

In the Key of Dee

A play by
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Original Music by
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CHARACTERS

MYLES WINTER, fifteen

A musical prodigy; extremely accomplished playing piano and violin, only son of Aaron and Dee Winter.

AARON WINTER, early fifties

Married to Dee Winter. A high school music teacher whose passion for music is only exceeded by his love for his wife and son.

DEE WINTER, late forties

A beautiful and extremely talented performer. Intensely devoted to her family and her career.

ANNIE SIMMS, early fifties

Dee's long-time manager and friend; heavy-set, funny, warm and gregarious.

TOBIAS BUTLER, late fifties

A tall, striking and physically imposing high school voice teacher.

DANIEL/TIM GROVE, late forties

Dee's bass player/ A drifter.

SETTING

Old Saybrook, CT

November, 2000

ACT 1

SCENE 1

It's four o'clock on a rainy November afternoon in the modestly appointed Winter household. There's an open staircase with a wooden railing leading to a master bedroom at the top of the landing. Both the doorway leading into the bedroom and the bedroom wall facing the audience are imaginary in order to clearly see inside the room.

At the bottom of the stairs, center-stage, is an extremely large bay window offering a generous view of trees and brush along the banks of the Connecticut River.

There's a baby grand piano in a living area home to wood-paneled walls, built-in shelves, a couch and high-back chair.

The piano has charm but has a little wear and tear on it, likely having been passed down from another generation.

Resting on music stands next to the piano is a flute and a violin. A black sports jacket rests over the arm of the couch.

On the first floor directly below the bedroom, stage left, is the kitchen. There's a doorway that leads into the kitchen, however, the wall separating the kitchen from the living area is imaginary.

Aaron, fashionably dressed, is tying his tie in front of a bedroom mirror.

Myles, fresh from a shower, is half-dressed in slacks and a tee-shirt. He's in front of the bay window, staring out at the rain.

(CONTINUED)

After a few moments, he moves over to the stairs and calls up to the bedroom.

Dad? MYLES

Yes? AARON

You coming? MYLES

Be right there. AARON

C'mon, hurry. MYLES

Aaron comes down the stairs with the assistance of a cane.

Any faster and I'll fall. AARON

Over here. MYLES

What is it, Myles? Everything all right? AARON

Yes, fine. MYLES

You know you can tell me anything, son, even if you know I won't like it. I've always been fair. AARON

It's nothing to worry about. MYLES

I'm not worried, just lowering my expectations. Not that you should, mind you. Not at your age. Should I stand or sit? AARON

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

Most of the time I'm standing, I'm thinking about the satisfaction of sitting. No, not the couch.

AARON

What's wrong with the couch?

MYLES

It's like watching a movie in the last row.

AARON

Ah, a clue. You're going to play something.

MYLES

No guessing. You may be disappointed.

AARON

Lowering my expectations as we speak.

Aaron moves to his chair.

AARON (CONT'D)

Better?

MYLES

Perfect.

Aaron sits in his chair.

AARON

Perfect is you in Carnegie Hall, playing to a packed house, with chilled shrimp and bottles of champagne waiting for guests in your dressing room. For now, it's just you and me and a bowl of peanuts in our living room.

MYLES

The only living room I've ever known.

AARON

You were too young to remember Norwich.

MYLES

I remember some things.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

You were two years old. What could you possibly remember?

MYLES

Sounds.

AARON

What kind of sounds?

MYLES

Barking, for one.

AARON

The next door neighbor's Border Collie. He was a handful.

MYLES

And sirens.

AARON

Sirens, sure. There was a fire station a few blocks away.

MYLES

And our cuckoo clock.

AARON

A wedding present from your grandparents. Unfortunately, I hadn't begun lowering my expectations back then.

MYLES

You have to admit, the clock is a bit dated.

AARON

It's a sentimental piece, and we'll just leave it at that.

Aaron stretches his knee.

MYLES

How's your knee?

AARON

Feeling better. The doctor finally has me driving again.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

A car or a golf ball?

AARON

Hopefully both very soon. Not going to let a torn tendon keep me down.

MYLES

No more jumping off tables at weddings for you.

AARON

Not to mention all the scotch that preceded the jumping. Is there a door open, Myles? I'm feeling a draft.

MYLES

No, it's just the storm reminding you to fix the bay window. The left side still doesn't close all the way.

AARON

I'll be sure to thank the sun if I ever see it again.

MYLES

Do you think they'll cancel the concert tonight?

AARON

Since you're the star attraction, I'm sure you'll be the first to know.

MYLES

I'm not the star. Just part of the event is all.

AARON

I really do admire your humility, Myles. I hope you're able to maintain it after you join the ranks of the rich and famous. Now, what's this all about?

MYLES picks up the large folder and hands it to his father.

MYLES

Happy Birthday.

AARON

It's not my birthday yet.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

Will be shortly.

AARON

In three weeks.

MYLES

Less than two. Eleven days to be precise.

AARON

Eleven? Seems being away from your mother has taken more of a mental toll on me than I thought.

MYLES

I miss her too, Dad.

AARON

The life of a performing artist does have its drawbacks, in many forms, including separation. Remember that as you make your way toward greatness. As gifted as you are, it won't be easy.

MYLES

Has she called today?

AARON

Not yet.

MYLES

Open it.

AARON

Now?

MYLES

It'll make sense in a minute.

Aaron opens the folder and takes out a number of pages of sheet music.

MYLES (CONT'D)

My latest composition.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

I see that.

(after humming a few notes)

A ballad?

MYLES

Yes.

AARON

And these?

MYLES

Arrangements.

AARON

When did you have time for homework?

MYLES

Actually, it was an assignment of sorts. I plan to submit the piece when I apply to music schools later this month.

AARON

How wonderful.

MYLES

I was hoping I could play it at the concert tonight. May I?

AARON

Why would you need my permission?

MYLES

Because if I do, I'll have to explain to the audience what inspired me to write it. Which means I'll be talking about you a lot, and I don't want to make you uneasy or uncomfortable in any way.

AARON

You sure you know who you're talking to?

MYLES

Aaron Bradley Winter.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

And do you know how many autographs I signed when I played for the Springfield Giants back in the day?

MYLES

In four seasons, you had more stolen bases than strings on a piano.

AARON

Two hundred and thirty-seven to be exact.

MYLES

If you hadn't broken your ankle, do you think you'd have played in the major leagues?

AARON

I really don't know.

MYLES

Does that make you sad?

AARON

Should it?

MYLES

Then you're happy with how everything turned out?

AARON

Well, I could always wish for a few more sunny days and three-day weekends - but most of all, a Bluthner for you to play on. Unfortunately, a high school music teacher's salary only goes so far. But if your mother keeps busy, I'm sure one will come sooner rather than later.

MYLES

I don't need one. This piano is just fine, thank you.

AARON

I'm sure your grandmother would be happy to hear that. This piano meant an awful lot to her.

MYLES

Promise me we'll never get rid of it.

AARON

I promise.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

Promise for mom, too.

AARON

I don't have to. She already did. To grandmother.

Myles jumps behind the piano and starts playing a few measures of jazz. In an instant we know how gifted he is.

AARON

I just had it tuned. How does it feel?

MYLES

Feels great. What am I playing?

AARON

Twelve bar... no, no... Sixteen bar blues.

MYLES

Good catch.

Myles segues into a few measures of classical.

MYLES (CONT'D)

And this?

AARON

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

MYLES

Title?

AARON

Rondo Alla Turca.

MYLES

Sonata?

AARON

Number 11 in A Major.

(CONTINUED)

Sure is. MYLES

Myles segues to an original piece; a rolling, upbeat melody.

Ah, it's about time you played this for me. AARON

Do you know it? MYLES

Of course I know it. AARON

I'm waiting. MYLES

The Mailer! AARON

Composer? MYLES

My son! AARON

Myles laughs. Aaron begins singing over the engaging melody.

AARON
(singing)
Pay homage to the Mailer.
Pay homage to his Light.
Delivering you things he's delivered to kings
He's the Mailer with mystical might!

The music ends.

AARON (CONT'D)
Bravo, Myles. Bravo. Promise me you'll finish that piece one day. I was born to play that part.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES
If only you could sing like mom.

AARON
Are you mocking me?

MYLES
Of course not. Not many can.

AARON
That's true.

MYLES
In fact, isn't that why you married her?

AARON
It did play a big part.

MYLES
Tell me again. How you met.

AARON
Again?

MYLES
I never get tired of hearing it.

AARON
You sure?

MYLES
You were living in New York, and you went to see a musical review off-Broadway.

AARON
I was seated in the rear of the house when a spotlight appeared over a woman standing in the middle of the stage wearing a silver and blue sequin dress. She sang a haunting and dramatic song about love and loss. And she connected to the words and music in such a way... it completely overwhelmed me. I watched her every move, hoping the song would never end. And when it did, all I could think about was how I was going to meet this woman. No matter how awkward I knew it would be, I had to try. Not knowing anything about her, I went home and wrote a letter. I enclosed a small photo of me and sent it to the venue, never expecting for one second she might receive it, much less respond. I received a call several nights later.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES
Hello, is this Aaron?

AARON
Yes?

MYLES
Hi, it's Dee.

AARON
Dee. Oh, my God, hello.

MYLES
Just Dee is fine.

AARON
I laughed and she laughed and before I knew it she had invited me to see her perform again as her guest. The anticipation of meeting her was beyond anything I ever felt before. The week went by in slow motion. I kept waiting for a cancelation call but it never came. When I got to the club, I was escorted to a seat she hand-picked for me. And when the lights went down, the most shocking thing occurred.

MYLES
I love this part.

Lights fade to black. A spotlight appears and falls over Dee, dripping with elegance, standing in front of a microphone. There's a piano (the same piano in the living room) positioned slightly behind her. Accompanying Dee is Daniel, an accomplished bass player.

DEE
Good evening, my name is Dee Dwyer. I'm so grateful for this audience, particularly on a cold and snowy December night like this. Even my fabulous bass player was able to make it. Thank you, Daniel.

Daniel waves to Dee.

DEE
I have to admit, I've been feeling a little blue lately so it's always nice to open mail and hear from someone who's seen a show. I was in my dressing room with my manager, Annie Simms, when a letter arrived from someone I didn't know.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEE (CONT'D)

It was a very nice letter that I was about to file away until Annie recognized the name of the sender. It happens that they were classmates in college. He loves the violin but also plays a little piano. That being the case, I'd like to invite him up here to play this first song with us. Would you please give a warm welcome to Mr. Aaron Winter.

Lights up in the living room on Aaron and Myles.

AARON

(To Myles)

I was absolutely horrified.

MYLES

Who wouldn't be?

DEE (CONT'D)

(Looking out into the audience)

Come on up, Aaron. Don't be shy.

Aaron picks up his sports jacket and slips it on, then makes his way over to Dee. Lights fade out on Myles on the couch. Dee reaches out to shake Aaron's hand.

DEE (CONT'D)

Dee Dwyer. Nice to meet you.

AARON

Hello. Aaron Winter. What are you doing?

DEE

My mother told me to never take a compliment for granted. You just may be short-changing yourself.

AARON

I'll have to remember that one. What are we playing? I'm totally unprepared.

DEE

You'll be fine. I have the sheet music all ready for you.

AARON

What if I'm terrible?

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Then this will be an extremely brief friendship.

AARON

You're honest. I like that.

DEE

Ready?

AARON

When you are.

Aaron begins to play. He's tentative to start but becomes more confident.

DEE (CONT'D)

(Singing)

I've always been too guarded and wary
To give someone my heart,
I never sought out love, nor thought it necessary
For me to play a part.

I've always been so careful, withdrawn
Romantically naïve,
That all turned in a heartbeat, the day you came along
And changed what I believe

Is this love, I'm certain I don't know
It appears to be a mystery,
And coupled with my history
It simply seems impossible for me to even guess
If this is love

It always seemed unlikely, absurd
That love would find me here,
Above the rising voices, I swear that's what I heard
And somehow you appear

How could I have found you, this way
Completely unprepared,
Am I wise to tempt fate's fortune, or should I walk away?
Content with the moments that we shared

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEE (CONT'D)

Should I stay or leave
 Take a chance and trust that it's not
 Make believe
 A dream that ends the moment I awake
 And I ache
 Still uncertain of the path that I should take

If this is love, I'm certain I don't know
 It appears to be a mystery,
 And coupled with my history
 It simply seems impossible for me to even guess

If this is love.
 I'm certain I don't know
 It appears to be a mystery
 And coupled with my history
 It simply seems impossible for me to even guess
 If this is love
 If this is love
 I'm certain I don't know
 If this is love.

*The song ends. Dee turns to recognize Aaron,
 who smiles sheepishly and waves to her.*

Lights fade to black on Aaron.

DEE (CONT'D)

(To Aaron)

Thank you, Aaron.

(To the audience)

Wonder if he's staying.

The lights on Dee and Daniel fade to black.

*Lights up on Myles as Aaron returns to the
 living room.*

MYLES

You really didn't know she was going to do that?

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Not an inkling.

MYLES

I forget. What happened after that?

AARON

When the show was over, we walked over to a restaurant across the street, sat by a wood-burning stove and talked for hours. Then I put her in a cab, went home and couldn't wait to see her again.

MYLES

Do you ever wonder?

AARON

About what?

MYLES

What life would be like without music?

AARON

I never really thought about it.

MYLES

What if there was no such thing as composers or musicians or concert halls? No instruments to play. No songs to sing or even singers to sing them. I'm mean, just think of it. If you never heard mom sing, I might never have been born. Maybe that's why I write and play so much. I don't ever want to take it for granted.

AARON (CONT'D)

What was it that Beethoven said? "I would rather write ten thousand notes...

MYLES

...than a single letter of the alphabet."

AARON

... than a single letter of the alphabet."

*

MYLES

Great minds think alike.

AARON

How about you display some of that greatness and play this for me now? Or should we wait until mom comes home?

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

She won't mind. I've written plenty of songs for her already.

AARON

Really?

MYLES

A few.

AARON

How many? Two? Three?

MYLES

Six if you count the poem I wrote music for.

AARON

Six? Well, I'm happy she inspires you so much.

MYLES

She sings and you teach. You both inspire me in different ways. Isn't that how it's supposed to be? Besides, I'm nearly sixteen. There's plenty of time to write more music for the both of you.

AARON

Fair enough. Any chance I can hear my song on the violin?

MYLES

That would be awkward since it's a ballad and I have to sing.

AARON

Yes, of course. But you'll be playing the violin at the recital?

MYLES

No, just the piano.

AARON

Myles, why? I thought you committed to playing both?

MYLES

That was never the plan.

AARON

You're an incredible violinist. You need to embrace that.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

I have, it's just --

AARON

Not as much as you should, and you know it. Be honest.

MYLES

Dad, I already told you. This recital is not the Myles Winter show.

AARON

Ok, fine.

MYLES

You're just saying that.

AARON

No, no, you're right. I just want you to -- Don't be afraid to be who you are, that's all. And that includes playing the violin whenever you have the opportunity to do so. Dream big, son.

MYLES

I will, Dad.

AARON

Good. Now. Where were we?

MYLES

Your song.

AARON

Right. The stage is yours.

MYLES

I want you to close your eyes. And think of the most beautiful dream you've ever dreamed.

Aaron closes his eyes. Myles steadies himself and prepares to play. Suddenly, he smashes down on the piano keyboard, making an excruciating sound that startles Aaron.

AARON

Jesus, Myles. Personal foul. Unnecessary roughness.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

Are you okay?

AARON

I will be in a minute. I'm sure the nightmares will linger.

Aaron pours himself a drink.

MYLES

I won't do it again.

AARON

Don't be offended. I'll need a promise.

MYLES

I promise.

(after Aaron sips his drink)

Better?

AARON

Getting there. Is there a title attached to that opening? I didn't see one.

MYLES

Yes, it's called --

AARON

Wait. Lemme guess. The Magnificent Aaron Winter.

MYLES

Please.

AARON (CONT'D)

Is that a no?

MYLES

Emphatic no.

AARON

How about... The Musical Maniac from Middlesex County?

MYLES

You're not very good at this, are you?

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Born in Old Saybrook. Crazy about music. That's a great title.

MYLES

You've haven't even heard it yet. How could you possibly guess?

AARON

Don't ask me to give away my secrets.

MYLES

Last try.

Myles plays a drum roll on the piano.

AARON (CONT'D)

My Father, My King!

The cuckoo clock engages and the wooden bird appears, bursting in and out of the clock three times. Myles laughs.

MYLES (CONT'D)

Perfect timing! That's cuckoo! Crazy!

AARON

Say it!

MYLES

What?

AARON

Say it!

MYLES

You don't have any 'say its' left.

AARON

I have one.

MYLES

I bent the knee three times already. I'm sure of it.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

I keep track of these things for exactly this reason.

MYLES

You used them up.

Aaron pulls a sheet of paper from under a cribbage board.

AARON

I have the score sheet right here. I won the cribbage championship seven games to five. Which means I wear the crown. I'm king.

MYLES

I'm not disputing your victory.

AARON

And as king, I'm awarded three 'say its' for my victory. This score sheet clearly shows I've only used two - one on November 6th and one on November 21st. Which means I have one left.

MYLES

Fine!

AARON

Then say it.

Myles dutifully kneels and bows his head.

MYLES

(in earnest)

Forgive me for speaking out of turn, sire.

Myles slowly stands.

MYLES (CONT'D)

Most ridiculous game you ever invented.

AARON

Myles! No one is allowed to speak after a 'say it' except the king. Minions remain silent until the king speaks first, you know this. I should penalize you and get to reuse my 'say it.'

(CONTINUED)

Myles glares at his father.

AARON (CONT'D)

Be that as it may, I am a wise and just king. Therefore, there will be no penalty. Let me know when you'd like a rematch.

MYLES

I'm done competing with you for the time being. You enjoy winning too much.

AARON

Myles. Rules are rules. That's all.

Myles turns to leave.

AARON

Wait. Where are you going?

MYLES

To get dressed for the recital.

AARON

What about my ballad?

MYLES

I don't feel like playing it just now.

AARON

Tonight then?

Myles heads around the corner and into his bedroom without answering, leaving Aaron alone in his chair.

AARON (CONT'D)

(to himself)

And you wonder why he hasn't written more songs for you.

There's a crack of thunder. Rain begins to pour outside. Aaron turns his attention to the window. Lights slowly fade to black.

--MUSIC BEGINS --

(CONTINUED)

A small spotlight appears, shining down like a ray of light through the dark clouds of an ongoing storm. The light falls directly on Myles and Aaron. Myles is playing the piano. Aaron is seated on the bench beside him, watching, listening.

The piano is positioned in such a way that Myles and Aaron are behind the cavity of the instrument and the keyboard cannot be seen. The purpose is to get a sense that the two are in the front seat of a car and the audience is looking through the front windshield.

Two small headlights appear - one on the left side of the piano and one on the right.

A fog rolls in.

We hear the sound of traffic -- cars speeding past the scene from both directions.

A train horn is heard off in the distance.

A flash of lightning briefly fills the room.

There's a rumble of thunder.

The sound of rain and traffic intensify.

There's another flash of lightning followed by the sound of an oncoming car blaring its horn defiantly. The stage goes dark and the music abruptly stops.

A beam of light rises over Myles' lifeless body slumped over the piano bench.

There are distant sounds of sirens as the rain continues to fall.

Flashing red lights appear as the sirens grow closer and the emergency vehicles approach the scene.

A second beam of light rises over Aaron laying on the ground a good distance away. He sees his son and calls out to him.

Myles!

AARON

Black out.

SCENE 2

Four years later. The living room is void of musical instruments. You have to look twice to notice that the piano is now tucked away in the corner of the kitchen with a number of cookbooks stacked neatly on top. Several photographs have been removed from the mantle and the cuckoo clock is gone, making the room appear substantially colder.

Dee is in the kitchen, pacing, trying to find something to do to pass the time. She rearranges some flowers in a vase, then straightens a dish filled with cupcakes. The doorbell rings, startling her. She rushes to the door.

Annie?

DEE

She opens the door and greets Annie who is dressed in a winter coat and hat, and carrying a bouquet of flowers.

(CONTINUED)

DEE (CONT'D)

Annie.

ANNIE

Dee.

The two embrace like two long-lost friends.

ANNIE

For you, darlin'.

She hands her the flowers.

DEE

Thank you. They're beautiful. I have the perfect vase, but first let me look at you. You look wonderful. You absolutely glow.

ANNIE

I've always loved the way you make me feel. Everyone feel.

ANNIE

I've missed you.

DEE

It's been way too long. Can you ever forgive me?

ANNIE

I'm just as much to blame for not calling.

They squeeze one another again before finally letting go.

DEE (CONT'D)

I can't thank you enough for coming. How was the trip?

Annie removes her coat and scarf. Dee hangs them over a coat rack.

ANNIE

Two and a half hours door to door. Directions were perfect.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

I'm sorry to put you out.

ANNIE

Don't be silly, I'll drive anywhere in the fall. Especially to Connecticut to see you. Doesn't Hepburn live out this way?

DEE

The other side of town. In Fenwick. Right on the water. It's beautiful there. Did you know she was born in Hartford, too?

ANNIE

I did not.

DEE

Both of us born in Hartford and now living in Old Saybrook. That so amuses me.

ANNIE

That's remarkable.

DEE

Hungry?

ANNIE

Nothin's changed. I'm always hungry.

DEE

I have cupcakes. Unless you need something more substantial.

ANNIE

Cupcakes will do me just fine. What kind?

DEE

Chocolate.

ANNIE

Just my luck. I only eat vanilla.

DEE

Oh.

ANNIE

Where's your sense of humor, girl? Do I look like someone who only eats vanilla?

(CONTINUED)

DEE

I thought you might be allergic or something.

ANNIE

Allergic to chocolate? Chocolate helped make me who I am - sweet and substantial.

She laughs and it's engaging.

DEE

That's what I get for not seeing you sooner.

ANNIE

How long has it been?

DEE

Nearly four years.

ANNIE

Dear Lord.

DEE

You're staying the night, aren't you?

ANNIE

Depends.

DEE

On what?

ANNIE

What's for dinner?

More laughter.

ANNIE

You forgot how funny I was.

DEE

That's impossible. Do you have a suitcase?

ANNIE

It's in the car.

(CONTINUED)

DEE
I'll ask Aaron to get it.

ANNIE
Is he home?

DEE
Not yet. He will be soon. Help yourself to the some cupcakes.

ANNIE
Thank you, I will.

DEE
Would you like something to drink? I have some champagne. Or would you prefer tea?
I have some steeping.

ANNIE
Too early for the bubbly, even for me. Tea is just fine.

ANNIE
These looks divine.

DEE
Tobias made them?

ANNIE
Tobias? Tobias Butler.

DEE
I don't know any other Tobias, do you?

ANNIE
How is he?

DEE
Doing well.

ANNIE
I'm glad to hear that.

Annie picks up a cupcake.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Be honest.

ANNIE

Have you ever known me not to be?

She takes a bite.

DEE

How is it?

ANNIE (CONT'D)

I just got sweeter.

Dee suddenly turns away to hide the tears.

ANNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, Dee-Dee. Don't you cry.

DEE

I'm sorry.

ANNIE

Don't you dare be.

DEE

I've laughed more in the last two minutes than I have in the last two years.

ANNIE

I understand.

DEE

I'll be fine.

ANNIE

As long as I'm here you have no choice.

DEE

I have so much to tell you. I could've mentioned some things when I called, but I needed to see you. I can't stop you from hanging up the phone, but I know you would never ever run out on me. I wouldn't blame you for a second if you did.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

I'm not going anywhere. So take a deep breath and remember who you're talkin' to.

DEE

You've known Aaron a long time. Long before I hired you as my manager and we started working together.

ANNIE

That man and I shared some silly times together, we sure did.

DEE

Well, Aaron is not the same man any more. The sheer trauma of losing Myles and feeling responsible has had deep consequences. He has a pretty significant form of post-traumatic stress disorder. He experiences bouts of amnesia. He'll remember some things and then - like a switch - he'll forget. In some cases he clearly doesn't want to remember, which is terribly unsettling. I'm not sure what he remembers about you.

ANNIE

Does he remember the accident?

DEE

Yes. He won't go near a car anymore so he rides his bike everywhere. He works on a golf course a few miles away. Cuts the grass, rakes the sand, cleans the carts. I've been trying to push him to start playing again but he's resisted. He'll stop and watch but only from a distance. Doesn't get close to anything or anyone anymore except Tobias.

ANNIE

Is Tobias still teaching at the high school where Aaron used to work?

DEE

He is.

ANNIE

Good for Tobias.

DEE

If they were good friends before, Tobias is like a brother to Aaron now. They'll ride bikes, go fishing, go hiking through Turtle Creek. Aaron still loves the outdoors except when it rains.

ANNIE

And you?

(CONTINUED)

DEE

I sell houses now.

ANNIE

When we parted ways professionally, I knew you stopped touring.

DEE

Stopped touring? No, you don't understand. I've pretty much stopped everything.

There's a commotion at the front door. Aaron enters, wearing a knitted hat and carrying a pizza box. He kicks at the base of the door, trying to get his shoes off before stepping inside. Dee comes out of the kitchen.

DEE (CONT'D)

Aaron?

AARON

I'm busy... with these stupid shoes.

DEE

You need to loosen your shoelaces first.

AARON

I tried already. Still won't come off.

DEE

Look. Your left shoe is still tied.

AARON

That's because there's a knot. Always a freaking knot.

DEE

Let me help you.

AARON

For the hundredth time.

While Dee unties the knot, Aaron sees Annie watching them.

(CONTINUED)

Did you wipe your shoes outside?

DEE

Why do you always ask me that?

AARON

Because you don't always do it.

DEE

I wiped them off. See for yourself.

AARON

Dee unties the knot.

There.

DEE

Thank you.

AARON

Aaron easily kicks off his shoe. After Dee closes the door...

Aaron, this is Annie.

DEE (CONT'D)

Your friend from New York?

AARON

That's right.

DEE

She came to see you.

AARON

Yes.

DEE

You told me that last night.

AARON

I did.

DEE

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

Nice to see you, Aaron.

DEE

Do you want to take off your hat in the house?

Aaron dutifully takes off his hat. Then puts down his box.

ANNIE

Thank you for having me.

AARON

Don't thank me. Dee's the one who invited you.

(to Dee)

Just for the night, right?

DEE

Just for the night, Aaron.

ANNIE

Be gone in the morning.

AARON

Okay.

DEE

How was work today?

AARON

Really good. I found more golf balls.

DEE

How many?

AARON

Eight. Seven are almost like new.

He takes out the balls from his pockets.

AARON (CONT'D)

(to Annie)

I work at a golf course.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

I heard. That's wonderful.

AARON

On my breaks I go looking for golf balls in the ponds or in the streams or in the woods. And then I wash them and sell them back to the people who play. A dollar a piece. Six for five dollars. I make a lot of extra money doing that.

ANNIE

I bet.

AARON

I won't be selling this one. You know whose ball this used to be?

ANNIE

No, who?

AARON

Jack Nicklaus.

ANNIE

Jack Nicklaus?

AARON

That's right.

DEE

Aaron, we already talked about this. It could have been somebody who looked like him.

AARON

No, it was Jack Nicklaus. I saw him on the seventh tee.

ANNIE

Really?

AARON

You don't believe me? Just look at the ball.

He shows her the ball.

AARON

What's this a picture of?

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

Looks like a bear.

AARON

It is a bear. And what color is the bear?

ANNIE

Yellow.

AARON

Gold. It's a golden bear. That's his nickname, The Golden Bear. And what's this first initial right here?

He shows her the ball again.

ANNIE

J.

AARON

J for Jack. And what's this initial?

He shows her the ball again.

ANNIE

N.

AARON

N for Nicklaus. Now do you believe me?

ANNIE

I do.

AARON

I'm not making it up.

DEE

Okay, Aaron, we believe you.

AARON

You didn't before. You thought I was lying.

DEE

Not lying. Mistaken. There's a difference.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
I know what I saw. I'm sure of it.

DEE
You don't have to raise your voice.

AARON
I'm just making a point. It was Jack Nicklaus.

DEE
Okay.

AARON
Then say it.

DEE
It was Jack --

AARON
Wait. Say it. I've heard that before.

DEE
It used to be a game you played.

AARON
What game?

DEE
Cribbage.

AARON
Cribbage?

DEE
Yes, Cribbage, remember?

AARON
I don't.

DEE
You played with --

(CONTINUED)

Never mind. AARON

Okay. DEE

Don't tell me. AARON

I won't. DEE

Dee notices the pizza box.

Pizza again? DEE

I was hungry so I stopped by Charlie's and got some on the way home. Want some? AARON

No, thank you. DEE

Would you like a piece? It's very good. AARON
(to Annie)

Thank you, Aaron. ANNIE

Sure. AARON

Should we eat in the kitchen? ANNIE

I don't go in the kitchen. AARON

I see. ANNIE

(CONTINUED)

Ever. AARON

That's not true. You help me with the groceries. DEE

Nearly ever. AARON

That's fine. ANNIE

You didn't tell her? AARON

Not yet. DEE

What about the house rules? Does she know about the house rules? AARON

She just arrived, Aaron DEE

I'll tell her. AARON

How about you let me? DEE

How about we both tell her? You tell her the first part and I'll tell her the rest. AARON

Sounds like a great idea. What's the first part, Dee? ANNIE

There's no music allowed in the house. No playing, no singing, or listening. Music is strictly forbidden. DEE

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Even on TV. So if you want to watch TV, you can go to Charlie's down the street. You could get a slice and watch TV there. Now, if you wanna go to Charlie's and you don't want to watch TV, you can use the drive-thru like I do. It's up to you.

ANNIE

I'll keep that in mind.

DEE

Would you like something to drink?

AARON

Yeah, a beer.

DEE

No beer.

AARON

I was just joking.

(To Annie)

I can't drink alcohol yet. Doctor's orders. Doctor Dee.

DEE

Water, juice or tea?

AARON

With pizza?

DEE

Something to drink, Annie?

ANNIE

I'm good with tea.

AARON

Do we have lemonade?

DEE

I think so. Let me check.

Dee heads into the kitchen. Aaron opens the box of pizza and starts eating. Annie sits beside Aaron.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

How is it?

AARON

Really good. Really cheesy. I love cheese, don't you?

ANNIE

Who doesn't?

AARON

Charlie makes the best. And he makes the best sauce. He calls it gravy. I keep telling him, it's not gravy, it's sauce. Gravy is something you pour over mashed potatoes or turkey or stuffing, but he won't listen. He says he's from Italy and they call it gravy. Those Italians. They know how to make food, they just don't know what to call it.

ANNIE

I love Italian food.

AARON

You do?

ANNIE

Especially pizza.

AARON

You like pizza?

ANNIE

Like the kind you're eating. Charlie's pizza.

Annie watches Aaron consume the last bite.

AARON

Would you like a slice?

ANNIE

There's nothing left.

AARON (CONT'D)

I can ride over to Charlie's and get you one.

ANNIE

No, no.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

It's okay. I love to ride my bike.

Dee returns with hot tea and water.

DEE

Where you off to?

Aaron pockets a few golf balls and takes a sip of the water.

AARON

Back to Charlie's. She wants a slice.

ANNIE

No, please. I don't want you carrying hot pizza on a bike.

AARON

I'm not gonna carry it, silly. There's a basket on top of my handlebars.

DEE

He'll be fine.

ANNIE

At least let me pay for it.

AARON

Pay for it? Charlie's a golfer. I just give him a few golf balls.

Annie laughs.

AARON

You're Annie!

ANNIE

Yes.

AARON

I remember.

DEE

Remember what, Aaron?

(CONTINUED)

Her laugh.

AARON

You do?

ANNIE

I think so. Do it again.

AARON

Annie laughs.

Yes, I know you.

AARON

We've known each other a long time.

ANNIE

How long?

AARON

Since college.

ANNIE

When was that?

AARON

Twenty-six years ago.

ANNIE

Twenty-six?

AARON

Yes.

ANNIE

Then... you knew my boy?

AARON

I knew him well.

ANNIE

I see. Can I ask you something?

AARON

(CONTINUED)

Of course. ANNIE

Are you married? AARON

No. ANNIE

Why not? AARON

Aaron, that's extremely personal. DEE

She said I could ask. AARON

It's fine, Dee. ANNIE

See? AARON

To be completely honest with you, Aaron, no one's ever asked. Well, someone almost did. At least I think so. But all the attention I give my clients seems to get in the way of that. ANNIE

You never know. Maybe someone will ask you again some day. AARON

And God help the man who finally does. ANNIE

They laugh.

What's your last name, Annie? AARON

Simms. ANNIE

Simms. AARON

(CONTINUED)

AARON
Annie Simms.

ANNIE
That's right.

DEE
That's wonderful, Aaron.

ANNIE
Maybe in time, you'll remember other things about me. Only you have to promise to keep that between us.

AARON
Don't worry. I'm a good secret-keeper.

ANNIE
I know.

Aaron begins to put on his shoes.

DEE
Can you help with Annie's suitcase?

AARON
Sure.

DEE
Never mind. I'll get it.

AARON
I can get it. Where is it?

DEE
In her car.

AARON
Oh.

ANNIE
We can manage.

(CONTINUED)

Okay. Be back soon.

AARON

He opens the door, then gestures to Dee, waving her over. He whispers something in her ear and waits for her to respond. Dee nods and Aaron exits. Dee turns to Annie.

What'd he say?

ANNIE

You can stay longer than tomorrow morning if you like.

DEE

Annie's laughter fills the room. Lights fade to black.

SCENE 3

Lights up on the Winter residence. No one is present. The door opens and again Aaron tries to kick off his shoes unsuccessfully.

Dee?

AARON
(Calling out)

These damn knots.

(To himself)

Tobias, help.

(To Tobias)

Tobias enters holding a pizza box. He's dressed rather nicely for a Saturday afternoon.

Do it yourself.

TOBIAS

I can't.

AARON

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

Then leave'm on.

AARON

Can't you read the sign on the door? "Please remove any dirty shoes before entering."

TOBIAS

Are yours dirty?

AARON

Yes, they're muddy from work.

TOBIAS

Does it say I have to help you? Is that a no?

AARON

Dee, I'm back...

(to himself)

... with another stupid ass knot in my shoe.

Aaron kicks the door in frustration and bends over in pain.

AARON (CONT'D)

Ow!

TOBIAS

(calmly)

Don't kick the door.

Tobias goes into the kitchen and places the pizza on the counter. He spots the dish of cupcakes, takes one, peels off the wrapper, then consumes it in one bite.

AARON

Tobias! Get out of the kitchen

TOBIAS

I'm putting the pizza down.

AARON

There's a table right here in the living room.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

Food belongs in the kitchen. If you don't want to come in, that's up to you.

AARON

You know why I don't.

TOBIAS

Because there's a piano in here.

Aaron gives up trying to take off his shoe. He has one shoe off and one shoe on as he goes to confront Tobias.

AARON

That's right. I can't stand seeing it.

TOBIAS

Why is that?

AARON

Because.

TOBIAS

Because is not an answer.

AARON

Because it hurts.

TOBIAS

Like what?

AARON

Whaddaya mean?

TOBIAS

Hurts like what? A bee sting? A broken ankle?

AARON

Not like that. You know what I'm trying to say.

TOBIAS

I want you to tell me.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

It just hurts, Tobias. Why can't you be okay with that?

TOBIAS

Calm down. I'm not trying to upset you. I just want you to explain to me what you're feeling.

AARON

He's not here anymore, alright?

TOBIAS

Who's not here?

AARON

You know who. He's gone.

TOBIAS

Who's gone?

AARON

What do you keep asking me that? My son. My only son.

TOBIAS

What's his name?

Aaron doesn't answer.

TOBIAS (CONT'D)

Can't say or won't say? There's a difference.

AARON

Why are you doing this? You're my friend.

TOBIAS

And I'll never stop being a friend. But you have to start sometime.

AARON

Start what?

TOBIAS

Living.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

What? I don't look alive to you?

TOBIAS

It's time now. You have to start changing your ways.

AARON

You mean to how I used to be?

TOBIAS

Not necessarily.

AARON

Good, cause I don't remember exactly how I was.

TOBIAS

You were a good man. Just like you are now.

AARON

You're so damn confusing.

TOBIAS

How?

AARON

If I was a good man before, and I'm a good man now, what the hell is there to change?

TOBIAS

Goodness doesn't mean perfection. We all have flaws no matter how well-meaning we are.

AARON

You're making me crazy talking like this.

TOBIAS

Then let's just slow down.

AARON

You slow down.

TOBIAS

Aaron.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
You said I wasn't living.

TOBIAS
I didn't say that.

AARON
Excuse me. I just heard you say it.

TOBIAS
I said you needed to change your ways and start living the right way. You don't have to remember anything before today in order to do that.

*Dee and Annie enter but stay by the door,
watching the scene unfold.*

AARON
So what's the right way, Mr. Perfect?

TOBIAS
Like I said, nobody's perfect.

AARON
Okay, what's the right way, Mister More Perfect Than Me?

TOBIAS
You don't like the kitchen.

AARON
I don't.

TOBIAS
Because there's a piano in there.

AARON
Yes. I said that. I'm glad you were listening.

TOBIAS
Who did it belong to?

AARON
I told you, for chrissakes. My son.

(CONTINUED)

What's his name? TOBIAS

I can't say his name. AARON

Can't say or won't say? TOBIAS

Won't say! AARON

You call that living? TOBIAS

No answer.

You want something to eat? TOBIAS (CONT'D)

No! AARON

Something to drink? TOBIAS

No! AARON

I'll be in the kitchen if you need me. TOBIAS

Tobias turns and walks away. Just before he steps into the kitchen...

AARON
Myles! His name was Myles! And I killed him! You happy now?

Dee goes to him.

Aaron, no. DEE

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS
You didn't kill him.

AARON
Of course I did.

TOBIAS
It was an accident.

DEE
A terrible accident. That's all.

AARON
It was all my fault.

TOBIAS
That's not true.

AARON
I wasn't supposed to be driving! The doctor didn't okay it! You know it, I know it, everyone knows it!

TOBIAS
You didn't do it on purpose is what we're trying to say.

AARON
Does it really matter?

DEE
Yes, that matters.

AARON
Of all the things I wish I could forget, I can't get it out of my head. I was driving. Then my leg started hurting. I tried to step off the gas but I couldn't. Then everything went black. I couldn't see but I could hear... Ah, just forget it.

DEE
What did you hear?

AARON
I heard Myles... playing the piano. I couldn't see, but I knew it was him. I mean, who else could it be? He played for a while, and then it just faded away. Why do I remember that and not other things?

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Because he means so much to you.

AARON

What about Jack Nicklaus? Why the hell do I remember him?

DEE

I'm not sure where he fits in. But I know you loved playing golf.

AARON

That's what everyone tells me.

TOBIAS

Maybe you should start playing again.

AARON

I tried a few times. I suck.

TOBIAS

Practice makes perfect. Isn't that what you used to tell your students?

AARON

I don't remember.

TOBIAS

I'm pretty sure you did.

AARON

Where did you go?

DEE

We went for a walk. I showed Annie the river.

AARON

Did you walk through Turtle Creek?

DEE

Yes.

ANNIE

It's like nothing I've ever seen before.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

I know.

TOBIAS

Every time we go there it seems you remember something -- like that path you found beyond the old tree. Took us right to the water. Just like you said it would.

ANNIE

I saw where you like to fish. It's incredible.

AARON

Pretty much.

TOBIAS

We can go fishing tomorrow if you like.

AARON

In winter?

TOBIAS

Why not? We'll cut a hole in the ice. I see people down there all the time.

AARON

I don't know. Maybe.

TOBIAS

You think about it.

AARON (CONT'D)

I'm going to go upstairs and lay down.

DEE

Of course.

AARON

Can I ask you something first?

DEE

Sure.

AARON

Can you untie this knot in my shoe?

(CONTINUED)

DEE
Again?

AARON
I can't ever do it. I don't know why.

DEE
You just need to be patient and you'll get it.

While Dee unties the knot...

AARON
Annie, this is my good friend, Tobias. Tobias, this is Annie. We've known each other for how long, Annie?

ANNIE
Twenty-six years.

AARON
Twenty-six years. Imagine that.

TOBIAS
That's a long time.

ANNIE
Very nice to meet you, Tobias.

TOBIAS
Pleasure's mine, Annie.

Dee slips off Aaron's shoe.

AARON
Promise you'll save me some pizza. A real cheesy piece.

ANNIE
Maybe even two.

TOBIAS
Now that's livin'.

AARON
I didn't mean to get so upset with you.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

Don't even think about it. Get some rest, then let me know if I need to get the fishing poles ready.

AARON

Okay.

Aaron heads up the stairs.

DEE

Sweet dreams.

Aaron enters the bedroom. He lies down on the bed and turns off the bedside light.

TOBIAS

I should get going.

DEE

No, stay.

ANNIE

Yes, please stay.

TOBIAS

You two haven't seen each other --

DEE

-- I'd like you to stay. Please stay, Tobias.

TOBIAS

Okay, sure.

DEE

Great. How about some champagne? I bet it's nice and cold.

ANNIE

I say we pop that sucker.

TOBIAS

Still like the bubbly, I see.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

I do, especially when there's something to celebrate.

Dee leads Annie and Tobias into the kitchen. She goes into the refrigerator and takes out the champagne.

TOBIAS

Allow me?

DEE

Thank you.

Tobias takes the champagne from Dee. Annie takes a seat at the table. Tobias helps her with her chair.

ANNIE

Still the gentleman.

TOBIAS

Yes, ma'am.

ANNIE

Don't be mamin' me.

TOBIAS

Excuse me I didn't mean...

ANNIE

You address all your ex-girlfriends that way?

TOBIAS

Let me rephrase. Yes, Annie.

ANNIE

Alright then.

Both turn to see Dee slowly wiping the dust off the cover of the piano keyboard. Then very quietly, she begins to sing.

(CONTINUED)

DEE
(Singing quietly)

Remember the day
We sat by the bay
With nothing but time on our hands
Remember how we
Looked out at sea
Then dug our initials in the sand.

Dee? ANNIE

Yes? DEE

You were singing. ANNIE

Yes. DEE

You consciously made a decision to sing just now? ANNIE

I did. DEE

What about the house rules? ANNIE

I think they're about to change. Isn't that right, Tobias? DEE

They have to. TOBIAS

Does Aaron know? ANNIE

Not yet. DEE

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

What will you tell him?

DEE

(Quietly singing)

Am I to blame
For feeling the same
For loving you like I do
Did you forget
How we first met
And the song I sang for you.

ANNIE

I don't recognize that song.

DEE

I just heard it on the radio. Not sure who it's by.

ANNIE

You mean you've been listening to music, too?

DEE

I've been a closet listener for nearly three months.

TOBIAS

She literally has a folding chair in the closet.

DEE

Tobias records the voice lessons on a cassette player and I listen to them when I'm alone or convenient. Usually when Aaron is at work or fishing with Tobias. I'm mostly in the listening phase. Although when I do sing it's always with fear I'll be exposed.

ANNIE

Until now.

DEE

Right.

ANNIE

So you've been listening to music for three months, decided to start working to get your voice back with Tobias, and nobody in this world knows about it except you two?

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Us three.

ANNIE

I don't know whether to laugh or cry.

DEE

Me either. Which is why I asked you here in the first place.

ANNIE

You want your career back, is that what I'm hearin'?

DEE

I change my mind about it every other day. I'd be more inclined to do it if...

ANNIE

If I managed you again.

DEE

Well, I certainly wouldn't want to do it with anyone else.

ANNIE

Four years. That's a long time to live without music. You know anyone that does that, Tobias?

TOBIAS

Hell, no.

ANNIE

Quitting your job, punishing yourselves with house rules?

DEE

I did it for Aaron.

ANNIE

Anyone who knows you understands why you did it.

DEE

Even if I were able to forgive myself, Aaron never will. He's forgotten how.

TOBIAS

You can help him try.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

By putting myself first all over again?

TOBIAS

With an awareness you didn't have before.

DEE

I knew what I was doing. I always knew.

ANNIE

But you didn't use it to your advantage. Or your family's.

DEE

I didn't know how to. I still don't.

ANNIE

You have to try.

TOBIAS

What I've been saying for months.

A BEAT.

DEE

Sometimes I feel my voice is not a blessing but a curse.

ANNIE

Dee Winter was born to sing.

TOBIAS

Exactly right.

ANNIE

In whatever key you choose.

TOBIAS

Amen.

ANNIE

In the key of Dee.

TOBIAS

That's it right there.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

Unless, of course, you think you're better off selling houses and living in silence?

TOBIAS

Been there, done that. No, thank you.

ANNIE

No matter how much you want to put this behind you, you'll never forget Myles. Or his music. Aaron needs to understand that. Whether you start singing again or not. I think that's something you've always known. Why else would you keep his piano?

DEE

I remember when Myles was a baby. Every time he saw the piano he would reach for the keys. I would take his fingers and help him play a few notes. I'll never forget the look in his eyes. Like he just discovered America or stepped on the moon. He was always meant to play. Right from the very beginning. After all these years, I still fight hard to keep it.

ANNIE

Don't stop now.

TOBIAS

She won't. Ain't that right, Dee?

Dee doesn't answer.

ANNIE

We'll help you anyway we can.

The three embrace. Lights fade to black.

SCENE 4

A dream sequence begins: We hear gentle yet eerie sounds overlapping one another. Mysterious tones that are heaven-sent.

An intense white light appears over Aaron asleep in the bedroom.

(CONTINUED)

A dense fog rolls in and fills the home. Fractured colors of light burst through the fog, filling the household.

Suddenly, someone appears at the edge of Aaron's bed. It's Myles, dressed in white. He lifts up a violin and begins to play.

Aaron begins to stir in bed, then sits up at the sight of Myles. Myles continues playing, then slowly walks down the stairwell. Aaron cautiously follows him into the living room.

Myles turns to his father, but Aaron backs away. He turns and heads back up the stairs... but stops in his tracks at the sight of Dee standing at the top of the landing.

Dee is dressed in a magnificent multi-colored garment with long-sleeved gloves and a headpiece worthy of royalty. She lifts up a viola and begins to play. As she comes down the stairwell, Aaron retreats to the living room.

Suddenly, someone begins to play the piano in the kitchen. Aaron navigates around Myles and makes his way to the doorway and peeks in.

A light rises over Tobias playing the piano. Tobias is dressed in an elegant tuxedo. He locks eyes with Aaron and smiles broadly.

Aaron slowly approaches Tobias and watches him play the piano before turning and running out. He makes a dash for the front door, then stops in his tracks at the sight of Annie, walking in.

Annie is wearing a bridesmaid's gown. She lifts up her flute and begins to play.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

(Singing)

Aa-ron
Aa-ron
Aa-ron

ALL

(Singing)

Aa-ron
Aa-ron
Aa-ron

Tobias stops playing. The light over Tobias slowly fades until we no longer see him.

Annie stops playing. The light over Annie slowly fades until we can no longer see her.

Dee stops playing. The light over Dee slowly fades until we can no longer see her.

Myles moves up to the bedroom. The music from his violin draws Aaron back into his room.

Aaron lays back down on his bed. The light over Aaron fades until we no longer see him.

Myles steps out on the landing and moves to the top of the stairwell. He finishes playing and the music ends. Myles looks up to the heavens. There's a flurry of scattered light over Myles and he's gone.

Lights fade to black.

END OF ACT 1

ACT TWO**SCENE 1**

It's four years earlier, late at night. The violin and flute are back on the wall as is the cuckoo clock. A small lamp on top of the piano shines over Myles working on a piece of music he is writing. He stops and starts, penciling notes on to sheet music. Two suitcases rest at the bottom of the stairs.

Coming down the staircase out from the darkness is Dee, dressed in a robe. She walks up next to Myles and just watches him. After a few measures, he notices her and stops playing.

DEE

It's late.

MYLES

Couldn't sleep.

DEE

Me neither. Didn't want to wake your father so I got up and heard you playing. Working on something?

MYLES

Yes.

DEE

You don't want to tell me?

MYLES

It's something I'm writing for Dad. For his birthday.

DEE

He'll be thrilled.

MYLES

It's a surprise so don't say anything.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

I won't.

MYLES

I know how much he loves the violin so I was thinking of writing my next string quartet for him, but I wanted something a bit more personal. So I thought I'd try writing him a ballad.

DEE

How's it going?

MYLES

Fine.

DEE

May I?

MYLES

I'd rather not. I want him to see it first. Like I just said, it's for him.

DEE

Of course.

An uncomfortable silence.

MYLES

You're leaving again.

DEE

Yes.

MYLES

I understand why, but I don't have to like it. And I don't one bit. The more successful you become, the less we see of you. If it's not a new Broadway show, you're on tour, you're in the studio, performing in clubs, and now you're off on a cruise ship sailing around the world.

DEE

I'm not just doing this for me, you know. It's how I make a living.

MYLES

I said I understand, didn't I?

(CONTINUED)

Dee falls silent.

MYLES

Sorry.

DEE

One day, when you're playing your music in New York or Rome or Vienna, you too may be faced with difficult choices. Not everything will go your way. You never stop sacrificing. Not in this business. Hopefully, you'll get to live your life doing what you love to do, and if things get complicated or frustrating, hopefully you'll have someone there to help you through it, like you and dad do for me.

MYLES

I know you believe I'm going to be a great composer one day. But I don't think about that. I write and play because it's inside me and I can't stop thinking about it until it comes out. When it does, everyone treats me like I'm somebody special and I'm not.

DEE

Of course you are.

MYLES

To some degree, sure. But sometimes I feel like just being fifteen, you know? A kid making mistakes, getting yelled at or being punished? I can't remember the last time you were home long enough to do that.

DEE

You're right.

MYLES

It's not fair.

DEE

It's not.

MYLES

Stop agreeing with me.

DEE

Okay.

Silence.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

It won't ever change, will it? You being away so much?

DEE

I can't say for sure. I know that's not helpful.

MYLES

You'll be back in time for dad's birthday?

DEE

I wouldn't have taken the job if I couldn't.

MYLES

I've never been on a cruise ship before. I wish I could go and play for you.

DEE

I wish you could too. And you will one day. But you have bigger and better things to do right now.

MYLES

Like what?

DEE

Like school. Being here for your father. He'll need you.

MYLES

What about you? Don't you need me?

DEE

Myles, of course I need you. I need you more than you can possibly imagine. You and your father are the two greatest loves of my life. There isn't a moment in time where I wouldn't need you. It's impossible.

Myles retrieves his sheet music and hands it to her.

MYLES

Here. Take a look. I'm not sure about the lyrics yet. It's not my strongest suit.

DEE

All the more reason for you to write them.

She begins reading to herself.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

What's the saying? Less is more? That's always been a hard concept for me to embrace, particularly when I constantly have all these notes swimming around in my head. Not sure I really need to say anything here...

He's looking over her shoulder now, pointing to some of the music on the page.

MYLES

For instance, during this interlude, there's going to be a string section - a violin, a viola, perhaps a cello and then a chorus. A children's chorus, I think he'd like that. I'm not quite finished with the sequence yet, but it'll sound something like this...

Myles points to the melody line for a violin on the page Dee is reading. We hear the music that Myles has created in his mind.

MYLES

This is the violin. And then violin 2. Underneath, a cello. A viola.

Dee hasn't taken her eyes off the page.

MYLES

Can you hear it, mom?

The music ends. Myles waits for Dee to look up from the page. Finally, she does.

DEE

Promise me.

MYLES

What?

DEE

I get to sing this one day.

MYLES

Of course.

DEE

Come. Sit.

(CONTINUED)

Myles joins her on the couch.

DEE

I've been wanting to tell you something for a while now. Sometimes I think I should've told you sooner, but I'm torn. So is your father. It's something he doesn't want you to know just yet. Maybe ever know. That's where we disagree. You see, he's afraid you'll think less of us. But if I were in your shoes, I would want to know.

MYLES

Know what, mom?

DEE

After your father and I married, we tried to have children right away. But for many reasons we weren't able to get pregnant. We spent nearly all our savings on different treatments which were known to increase the odds of us having a child. As you might imagine, when things didn't work out, your father and I felt less than whole. Certainly less than we both could bare. It nearly ended our marriage. Then one day, out of the blue, a doctor called. Said she heard through the grapevine we were desperate to start a family. She asked if we would be interested in meeting with her to discuss egg donation at her fertility center. At least investigate the possibility. We were at our wits end so we decided to go. We met with her for several hours, looked through pages and pages of possible donors, trying to look for a perfect match. But when we saw how much the services cost, we had no choice but to tell the doctor it was far beyond anything we could afford. She handed us a note which read, "You both deserve to be parents. I know it will happen. I know it in my heart." The doctor explained everything was paid for. But whoever did this wanted to remain anonymous. We sat there stunned. How could we say no? So we decided to try. It was a stressful few months. When the time came for the embryos to be implanted inside me, the doctor said the prospects didn't look good, but that there was a small chance it could still work. As you might imagine, we were devastated. But I just kept thinking of that anonymous note -- I know it will happen. I know it in my heart. Six weeks later, I went in for a checkup. During my examination, the doctor asked me to take a pregnancy test. She didn't want me to get my hopes up because the early test would most likely be negative. A few minutes later, I was shown the results. According to those bright, beautiful pink lines I was definitely pregnant. I was finally going to be a mother. And dad, a father. Eight months later, on August third at nine-thirty in the morning, Myles Bradley Winter was born. Nothing will ever be a bigger moment for us. You were a miracle then and you are a miracle now. You always will be.

*Myles sinks into Dee's arms. Dee won't let go.
After a few moments...*

(CONTINUED)

Mom?

MYLES

Yes?

DEE

I can't breathe.

MYLES

Dee lets go. Aaron appears, slowly making his way down the staircase.

What's going on?

AARON

Hi, Dad.

MYLES

It's two o'clock in the morning.

AARON

Not yet.

MYLES

The cuckoo clocks engages and chimes two times.

Now it's two o'clock in the morning.

MYLES

Everything all right?

AARON

Everything's good, Dad.

MYLES

There's school tomorrow.

AARON

I know. I'm going to bed soon. Just a few more minutes.

MYLES

See you in the morning.

AARON

Dad?

MYLES

Yes?

AARON

Good night.

MYLES

Good night.

AARON

Aaron heads back up the stairs and exits. Dee grabs the blanket hanging over the couch and lays down.

Are you going to tell Dad that you told me?

MYLES

Do you think I should?

DEE

Don't see why not.

MYLES

Okay then. When I get back.

DEE

Dee pulls the blanket over herself.

You sleeping here?

MYLES

For a while.

DEE

Can I stay with you?

MYLES

Dee lifts the blanket and Myles climbs in.

(CONTINUED)

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 2

Aaron and Tobias, dressed in winter gear, are sitting on two small outdoor chairs, ice fishing.

TOBIAS
Isn't this fun?

AARON
Where are the fish?

TOBIAS
They're here somewhere.

AARON
You sure?

TOBIAS
Mid-February day. No wind. Temperatures in the thirties. Sun is shining. Conditions couldn't be more perfect.

AARON
Shouldn't we be over there, where the other fishermen are?

TOBIAS
Magic's gonna happen right where we are, trust me.

AARON
If you say so.

TOBIAS
Something's been taking our bait. Just gotta be a little quicker on the trigger.

AARON
If you say so.

Slight pause.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
How do you like Annie?

TOBIAS
She reminds me of someone.

AARON
Who?

TOBIAS
I won't say.

AARON
Why not?

TOBIAS
Because every time I bring up something about your past, you get angry. And it takes you three weeks to get over it. Nothing worse than waiting for you to get your groove back.

AARON
Whatever that means.

TOBIAS
You know exactly what it means.

AARON
I like her.

TOBIAS
Of course you do. You two go way back. Twenty-six years.

AARON
That's longer than I've known you.

TOBIAS
It's not about quantity, it's about quality. Remember that next time you're selling golf balls.

AARON
I don't remember much about her. Just when she laughs.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

She's from New York and used to work for Dee.

AARON

Doing what?

TOBIAS

She was Dee's manager. Helped manage her career.

AARON

Dee never told me that.

TOBIAS

Maybe she did and you forgot.

AARON

Why do you think she came to visit?

TOBIAS

Because that's what friends do. If I suddenly moved back to Michigan and we didn't see each other for a long time, wouldn't you want to come and visit?

AARON

On a bike?

They laugh.

TOBIAS

We'll have to fix that. One thing at a time.

AARON

Who does Annie remind you of? I won't get mad. I promise.

TOBIAS

Where am I from?

AARON

Detroit.

TOBIAS

That should be your first clue.

(CONTINUED)

Lousy clue. AARON

Why did I move to Connecticut? TOBIAS

To take care of your aunt who was sick. AARON

And how did we meet? TOBIAS

I was getting a haircut. I forget where. AARON

Glen's barbershop on Main Street. TOBIAS

Glen's, yeah. You came in and asked for directions to the high school because you were looking for a job. AARON

What kind of job? TOBIAS

A teaching job. AARON

And what did you used to do? TOBIAS

Teach. AARON

Teach what? TOBIAS

Aaron doesn't answer.

Never mind then. TOBIAS

(CONTINUED)

Music. AARON

And what do I teach? TOBIAS

You teach music. AARON

And what else? TOBIAS

I don't remember what else. AARON

What are you hearing right now? TOBIAS

Your voice. You teach voice. AARON

Yes. TOBIAS

You have a wonderful voice. I wish I had a voice like yours. AARON

My voice fits me. Your voice fits you. TOBIAS

Funny how that works. AARON

When I asked for directions to the high school, what did you say? TOBIAS

I'll take you there. AARON

Why didn't you just give me directions? Why did you need to take me? TOBIAS

(CONTINUED)

Because...

AARON

Aaron closes his eyes and thinks hard.

I don't remember.

AARON

Take your time. I got all day.

TOBIAS

I wanted to take you because...

AARON

You were in charge of what at the school?

TOBIAS

The music department.

AARON

Correct. So I followed you to school and when we got there what did you hand me?

TOBIAS

How do you expect me to remember all this?

AARON

I was applying for a job. What would you be handing me?

TOBIAS

An application?

AARON

Very good. And what the very first question on that application?

TOBIAS

Hell if I know.

AARON

When I read the first question I knew this was the place I wanted to be.

TOBIAS

Why? What was the question?

AARON

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

You should know because you hired me after you read my answer.

AARON

I did?

TOBIAS

Yes.

AARON

I wish I could remember, Tobias. I'm sorry. I can't.

TOBIAS

"Why music?" That was the question. Why music? I wrote down my answer with two words.

AARON

That's all you wrote down, two words?

TOBIAS

Just two.

AARON

Two words and I hired you?

TOBIAS

On the spot.

Aaron thinks hard but can't come up with anything.

TOBIAS

Not even a guess?

AARON

I don't know, cheese pizza?

TOBIAS

What does cheese pizza have to do with Detroit and music?

AARON

Hell if I know? You wrote it.

(CONTINUED)

Give up?
TOBIAS

A long time ago.
AARON

Aretha Franklin. The Queen of Soul, remember?
TOBIAS

No.
AARON

You and I talked about Aretha Franklin for hours. What she meant to me. What she meant to you and the entire world. You can't teach that kind of soul, you know what I'm sayin'? It's God-given or you can forget about it. Annie's got a little of what I'm talkin' about, no question.
TOBIAS

So then you like her?
AARON

She's a very nice lady.
TOBIAS

You could've just said so.
AARON

It's important that you try and remember these moments. Believe it or not, it helps to.
TOBIAS

*Suddenly, Aaron's fishing pole begins to bend,
with apparently a fish on the line.*

Whoa. Tobias, I got one.
AARON

Damn straight you got one. Didn't I tell you?
TOBIAS

Here, take the pole.
AARON

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS
No, no. You can do it.

AARON
I can't.

TOBIAS
Just take your time. Start reeling her in nice and slow.

AARON
Look at the pole bend.

TOBIAS
That is one pissed off fish.

AARON
Whoa.

The string snaps and the fish is gone.

AARON
Oh, man.

TOBIAS
It's okay. You did everything right.

AARON
Did you see that, Tobias?

TOBIAS
I should've used a braided line.

AARON
I never felt anything like that before in my life.

TOBIAS
Just snapped in half. Incredible.

Tobias kneels down and looks at the hole in the ice. Suddenly, something alarms Aaron. He stops to listen.

(CONTINUED)

What's that?
AARON

Where?
TOBIAS

You hear it?
AARON

Hear what?
TOBIAS

Shhhh.
AARON

Aaron takes off Tobias' hat.

Hear it now?
AARON

I don't hear a damn thing.
TOBIAS

Still?
AARON

Nothing.
TOBIAS

It stopped.
AARON

What, pal?
TOBIAS

Never mind.
AARON

Slight pause.

AARON
There it is again. Right across from us. Up on the hill.

(CONTINUED)

The grey house?
TOBIAS

Yes.
AARON

That's --
TOBIAS

My house. You hear that?
AARON

Suddenly, off in the distance we hear a female voice singing.

DEE
(singing)
Lord, can you hear me?
Lord, will you hold me?
Will you take my hand and show me?
I'm unsure, I'm afraid and alone.

That's Dee.
AARON

Aaron.
TOBIAS

She's singing.
AARON

Aaron.
TOBIAS

Quiet!
AARON

DEE
(from off in the distance, singing)
Every day, through the night
Guide me to your brightest light
And give me strength to carry on
To carry on.

(CONTINUED)

That's Dee!

AARON

Aaron!

TOBIAS

I have to go.

AARON

AARON!

TOBIAS
(booming voice)

Aaron stops.

DEE
(from off in the distance, singing)

Lead the way, and show me, Lord
This one time will you afford
Give me peace
Give me hope
To carry on. To carry on. To carry on.

The singing ends.

TOBIAS

You're never going to forget Myles. No matter how hard you try.

AARON

We had a deal. No music.

TOBIAS

You want to lose Dee too? Is that what you want?

AARON

Lose Dee?

TOBIAS

If she changes her mind, is that okay with you?

AARON

She won't.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

You're sure?

AARON

She can't.

TOBIAS

If she does, Aaron, if you're wrong, are you prepared to lose her? Because that's what will happen. You will lose her. You will lose yourself. Faster than you lost that fish.

AARON

She's singing again. Behind my back. You heard her just like I did.

TOBIAS

She's not singing behind your back. She's singing because she wants you to know. But doesn't know exactly how to tell you. You want to know the truth? I'm trying to help her. Because I want her to sing again. I've gotten down on my hands and knees and I've prayed for it. Just like I pray you'll find the strength to let your boy back into your life in every way -- letters he's written to you, photos he's taken with you, music he's written for you. Are you looking to punish yourselves forever? You think that's what Myles would want? Dammit, man. How can you try to remember certain things while trying to forget Myles at the same time? You can't pick and choose. It's doesn't work that way.

Aaron sits on the ice and buries his head in his knees.

TOBIAS

Aaron, look at me. I said, look at me!

AARON

Get away from me. I don't want to see you again.

TOBIAS

You don't mean that.

AARON

I do. I don't want to ever see you again.

TOBIAS

You think you can just toss friendships aside because circumstances don't suit you?

AARON

It's my life and I'll choose to live it the way I want.

(CONTINUED)

I know this is hard--

TOBIAS

You don't know shit!

AARON

Tobias goes for Aaron and grabs him and starts shaking him.

Stop it! Ya hear me? Just stop it!

TOBIAS

Tobias pushes him away and Aaron falls. Tobias goes to help him.

Get away!

AARON

Come on, I'll walk you home.

TOBIAS

Just go.

AARON

I lost control. It won't happen again.

TOBIAS

Aaron doesn't respond. Tobias folds up the chairs and gathers the fishing poles.

I'm sorry, Aaron.

TOBIAS

Tobias exits.

Aaron remains on his knees.

Lights fade to black

SCENE 3

At night. The phone rings. Dee comes running down the stairs. Annie rushes out of the kitchen. Dee gets to the phone first.

DEE

(answering the phone)

Hello?... Tobias?... No he isn't back yet... He took his bike so he could be anywhere... I'm getting in the car now. Annie is staying here in case he shows up... Try the golf course... Thank you.

Just as Dee hangs up the phone, the doorbell rings. She rushes to the door and opens it. Tim Grove, 40's, a drifter wearing a cowboy hat, is there.

DEE

Can I help you?

TIM

Ms. Winter?

DEE

Yes?

TIM

My name is Tim Grove.

DEE

I'm sorry, we're in the middle of something.

TIM

It's about your husband. May I come in?

Dee hesitates before stepping aside and Tim walks in.

DEE

Have you seen him?

(CONTINUED)

TIM

About two hours ago. He was hiding behind a picnic table in back of Charlie's Pizza but rode off after I came out to talk to him. Maybe you'd like to sit down.

DEE

I'm fine, thank you.

TIM

Would you mind if I did? Been on my feet all day. I'm tired and could use a drink. Do you have anything? Cold beer?

DEE

I'm sorry I don't.

TIM

A glass of ice will do.

DEE

Ice?

TIM

Please.

ANNIE

I'll get it.

DEE

Thank you, Annie.

Annie heads into the kitchen.

TIM

I would've come sooner but I couldn't leave until my shift was over. Ya see, I work at Charlie's as part of the kitchen staff. Just started workin' there a few weeks ago. I wash dishes, prep toppings, grate the cheese --

DEE

Do you know where my husband is, Mr. Grove?

TIM

Ya see, I was living in Tennessee a spell, just outside Nashville. Picked up this slight southern drawl which I can't seem to let go of. Got myself into a bit of trouble, and well, paid the price for some mistakes I made.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Mr. Grove, I'm very sorry but --

TIM

Call me Tim.

DEE

I need to find my husband.

TIM

Of course you do. And I'm here to help. Just bear with me a moment.

Annie arrives with a glass of ice.

TIM

Much appreciated. Smokin' makes me thirsty.

Tim pulls a flask from his coat pocket, unscrews the cap and pours his whiskey.

DEE

I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

Tim just stares at her and sips his drink.

TIM

I was in and out of jobs, smart enough to keep myself out of jail for long stretches, but not so much when it came to alterin' my reality, which I pretty much accomplished on a daily basis.

DEE

What does this have to do with Aaron?

TIM

I'm getting to that, mother. It's not easy for me to be here, I can tell you that. This won't take more than a minute of your time so how about you just relax?

ANNIE

If you'll excuse me for a minute.

TIM

I'd like for you to hear this too, Annie. It's important.

(CONTINUED)

ANNIE

Then would you please get to the point.

TIM

Point is I used to live about four miles from here, just off Old Boston Post Road. After the accident, my family left town shortly after I headed south.

DEE

Accident?

TIM

Yes, ma'am. Ya see I happened to be drivin' the vehicle that collided with your husband's car. Although it was determined the crash wasn't my fault, I've carried the weight of being part of the incident that killed your boy. As his parents, I can't imagine what it must be like to be you. A few days after I started workin' at Charlie's, I kept seein' someone sittin' outside on the picnic table 'round the lunch hour. When I got a closer look, I recognized it was your husband from the crash. Charlie, the owner, has no idea I was involved in that accident so I never mentioned anything to him. But...

DEE

But what?

TIM

By the fifth or sixth time, I determined your husband knew exactly who I was and was stalkin' me.

DEE

Stalking you?

TIM

That's right.

DEE

Aaron would never do that.

TIM

Well, he's there for a reason and it isn't for the thin-crust pizza or twisted cheese balls. I tried goin' outside a few times to speak to him, but he would just jump on his bike and ride off. I'd like to keep my job, sugar. I don't want any trouble. So I thought I'd come by and pay my respects, and ask if you'd see to it to get him to stop the damn stalkin'.

DEE

I'll be sure to talk to him about it.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

I trust you will. Otherwise, I'll be forced to report him to the proper authorities.

Tim stands to leave.

TIM

Oh, there's somethin' else.

Tim reaches inside his coat and takes out a hunting knife and puts it down on the table. Dee and Annie look at one another. Then Tim reaches into his coat and pulls out a large manila envelope.

TIM

This was sent to me a few weeks after the crash. It came with some of my personal belongings the investigators picked up at the scene. They must have gotten a few things mixed up because I believe this originated from your husband's vehicle. I didn't bother to send it back. Just left it in my drawer. Was wonderin' if you had any interest in it? Looks like some sheet music of a song your boy wrote.

DEE

Oh, my God, give that to me!

Dee reaches for the music but Tim pulls it back.

TIM

Now, the envelope was addressed to me, which means legally this is mine. However, I am willin' to sell it to you for a fair price. Nothin' outrageous, just a little somethin' to keep me upright for a few weeks.

DEE

How much?

TIM

Thousand dollars.

DEE

Fine. I'll write you a check.

TIM

Sorry, this is a cash transaction.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Are you joking?

TIM

No, ma'am. I'm a serious man and should be regarded as such.

DEE

I don't have a thousand dollars here.

TIM

Hard to believe livin' in such a nice house like this. Maybe Annie can help.

ANNIE

I have some cash but not nearly enough.

TIM

Then I'll just put this back in my drawer and pretend my one time offer never existed.

ANNIE

I have a two hundred dollars.

DEE

Please. Kindly take it and leave.

TIM

Price is non-negotiable. Sorry.

The door opens and Tobias steps in. He locks eyes with Tim who takes a small step back at the sight of him.

TIM

Two hundred will be just fine.

ANNIE

Actually... the price just went down.

TOBIAS

Come in, Aaron.

Aaron walks in.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

Aaron.

Aaron sees Tim.

AARON

What is he doing here? Get out! Get out!

Aaron goes for Tim but Tim picks up the hunting knife, stopping Aaron in his tracks.

TIM

Now, this is exactly what I hoped wouldn't happen. I stop by out of the goodness of my heart to make amends so this man here stops stalkin' me for somethin' he was responsible for, and this is the bullshit I get.

AARON

You ran away. Why did you run away?

TIM

The hell you talkin' about?

AARON

You could've helped us. You could've helped Myles. Why didn't you?

TIM

Don't lay that shit at my door, mister. You crossed lanes, not me.

AARON

What does that have to do with anything?

TIM

My truck was about to explode. What the hell did you expect me to do?

(pointing the knife right at Aaron.)

I'm lucky to be alive and you have the nerve to ask me that?

AARON

You think that's going to stop me?

TIM

You don't know who you're dealin' with, donkey.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

Let me go, Tobias.

TOBIAS

Stop it. Stop.

Tobias slams Aaron against the wall.

TOBIAS

Dee, Annie, take Aaron into the kitchen and don't come out until I say so.

AARON

I don't go in the kitchen.

TOBIAS

(booming voice)

Get in the fucking kitchen!!

AARON

Okay. Jesus.

*Annie takes Aaron by the arm and escorts him into the kitchen. Dee follows.**Tobias takes off his coat.*

TOBIAS

You got two choices, boy. A -- you can stay right here and suffer the consequences of trying to use that knife or B ----

TIM

B. I choose B.

TOBIAS

The music stays.

TIM

Now, sir, this music is rightfully mine.

TOBIAS

You'll be leaving without it one way or the other. I promise.

(CONTINUED)

TIM

You sure about that?

TOBIAS

One thing you should know about me, I don't ever break a promise.

Tim picks up his glass and downs his whiskey. He slowly lowers the knife and places it back in its case. Then drops the music and heads for the door.

TIM

Like I told Ms. Winter, I want no part of trouble. Never let it be said I'm not a man of my word.

TOBIAS

You ever come around here again, you'll wish you had died in that crash.

TIM

Thank you for the kind warning.

(to Dee)

Mother? I'm sorry for your loss. Y'all have a good evening.

(to Aaron)

You too, killer.

Tim exits.

Tobias takes a seat on the couch. Aaron is the first one to come out of the kitchen. He sits next to Tobias and just stares at him. Annie walks over and places a hand on Tobias's shoulder.

TOBIAS

(to Annie)

You okay?

ANNIE

Never better.

Dee comes out and picks up the music.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
What's that?

Dee heads up the stairs and exits.

TOBIAS
I'm going home to get some rest.

ANNIE
I'll be leaving in the morning.

TOBIAS
Tomorrow morning?

ANNIE
Yes.

TOBIAS
Well then, I sure hope I see you again.

ANNIE
I hope so, too.

Tobias picks up his coat. Annie helps him put it on.

TOBIAS
Thank you.

ANNIE
No, thank you.

AARON
See you tomorrow?

TOBIAS
I haven't decided yet.

Tobias turns to leave.

ANNIE
Tobias? You still have my number?

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

212-875-2263.

(Annie smiles. Tobias exits.)

ANNIE

It's getting late. I'm going to pack some things and then turn in. If by chance I don't see you before I leave, thank you for having me.

AARON

She's singing again. Why did she change her mind?

ANNIE

I think she feels she's punished herself enough. It's hard to keep livin' like that. But I'm sure that's something you already know. Good night.

*Annie exits to the first floor bedroom.**Aaron is alone on the couch. Dee walks down the stairwell and sits in her chair.*

DEE

A few months ago, I decided to listen to the radio. Not necessarily to listen to music, just to see if the damn thing still existed. I didn't expect I would tune into something so moving but I did. Naturally, I began thinking of Myles and the songs he loved to write. I don't remember exactly if it was at the beginning, middle or end of the song that I knew... I wanted to let Myles back in my life. I realize we made a promise to each other, but I can't fight it any longer. Music has always been a huge part of our lives. Shutting it off won't let us forget what happened, Aaron. Shutting it off won't keep him away.

AARON

Dee, please.

DEE

So I'm going to sing again. If you can't accept that --

AARON

Dee, please. Stop.

DEE

The pain will never leave us, Aaron. It's just something we have to deal with.

(CONTINUED)

No. AARON

Yes. DEE

I can't do it, Dee. AARON

Can't or won't? DEE

I've tried! AARON

Really? DEE

Yes! AARON

When? DEE

Many times! AARON

Tell me! DEE

AARON
I've had dreams, okay? The most beautiful dreams. Of Myles coming to visit me. Playing his music. Sometimes it's the violin, sometimes it's the piano. Whatever he's playing is beautiful and everything is perfect. But then I wake up and everything is shit because he's not here.

DEE
He is here.

AARON
What are you talking about? He's dead.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

I know he's dead. He's dead and he's not coming back. I get it. You think you're the only one affected by this. You don't think I have regrets?

AARON

How can you say he's here when he's not? That makes no sense.

DEE

That's not what I mean.

AARON

You're just like Tobias! Saying things that make no sense at all.

Dee turns and runs up stairs.

AARON

Where are you going? Dee! Come back!

Dee runs into the bedroom. She opens the dresser and grabs the sheet music, then comes hurries back down.

AARON

What are you holding?

DEE

Here!

AARON

What is it?

DEE

Myles!

AARON

See?

DEE

The last day of his life, he gave this to you, remember?

AARON

I don't.

(CONTINUED)

DEE

He wrote this for you. For your birthday. You're telling me you don't remember?

AARON

Where did you get that?

DEE

What difference does it make? Do you want it?

AARON

No!

DEE

It's from your son!

AARON

I said I don't want it!

DEE

Is that what you told Myles when he gave it to you? You told him you didn't want it? Of course not. You were proud, and moved, and couldn't wait to hear it. Stop hiding, Aaron.

AARON

I can't help myself.

DEE

Yes, you can.

AARON

I can't! Why don't you believe me?

DEE

I don't know what to believe any more.

AARON

You're leaving, aren't you? You're leaving. I know it. I see it in your eyes.

DEE

Why I should stay?

AARON

Because I love you!

(CONTINUED)

DEE
Do you?

AARON
You know I do.

DEE
Enough to understand I can't keep living like this?

AARON
But we both wanted it this way.

DEE
Nothing's forever.

AARON
That's the thing. I keep waiting for the pain of losing him to go away but it never does. It never does. It is forever. At least for me. I've even thought about killing myself.

Dee slaps him.

DEE
Don't you ever say those words again. Ever.

AARON
Maybe I will, maybe I won't.

DEE
You're really aren't the man I married anymore, are you?

AARON
I didn't mean for it to be this way. But it is.

Dee picks up the music and starts to leave then stops and turns back to Aaron.

DEE
I got a phone call a few weeks ago. From my friends at the Carlyle. They call every now and then asking if I would come back to sing there. I've always said no, but this time I couldn't say yes fast enough. The event is in a few days. I'll be going with or without you.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

I'm not going.

DEE

Then I'm going without you.

AARON

Okay then, stop talking about it.

Aaron reaches into his pocket.

DEE

What's that in your hand?

He opens his hand and shows her a golf ball.

AARON

I was at the golf course today. That's where Tobias found me. Before the sun went down, I saw Jack Nicklaus again. He was standing on the 7th tee when he hit his drive into the woods, just like he did the last time I saw him. I found his ball but this time I ran up to him to give it back to him.

Here you go, Jack.

He said, I'm not Jack.

Whaddaya mean? You're not Jack Nicklaus?

He laughed and said... I get that a lot but, no, I'm not.

What about the initials on your golf ball?

Those are my initials, Jerry Noss.

I don't even know what's real anymore. When I think I do, I really don't.

Was that you singing today?

DEE

Yes.

AARON

You forgot to close the windows.

DEE

I didn't forget. I wanted you to hear me. I just didn't know how to do it.

AARON

I see. I forgot what you sound like. You have a beautiful voice. Cut from diamonds.

(CONTINUED)

Aaron gets up and walks into the kitchen. He stop and stares at the piano, then slowly moves to it. Dee gets up from the couch and follows him, careful to keep her distance.

Aaron stares down at the keyboard. Suddenly he slams his fist down on the keys in anger.

Annie runs in.

Dee doesn't move, just stands there shell-shocked.

Aaron turns and sees the two women watching him.

AARON

Make sure you take the piano with you when you leave.

He walks out of the kitchen and exits the house. Dee tries to go after him.

ANNIE

Dee, no!

DEE

I can't!

ANNIE

You have to. I've been there. I know what you're feeling, it's hard, but you have to take care of yourself and do what's right for you.

DEE

I don't know what that is anymore.

ANNIE

Yes, you do. You just don't trust it. And I'm telling you to trust it. You owe it to Aaron, you owe it to yourself, and you owe it to Myles. Especially Myles.

They embrace.

ANNIE

I got you, baby. I got you.

(CONTINUED)

The lights fade to black.

SCENE 4

It's five years earlier. Tobias and Myles are at the beach, wearing sunglasses and sitting in beach chairs. There's a sun umbrella just behind them.

MYLES

We're at the beach. Why do you have a shirt on?

TOBIAS

I'm tan enough, thanks.

MYLES

Wanna go for a swim?

TOBIAS

Can't swim.

MYLES

Well, you can stand in the water and watch me swim.

TOBIAS

I can do that from here without getting wet. If I get wet then the damn sand sticks to every part of me. Gets in my shoes, my hair, my wallet, my keys, every damn thing.

MYLES

Why did you want to come here if you don't swim or like to get wet?

Tobias pulls down his sunglasses as someone walks by.

TOBIAS

Did you see what just passed by?

MYLES

Are you referring to that beautiful lady in the pink bathing suit?

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

It's called a bikini. And yes, that's exactly who I'm referring to.

MYLES

So if I get up and ask her to come swimming and she says yes, you would come?

TOBIAS

First off, you're fifteen years old and you'll do no such thing. But hypothetically, if you did and she wanted to go swimming with us, I'd learn to swim so fast you'd write a song about it and make millions. I'd eat sand for breakfast, sand for lunch and make sand castles for dinner.

MYLES

Which leads me to my next question. Why aren't you married, or have a significant other you very much care for, if you don't mind me asking?

TOBIAS

I'm not sure that's an appropriate question for someone your age.

MYLES

Why not?

TOBIAS

Because I don't want to fill your head with negative thoughts regarding relationships. I want you to look forward to yours, not worry about mine so much.

MYLES

All I have to do is look at my mother and father to know how wonderful life can be sharing it with someone, especially when you find somebody who's perfect for you like they did. There's a lot of perfect in the world, isn't there?

TOBIAS

Oh, yes. A ton of imperfect, too.

MYLES

Didn't say there wasn't.

TOBIAS

My mother and father were much different people. It didn't go so well and we'll just leave it at that.

(CONTINUED)

MYLES

I guess what I'm trying to say if things don't work out with someone, it doesn't mean you can't try again.

TOBIAS

Thank you for your sage advice.

MYLES

I'm sorry, Tobias. You're a better man for having lived through it. You have the biggest heart of anybody I know. I mean that. You're like a second mother and father to me all wrapped into one with a ribbon on it.

TOBIAS

Myles?

MYLES

Yes?

TOBIAS

There isn't anything you say that will get me in that water, so forget about buttering me up.

MYLES

Which leads me to my next question.

TOBIAS

Can hardly wait.

MYLES

As you well know, I've studied classical music since I was four. Played classical music since I was six. Most of the compositions I've written are classical, but just recently I've been yearning for other kinds of music as well. I'm afraid if I mention anything to Dad, he won't accept it. I just don't want to disappoint him. I'm off to music school next year, so I'll need to focus on what I want for myself as a composer and musician, and classical music may not be what ultimately drives me. You've worked with him a long time, so I'd like your perspective. How do I tell him, Tobias?

TOBIAS

Did your father push you into music?

MYLES

No.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS
Did he push you to play music?

MYLES
No.

TOBIAS
Did he ever tell you to write this or play that?

MYLES
He may have asked, but told? No.

TOBIAS
You started studying and playing classical music because you wanted to?

MYLES
I did.

TOBIAS
So what you're telling me is it all came from within you?

MYLES
I guess.

TOBIAS
You guess?

MYLES
It came from within me, yes.

TOBIAS
And he's always supported that?

MYLES
He has. I just know how much he reveres Mozart and Beethoven, Bach and Debussy. He doesn't have to say what he thinks because I know what he wants for me.

TOBIAS
And what is that exactly?

MYLES
To be remembered.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

Maybe you should look at what he does instead of what you think he wants for you. At the end of the day, I see you writing and playing music that appeals to your true self and him being fine with that.

MYLES

You think so?

TOBIAS

I really do.

MYLES

I can't disagree with you.

TOBIAS

Okay then.

Both look out at the sea.

Lights fade to black.

SCENE 5

It's the middle of the night. A small glow of light appears over Aaron asleep on the couch.

The cuckoo clock engages and the wooden bird pops in and out of its opening three times.

From the bay window, a figure walks out of the darkness. It's Myles, holding a violin. He moves to the couch and looks at his father. Then reaches out and touches him.

Aaron wakes.

AARON

Myles.

(CONTINUED)

Hi, Dad.

MYLES

Is everything alright? You know you can tell me anything, son. I've always been fair.

AARON

I want you to hear something.

MYLES

Can it wait?

AARON

No.

MYLES

Should I stand or sit?

AARON

You're fine where you are.

MYLES

The stage is yours.

AARON

I want you to close your eyes.

MYLES

All right.

AARON

Aaron closes his eyes.

And think about the most beautiful dream you ever dreamed.

MYLES

Myles lifts his violin and begins to play. As the music ends, Myles steps back into the darkness and disappears. Aaron remains sitting with his eyes closed.

Morning arrives as darkness turns to light.

There's a knock on the door.

(CONTINUED)

Aaron opens his eyes.

TOBIAS (O.S.)

Aaron, open up. It's Tobias.

AARON

Go away.

TOBIAS (O.S.)

Don't make me kick down this door. You know I will... Aaron?

Aaron gets up and opens the door. Tobias enters.

TOBIAS

Get dressed.

AARON

What for?

TOBIAS

We're going for a ride.

AARON

A bike ride?

TOBIAS

No, we're taking my car.

AARON

I don't ride in cars.

TOBIAS

We'll take a short trip, enough to show you there's nothing to be afraid of.

AARON

No way.

TOBIAS

Then we'll come back, get dressed and head to New York.

AARON

New York?

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

The concert is tonight. And you're going.

AARON

No, I'm not.

TOBIAS

You really want Dee to leave?

AARON

She's already left. She's with Annie.

TOBIAS

She left to clear her head, that's all. It's not for good. There's still time.

AARON

For her to change her mind?

TOBIAS

For you to change yours.

AARON

I've already went through this with Dee.

TOBIAS

She's singing tonight. To honor Myles.

AARON

Please go.

TOBIAS

Aaron, listen to me...

AARON

No, Tobias, I want to be left alone. That's all I want. To be alone. So please go. Please.

Slight pause.

TOBIAS

You gave up.

AARON

If you say so.

(CONTINUED)

TOBIAS

Damn shame.

A BEAT.

TOBIAS

I loved that boy just as much as you. I watched him come in to this world and go out just like you. Your loss is no greater than mine. If you lose Dee, you'll live to regret it.

Slight pause.

TOBIAS

I know it will happen. I know it in my heart.

Tobias starts to leave.

AARON

Wait.

Tobias stops.

AARON

When you see Dee, tell her I love her.

TOBIAS

Tell her your damn self.

Tobias exits.

Aaron goes to the door and double locks it. He walks over to the bay window and takes one long last look outside. Then walks slowly into the kitchen and sits in a chair next to the oven. He spots a folder laying on top of the kitchen table. He picks it up and takes out the sheet music. He stares at it briefly before dropping it back on the table.

He opens the oven door and turns on the gas. Then sits and waits for the fumes to build.

A few moments pass when he suddenly springs off the chair and looks toward the living room.

(CONTINUED)

He turns off the gas and runs out to a side closet near the bay window. He tries to grab something off the top shelf but can't reach it. He spots the folding chair in the closet and uses it to reach a large box, which he takes down and carries into the living room.

He desperately begins taking out items: a violin, a flute, a conductor baton, a painting, and several framed family photos. He finds what he's looking for -- a framed photo of Myles as an infant. He opens the back panel of the frame and finds a small slip of paper. He unfolds the note and reads it out loud.

AARON

You both deserve to be parents. I know it will happen. I know it in my heart.

Slight pause.

AARON

It was Tobias.

Aaron folds the note and puts it on top of the photo. He returns to the kitchen and notices the sheet music and stares at it. He picks it up and sits on the piano bench.

Time passes as day turns to night. Aaron hasn't moved. Finally, he places the sheet music up against the frame of the reader. When he does, the home separates, leaving only the step of stairs, center-stage.

The silhouette of a woman dressed in an elegant evening gown appears on the top of the landing. A beam of light rises up and over her -- Dee on stage at the Cafe Carlyle.

Aaron reads the sheet music and begins to play the song on the piano.

--MUSIC BEGINS --

(CONTINUED)

The light fades out on Aaron, and Dee begins singing...

DEE

(singing)

Once upon a moment in time
I imagined this sound called music
I've dreamed of things with brass and strings
Of winds that soar and bells that ring
Believing that truth is heard thru song

If it all goes away what then do I play
If it's all just a dream
Then how will it seem
If I'm just empty words in a fable
If it all disappears do I just walk away
If it's all make believe
Who then would I be
If I'm just empty chairs at a table

Who am I then and if not now when
Can I close my eyes
May I close my eyes
And dream for you.
May I dream for you.

CHILDREN CHORUS

La, La, La
La, La, La, La, La
La, La, La, La, La
La, La, La, La
La, La, La
La, La, La, La, La, La
La, La, La, La, La, La
La, La, La, La

DEE

(singing)

Once upon a moment in time
I imagined this sound called music
I've dreamed of things with brass and strings
Of winds that soar and bells that ring
Believing that truth is heard thru song

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DEE (CONT'D)

Who am I then and if not now when
 Can I close my eyes
 May I close my eyes
 And sing for you
 May I sing for you

Who am I then and if not now when
 Can I close my eyes
 May I close my eyes
 And dream for you
 May I dream for you
 May I dream for you.

CHILDREN CHORUS & DEE

La, La
 La, La, La, La, La
 La, La, La, La, La
 La, La, La, La
 La, La, La
 La, La, La, La, La, La
 La, La, La
 La, La, La, La, La

Can I close my eyes
 May I close my eyes
 And dream for you
 Who am I then
 And if not now when
 May I close my eyes and dream for you

DEE

(singing)

May I close my eyes and dream
 For you.

Lights fade out on Dee.

SCENE 6

The next day. Aaron is sitting in the kitchen, holding the cuckoo clock. The sheet music is still on the reader of the piano, the oven door is still open, the chair is still by the closet, and the large packing box is in the living room. The violin rests against the couch and a flute is propped up on the chair.

(CONTINUED)

The front door opens and Dee enters. She's dressed in a winter coat and holding a small shopping bag. She looks around and slowly makes her way to the couch. She lifts up the violin, then notices the note. She picks up the slip of paper and reads it to herself. She sees Aaron in the doorway.

DEE

You're in the kitchen.

AARON

Eating pizza.

DEE

But in the kitchen.

AARON

I'm in the kitchen. I know. I went to talk to Charlie. Even went inside.

Dee takes off her coat.

DEE

You went inside Charlie's?

AARON

Yes. Tim Grove isn't there anymore.

DEE

You didn't use the drive-thru?

AARON

No, I... I went inside. Without my bike.

DEE

Was the TV on?

AARON

Playing a basketball game. I should have been a basketball player. No one could make a shot.

Dee notices that Aaron has one shoe off and one shoe on.

(CONTINUED)

She walks over and bends down and unties the knot in his shoe. He steps out of it. She stands and they are face to face.

AARON

It was Tobias.

DEE

Tobias?

AARON

Who wrote the note. Who gave us the money.

DEE

How do you know?

AARON

He wanted me to come to New York. Said I would lose you if I didn't go. Then he said those exact words, 'I know it will happen. I know it in my heart.' He left before I remembered those words. That's when I checked the note and saw what he wrote.

DEE

You remembered the note?

AARON

Yes, and where we put it. You were right.

DEE

About what?

AARON

We should've told him.

DEE

Who?

AARON

We should've told Myles. How he came into this world. If we told him he would've known just how much he meant to us. That always bothered me. Always.

DEE

Myles knew, Aaron. After what happened, I didn't know if there would ever be a good time to tell you. I told him just before the accident.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
You told Myles?

DEE
Yes.

AARON
What did he say?

DEE
I don't think he said anything. We just held each other. Then you came downstairs.

AARON
I did? What did we talk about?

DEE
It doesn't matter. What matters is he knew.

Slight pause.

DEE
What is it?

AARON
It's just different talking about him after trying not to for so many years. I have to get used to that.

DEE
Of course.

AARON
How was the Carlyle?

DEE
Fine.

AARON
Just fine?

DEE
You weren't there.

(CONTINUED)

AARON

I read the song he wrote for me. Even tried playing it on the piano. I wasn't very good, but the song... the song... I wish he were here so I could tell him how special it is.

DEE

Me too.

AARON

There's this one little part, I would've said something to him about it. I would've told him, this should be a major chord and not a minor chord, but other than that... very good, Myles, very good. Maybe one day soon, I'll try and play it for you and show you what I mean.

DEE

Maybe's okay.

AARON

And come see you in New York next time.

DEE

I'd love that.

AARON

Are you staying or going back to Annie's?

DEE

What do you want me to do?

AARON

I want you to stay.

DEE

Then I'll stay.

*She leans in and kisses him gently on his lips.
They wrap their arms around one another and
hold each other. She notices the oven door.*

DEE

Why is the oven door open?

AARON

The pizza wasn't very hot. I was going to heat it up. Forgot to close it.

(CONTINUED)

She goes over and closes the oven door.

AARON
Sorry, it's been awhile.

DEE
It's fine.

AARON
I think we should go see Tobias.

DEE
Why don't you get the bikes ready?

AARON
I don't want to take the bikes.

DEE
It's a long walk, Aaron.

AARON
I don't want to walk either.

DEE
The car?

AARON
I'll try.

DEE
How about we bring the bike just in case?

AARON
I was hoping you'd say that.

DEE
I'll get the keys.

AARON
I'll get my...

Aaron starts looking around for his other shoe.

(CONTINUED)

Now where did I put it?

AARON

Oh, wait.

DEE

She picks up the shopping bag and hands it to him.

What is it?

AARON

Open it.

DEE

He pulls out a box and takes out a pair of shiny black loafers.

Loafers.

AARON

I couldn't help myself.

DEE

Aaron tries them on.

How do they feel?

DEE

Really good. Thank you, Dee.

AARON

Aaron hugs her. Dee holds him tight. After a few moments...

Dee?

AARON

Yes?

DEE

I can't breathe.

AARON

(CONTINUED)

Sorry.

DEE

She let's him go. Both put on their coats. Dee grabs her purse and makes sure she has keys.

Ready?

AARON

When you are.

DEE

Aaron exits.

Dee heads to the door but stops and turns. She goes back for the note and puts it in her pocket. Then closes the door behind her as she exits.

Lights slowly fade on the household. Three small spots of light highlight the violin, the flute and the piano.

The spot goes out on the flute.

Then the violin.

Then the piano.

END OF PLAY