{sub.} *mp*

117 *mf* *mp*_{sub.} *f* *mf*

A. *8*
me, just like I de - serve

Pno.

f *mf*_{sub.}

121 *mp*

A. *8*
be-cause I'll say it. I'll talk. I'll

Pno.

*p*_{sub.}

126 *mf*

A.

talk be-cause I want to, be-cause I want to. I

Pno.

131 *f* confident, self-affirmed

A.

want to speak!

Pno. *f*

8vb

136

A.

no mat-ter if the

Pno.

(8)

141

A. *8* sun- light, _____ it hurts my eyes. _____

Pno.

146

A. *8* *His attention turns to his curtains.* The sun - light, _____ it *haunted, but with confidence unwavering*

Pno.

151

A. *8* hurts my eyes. _____

Pno.

156 *p* innocent, eager

A. *8* The sun - light, it hurts my

Pno. *psub.*

161 *mf* *mp* *p*

A. *8* eyes. The

Pno. *mf*

AUTUMN tears down his first curtain.
positively motivated, intentional

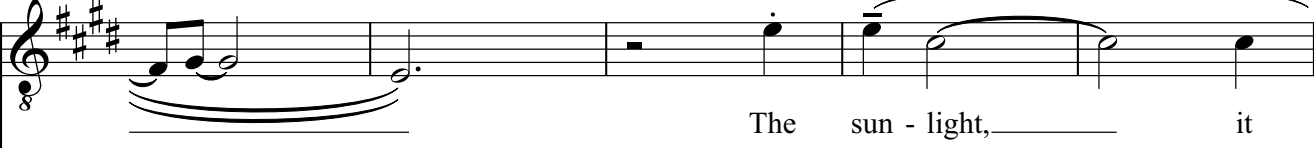
165 *8* sun - light, it hurts my eyes.


Pno. *psub.*

AUTUMN tears down
his second curtain.


13


170 *mf* *mp* *mf*

A. 

Pno. 

175

A. 

Pno. 

AUTUMN tears down his third and last curtain.
Tears stream down his face, but not ones miserable.
Strong. Strength, finally, from deep down where it's
always been. The sunlight is no longer abrasive. It
never was. It's a friend. It's always been.

180

A. 

Pno. 

AUTUMN crosses downstage, close to the audience. He stands almost confidently, almost there.

14

rit.

ff

185

A.

eyes!

Pno.

rit.

*p*sub.

AUTUMN holds his curtains close to his chest. They trail beside and behind him, all that darkness now torn from the window. The sunlight starts to peek through.

$\text{♩} = 52$

a deep inhale - the deepest of all;
you can breathe, finally

189

A.

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 52$

ff

AUTUMN takes a long moment to collect himself. He stares down at his arms draped in curtains. Black. Empty. Reminders of what almost was - how suffocated he felt. No breath, no life. Do you crack or do you change, *AUTUMN*?

194

A.

Pno.

AUTUMN throws down his curtains, all that exhaustion, that fear, that pain, those thoughts, his anger now flung and fallen on the floor. All that exhaustion no more, not in this moment - no longer himself alone. Confident, assured, ready.

15

195

A.

Pno.

AUTUMN takes a hard look at the curtains thrown upon the floor - a thoughtful one. Suddenly, he recalls that **OLIVIA** wants to try again. He thinks to himself for a moment - just a moment - and considers whether or not he is worth the effort, the time, the work. "Yes," he thinks. For once in his life he thinks, "yes. I am." For himself, he is good enough. For himself, he can try. With himself, for himself, he can grow. He eagerly steps to his shut door and extends his hand to grab the handle, pausing for another moment. This is a big decision, **AUTUMN**. Are you sure you can do this? Are you sure you can withstand the strenuous weight of it all, living? With yourself? With everyone else waiting? Can you handle this? Are you ready to feel the sunlight on your face?

He grabs the doorknob firmly, confidently, and pushes it open, not forcing it, not imposing himself upon it, not aggressively breaking it down - just a gentle push. He sees the sunlight trickle in and turns to watch how it dances on his black curtains. He smiles for a moment and thinks:

*I am. I can.
I changed.*

AUTUMN turns back to face the sunlight, beaming now. He crosses through the doorway - the threshold between his past and his future - and closes the door behind him. His room is left empty.

We can try again, always. As many times as we want, we can try again. At your pace, when you're ready, when your bones shift and set beneath the skin, try again. You are worth that. You always have been. You always will be worth the effort, the time, the work, for yourself.

I love you.

UCR ARTS
3824 Main Street
Riverside, CA 92501

Thursday, May 12th
7:00PM

*an operatic exploration of
mental health and wellness –
for you,
my friends –
only ever wellness to you*

starring

Elias Berezin
Emily Kerrigan
Andi Dana
Mia Cancio
Paul Reed

with our featured pianist
Jonathan Keplinger

SCHISM

an opera

joseph-nathaniel cuenca
librettist and composer

CONTENT WARNING

SCHISM elaborates heavily upon themes of mental illness, suicide, emotional trauma, alcoholism, and related subject matter. There are two ten-minute intermissions scheduled between these three acts, and I encourage you to use these moments to breathe, drink water, step outside, or engage in any healthy coping mechanism(s) for a moment if the material becomes emotionally overwhelming. I value the mental health of you all, my friends in wellness, and it is important to me that everyone feels safe, heard, and respected throughout this process of creating, promoting, and discussing advocacy art.

If you are experiencing any emotional distress, I encourage you to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1 (800) – 273 – 8255; or text HOME to 741741 to communicate with a crisis counselor at the Crisis Text Line.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I: WHAT WE SEEK IN THE LIGHT

The Void Chorus flanks Autumn’s bed, their words haunting his dreams. Autumn awakes from his deep slumber and checks his phone after hearing a notification blare from it. Olivia, his partner, addresses his absence as she’s been awaiting his arrival at their frequented coffee shop for a birthday celebration held in his honor. Autumn guiltily meets her there and apologizes, but Olivia takes accountability for her passive-aggressiveness. She gives him a watercolor portrait of himself and he sits in those good feelings, crying – that is, before he catches the invasive stares of other coffee shop-goers. He quickly recoils and Olivia is left with nothing. She goes to therapy and speaks about the experience with Dr. Langford, who warmly reassures her that what she’s feeling is valid. She works through the situation and resolvedly leaves the session to greet Autumn who is waiting for her at the bench outside the office. They share a warm moment, but it is interrupted by mention of an undisclosed trauma...

intermission (10 minutes)

ACT II: WHAT WE FIND IN THE DARK

Autumn experiences a recurring nightmare associated with his undisclosed trauma and awakes, terrified. Olivia is startled awake and consoles him, acting as an anchor of support for him. She gently but forwardly suggests therapy and, though he is still uncertain about it after years of experiencing mental health stigma, he agrees to try. After scheduling an appointment, Autumn meets with Dr. Langford – warmth, again. They gently ease into the first session, but as the conversation begins to drift toward family history, The Void Chorus enters and negatively affects the space. Autumn experiences a panic attack and rushes out of the facility, running into Olivia, who sits on the same bench happily waiting for him. She notices his distress and urges him to communicate, which he does – an undisclosed trauma no longer with heavy consequences...

intermission (10 minutes)

ACT III: WHAT WE DO NOW WITH WHAT WE KNOW

The Void Chorus presents Autumn to the audience post-suicide attempt. Autumn laments, his shame and embarrassment consuming him; something, though, sits just beneath the surface of his skin – something bright, something hopeful. Another therapy session, this one a bit more solemn between Dr. Langford and Olivia. They discuss the abandonment Olivia experienced the day of Autumn’s leave and Dr. Langford offers a form of assistance – letter-writing. Olivia takes this advice and leaves her therapy session somewhat resolved, but not completely. A new day, Autumn sits at his sister’s grave and reads her suicide letter aloud. He makes peace with this trauma and attempts to resolve his disconnect with Olivia, only to be interrupted by The Void Chorus yet again. Autumn has a big decision to make. Do you crack or do you change, Autumn?

end

BIOGRAPHIES



Elias Berezin

Autumn

Elias Berezin is a California native. The 2021-22 season sees company and role debuts with Pacific Lyric Association as both Eisenstein and Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus* and a return to Guild Opera for role debuts as Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* and Borsa in *Rigoletto*. An active proponent of new music, Berezin creates two leading roles as Autumn in Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca's *SCHISM* at UCR Arts, and The Inventor in Ian Dicke's *ROMAN* with Synchrony at Pasadena's Boston Court Theater. Recent concert performances include recorded recital appearances with the Verdi Chorus filmed during the pandemic and the tenor solos in Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and Haydn's *The Creation* with the Palisades

Symphony. Berezin has appeared as a young artist with Source Song Festival, Songfest, and the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, was a recent finalist in auditions for the GRAMMY-award winning group Chanticleer, and will complete master's work at the University of Redlands in August 2022. An experienced educator, Berezin maintains an active studio.



Emily Kerrigan
Olivia

Emily Kerrigan is a versatile operatic and vocal chamber performer noted for "the strength and cutting edge of her mezzo-soprano" (South Florida Classical Review). Previous roles include Nicklausse (*Les Contes D'Hoffmann*, Jacques Offenbach), Ruth (*Dark Sisters*, Nico Muhly), Nina (*Ainadamar*, Osvaldo Golivo), Julia Bertram (*Mansfield Park*, Jonathan Dove), and L'Espirit (*Cendrillon*, Massenet), as well as covers of Carmen (*Carmen*, Georges Bizet), Despina (*Così fan Tutte*, Mozart), and Jennie (*Down in the Valley*, Weill). Emily has sung with companies such as Pacific Opera Project, UCLA Opera, UCR Arts, Mission Opera, and Vox Visceralis Opera. Ms. Kerrigan made her Mozart *Requiem* debut as the Alto Soloist at the University of La-Crosse, and is an auxiliary member of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Tonality. She has been a studio artist at

the Aspen Music Festival Opera Theater Center, the Miami Music Festival, and has performed alongside "Seraphic Fire" in the AMF's Professional Choral Institute. Ms. Kerrigan holds her Bachelor of Arts in Music from the Herb Alpert School of Music (UCLA).



Andi Dana
Dr. Langford

Andi Dana (they/them) is a singer and voice teacher seen performing regularly in the local opera scene, with companies including: Independent Opera Company (*Don Giovanni*, Leporello; *The Snow Maiden*, Bermyata), Guild Opera Company (*La Bohème*, Colline; *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Bartolo), and Lyric Opera of Orange County (*Amahl and the Night Visitors*, The Page). In 2020, Andi focused on their teaching work, creating the Empowered Identity Voice Studio to address vocal discomfort and dysphoria. In an effort to start conversations about how we can better understand our own voices, Andi seeks to bring one's identity into greater alignment with their speaking and/or singing voice. Future engagements for Andi include Mesopotamian

Opera's *The Tree* later in May, followed by Lyric Opera of Orange County's production of *Carmen* in June. For more about Andi, visit <http://empoweredidentityvoicestudio.com/>



Mia Cancio
The Void Chorus Member – The Banshee

Mia Cancio is a student at UC Riverside pursuing a B.S. in Biology with a minor in Creative Writing and a poetry emphasis. She has been in over 13 musical productions around the Inland Empire, most notably as Marcy in the *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, Serena in *Legally Blonde*, and ensemble in *West Side Story*. This past year, Mia has ventured into film and will be featured in two music videos, one of which is produced by Grammy-nominated Michael Kiwanuka. In her free time, she produces original music, cooks pasta, and cares for her baby kitten, Mellu. Mia would like to thank Joseph-Nathaniel for entrusting her with his art, and her partner Umair for encouraging her to pursue her passions.



Paul Reed
The Void Chorus Member – The Eyes

Paul Chesley Reed has more than 45 years of performance and production experience throughout the Inland Empire. Paul has been both featured and ensemble performer in shows like *Camelot*, *Hello Dolly*, *Shenandoah*, *Kismet*, and *Jesus Christ Super Star*. Two of his favorite roles were the Russian Tenor in *Fiddler on the Roof* and George Banks in *Mary Poppins*. Paul has also served as an artistic director, director, conductor, musical director for several theatrical companies and schools in the Inland Empire. In addition to his theatrical endeavors, Paul is a teaching pastor and spiritual counselor. Paul feels a deep connection with this production of *Schism*. He is grateful to be a part of this opera, the poignant story it tells and the important message it shares.



Jonathan Keplinger
Pianist

Accomplished collaborative pianist Jonathan Keplinger is a multifaceted performer and talented vocal coach who serves as full-time staff collaborative pianist, coach, and recital coordinator for UCR's Department of Music. As a devotee of opera and vocal literature, Jonathan has been pianist for full productions of *Die Fledermaus*, *Aïda*, *La cenerentola*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Suor Angelica*, *Viva la mamma!*, *Into the Woods*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *A Grand Night for Singing*, and *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, among others. As an advocate for living composers, he also served as music director for Everyday Opera's premier performance of Glenn Winters' *Katie Luther: The Opera* in 2014, and collaborates yearly with UCR professor Dr. Dana Kaufman's composition students to perform newly

written micro-operas. Concerts and recitals of operatic repertoire with singers of all types are a staple of his performance calendar. A graduate of the University of New Mexico (M.M. - Collaborative Piano) and Washington Adventist University (B.M. - Piano), he studied with respected chamber musicians Pamela Viktoria Pyle at the graduate level and Dr. Daniel Lau as an undergraduate; he also studied graduate singer's diction with Dr. Michael Hix. Jonathan performs regularly with students, professionals, singers, and instrumentalists, keeping a lively schedule of recitals and concerts throughout the Inland Empire. As a chamber musician, Jonathan won first prize in the 2013 Maryland State Music Teachers Association Chamber Music Competition as part of a tenor/piano duo, and twice was selected to participate in the New Mexico Chamber Music Festival. Jonathan also collaborates regularly with Repertory Opera Company in Pomona, has served as pianist and coach for numerous productions with the opera studio at La Sierra University, and is in his fifth season as pianist for the Moreno Valley Master Chorale. When not accompanying, coaching, or performing, Jonathan enjoys spending time with his wife and two children, blogging about death metal, cheering on his Detroit sports teams, and playing video games. He is delighted and proud to be a part of bringing Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca's moving work to life here today.



Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca
librettist and composer

Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca is pursuing his Bachelor of Arts in Music (Composition Track) with a minor in Creative Writing at University of California, Riverside (UCR). He transferred into UCR from Riverside City College (RCC) at the start of the pandemic in 2020 and has since written for notable performers and ensembles such as Wesley Sumpter of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Orlando Cela and Wei Zhao of Duo Zonda, and the esteemed Brightwork ensemble, among others. In addition, Joseph-Nathaniel is a recipient of the Presser Award (awarded by UCR's Music Department), the Honors Excellence in Research Scholarship (awarded by UCR's University Honors Program), and the Chancellor's Research Fellowship (awarded by UCR's Student Engagement Program); all of these funds have been used to finance this opera, *SCHISM*. In addition, he serves as a member of LA Opera's College Advisory Committee, a UCR University Honors Outreach Leader, and is a Chancellor's Research Fellow. Joseph-Nathaniel Cuenca's work seeks to impact the lives of people who are part of

underprivileged, disenfranchised, and disproportionately affected communities, as he grew up in a lower-middle class socioeconomic background and wants to use his experience to advocate for change. He wants to use music as a way of overcoming cultural barriers, communicating important (but often-disregarded) topics such as mental illness, and advocating for societal reform and accessibility to music for all. Joseph-Nathaniel is hoping that *SCHISM* marks the start of a new trajectory for opera and music in general.

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...

Chancellor's Research Fellowship

University Honors Program

Department of Music at University of California, Riverside

...

*thank you to all my family, friends, and colleagues who
supported me throughout this process*

*i am forever indebted to you,
always*

POST-PERFORMANCE RESOURCES

On-Campus (University of California, Riverside)

- I. **CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services)**; provides free services for all registered UCR students, including individual and group counseling, psychiatry referrals, crisis consultation, and psychoeducational programs.
Call (951) – 827 – 5531 or visit <https://counseling.ucr.edu/>

Off-Campus (surrounding Riverside area)

Alcohol and Narcotics Supports

- I. **Alcoholics Anonymous**: a community of people working together to solve their drinking problems and achieve sobriety. Review information and resources, or locate support Groups at <https://www.aa.org/>
- II. **Narcotics Anonymous**: a community of people who are in recovery from addiction and who are working together to stay clean. Review information and resources, or locate a support Group at <https://na.org/>

Mental Health Resources

- I. **Up2Riverside Resources**: collated resources for easy access to local mental health and suicide prevention resources. Visit <https://up2riverside.org/resources/mental-health-local-resources/>
- II. **CARES Line**: (800) – 499 – 3008
Available 24/7 for screening and linkage to mental health and substance use programs, provided in English or Spanish.
- III. If you or someone you care about is in crisis and needs immediate help, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 1 (800) – 273 – 8255; or text HOME to 741741 (**Crisis Text Line**) for free, confidential support.
Visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- IV. **Find-Treatment.gov**: learn more about and locate treatment for substance use, addiction, and mental health. Call 1-800-622-4357 or visit <https://www.findtreatment.gov/>
- V. **NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)**: educates, advocates, listens, and leads to improve the lives of people with mental illness and their loved ones. Support and referrals are available in Riverside and surrounding areas.
<https://nami.org/Home> or [NAMI Western Riverside County](https://www.namiwesternriverside.org/)
<https://www.namiwesternriverside.org/>

UCR ARTS
3824 Main Street
Riverside, CA 92501

Thursday, May 12th
7:00PM

*an operatic exploration of
mental health and wellness –
for you,
my friends –
only ever wellness to you*

starring

Elias Berezin
Emily Kerrigan
Andi Dana
Mia Cancio
Paul Reed

with our featured pianist
Jonathan Keplinger

SCHISM

an opera

joseph-nathaniel cuenca
librettist and composer