



## OCTOBER 31. FRIDAY.

### LYLA'S NEIGHBORHOOD; 7:01 P.M.

Tripp arrives at the corner of Sycamore and Twelfth on his bike and looks for Lyla. Kids in Halloween costumes run across the lawn of a small brick apartment building. Lyla is nowhere in sight. His phone rings.

"Where are you?" Lyla asks.

Her voice in his ear is the first real pleasure of the day. "On the corner of Sycamore and Twelfth. Where are you?"

"Elm and Twelfth. How did you get there?"

"Bike."

"Okay. Walk your bike so you don't get ahead of me. Stay on Sycamore and cross Twelfth, heading toward Thirteenth."

“Okay. I’m walking. Where are we going?”

The neighborhood is old, canopied with huge trees. The small apartments give way to houses, decorated for Halloween with jack-o’-lanterns on the porches and ghosts hanging from the trees. The streetlights are on. It’s already dark, though not completely.

“Your voice sounds so sad,” she says. “Don’t be sad. You’re going to like this. Keep walking up Sycamore.”

“Is that where you live?”

“I live on Ash and Tenth. Keep going up Sycamore.”

“Am I going to find a pot of gold?”

“Yes.”

“I thought a rainbow was supposed to be the thing that you follow to get a pot of gold, not a voice on a cell phone.”

“Hey, look to your right.”

As Tripp begins to cross Thirteenth Street, he glances over and sees Lyla in the glow of a streetlight, carrying a cello case, heading in the same direction one street over.

“Hi, Ms. Even.”

“Hi, Mr. Odd. We’re parallel,” she says.

“Why aren’t we walking together?” he asks.

“We’re avoiding suspicion,” she says.

“Ah. Why do you have your cello?” he asks.

“You’ll see.”

Tripp stays on Sycamore and heads up the next block. Most of the houses have fences, which makes it impossible to catch another glimpse of Lyla. “Do I keep walking?”

“Yep.”

When he approaches Fourteenth Street, he looks to the right. “The suspense is killing me. . . . Wait . . . wait . . . there you are. Hello, yonder cello player.”

“Hello, yonder Oddman. I’m glad to hear some fun in your voice. Keep walking straight ahead. Hey, you know what this means?”

“What?”

“If we keep seeing each other when we’re crossing, it means we are walking with the same approximate stride. We could use algebra to determine the length of our strides.”

“Geek! Do I keep going straight?”

“Turn right on Fifteenth. If the length of our strides remains the same, we should remain one block apart.”

Tripp turns right on Fifteenth and sees Lyla one block ahead. “Hey, where are you going?”

“Left on Walnut.”

“You disappeared.”

“Ouch.”

“What happened?”

“I banged into a garbage can.”

Tripp crosses the street and heads down Walnut. “Okay, what do I do on Walnut?”

“Go into the backyard of the house on the corner. The one on the right with lots of trees. I’m already here.”

“Am I walking into a trap?”

"Yes, I'm luring you into a dark alley where I intend to rob — What do you have in your pockets?"

"Two dollars and a guitar pick."

"Where I intend to rob you of two dollars and your guitar pick. Hold on. I need both hands for a minute."

"Why?"

"You'll see."

"What about the pot of gold for me? I would like a lot of money so I can buy my own house and my own guitar and live happily ever after."

"Well . . . you might just get your wish."

"You sound like you're out of breath. How come?"

"Just keep walking. You'll see."

Tripp stops. The house on the corner has a tall fence. "You really want me to go into the backyard? Whose house is this?"

"Too many questions. Just come!"

"Do I go through the gate?"

"Yep. I'm already back here. Walk past the house and into the backyard. Bring your bike. All the way in the back. You're going to see a tree house."

"Tree house? What are you, a hobbit? Is your father the Lord of the Rings?"

She laughs. "This isn't my house. It's my neighbor's."

"We're trespassing?"

"Keep walking . . . all the way in the back."

The backyard is deep and dark. In a large oak he sees the faint glow of a tree house. Then the glow brightens,



and Lyla peers out of a window, her hair illuminated from behind.

“Wow.” He slips his phone into his back pocket.

“Like it?” she calls down.

“Very cool.”

“Ready for the next surprise?” she asks.

“I think so.”

“Open the cello case,” she says. “It’s by the trunk.”

Tripp sees a dark shape at the base of the tree. He parks his bike, crouches down, and unlocks the case. It takes a few moments for him to figure out what he’s seeing inside the case: the school guitar. He laughs.

“I smuggled it out,” she says. “I put it in my cello case and left my cello in the practice room. Mr. Jacoby never goes in those rooms. I figured if he did, I’d tell him that I forgot to put it away.”

“You stole the school guitar!”

“No,” she protests. “Just borrowing until you get your guitar back. I’m merely putting it to good use.”

“This is huge. This is monumental. I can’t believe you did it.”

“It’s a crime for a musical instrument to go unplayed. I put the empty guitar case back in the storage closet. Mr. Jacoby won’t even know the guitar is gone.”

“You’re like Robin Hood,” Tripp says. “The musical version. You take guitars from the rich and give them to the poor.”

Lyla laughs. “Bring it up!”

Tripp slings the guitar around his back and climbs up through the opening in the floor of the tree house.

The candle, which Lyla has set on the only piece of furniture—a small wooden stool—fills the room with a warm, golden glow. The three walls not facing the trunk have windows, complete with wooden shutters. Lyla has opened them all. The floor is lined with thick, striped blankets. The room smells of cedar and wool.

“Wow,” Tripp says.

“I used to know Mrs. Victor, the woman who lived here—”

“—in the tree house?”

Lyla smiles. “In the house house. But she died and her kids are all grown up and they can’t decide whether to sell it or keep it. They send a gardener once a month, but the house is empty. My secret hideaway.” She takes the guitar and strums a chord. “Nobody knows about it.”

The sound of the guitar fills the tree house. The moon is framed like a picture in one of the windows. It feels to Tripp as if they have traveled back in time. “I think Mrs. Victor would like that we’re here,” he says. “It’s a crime for a tree house to be uninhabited.”

Lyla smiles.

“My idea is to leave the guitar here so that either one of us can come anytime and play. We’ll cover it with these blankets to keep it warm at night.”

“But that means you won’t have it to play at school.”

"I know." She shrugs. "But you can't come to the practice room at all, and you really need it."

"You need it, too."

"We both need it, and I figured we could both play it here."

Tripp nods. "Thanks."

"You're welcome. Okay. Let's work on our waltz," Lyla says, and pulls her notebook out. "I wrote the rest of the lyrics. Oh, and guess what else I brought?"

"I can't imagine."

She reaches in her other pocket and pulls out a small digital recorder. "My dad got this for me to record my lessons with Dr. Prevski. We can record our songs up here and post them all on our website."

"You're a genius," he says, and she nods.

They work on the song, and after a few minutes, Lyla's cell phone rings.

"I'm not answering," she says.

They practice different harmonies until they get the song into shape.

"Ready to record it?" Lyla asks.

Tripp nods, and she pushes the button.

He plays the introduction and then they sing:

*I like the sound of your name in my ear,  
I like to hear what you have to say,  
I'd like to pay attention to you—instead of doing  
What I have to do. Oh . . .*

*Something inside me is ready,  
Something inside me is ready,  
Something in me's ready—oh,  
Here I go . . .*

*I like the way that our time intertwines.  
I want to design each day so we can meet,  
Each word a seed that's hoping to grow—no need to hurry,  
Let's take it slow. Oh . . .*

*Something inside me is ready,  
Something inside me is ready,  
Something in me's ready—oh,  
Here I go . . .*

*I like the shape of the thoughts in your mind.  
You've got the kind of edge that I seem to need,  
And if you feel the world doesn't care—I'll send a message,  
You'll know I'm here. Oh . . .*

They sing the chorus one final time and when they get to the last note, they look at each other and smile.

"Not bad!" Tripp says.

"Oooh, that break you did gave me an idea for something new to try. Maybe for another song," Lyla exclaims and takes the guitar. "Let me try it with your pick."

He hesitates.

"Just for a minute," she says.

He hands it to her. She strums, but she isn't holding on tightly enough and the pick flies out of her hand. "I'm sorry," she says, her voice bright with embarrassment. She kneels forward, looking for it. "If we can't find it, I'll get you another one."

Tripp looks all around the opening and then heads down the ladder without saying a word. He starts to search the dark, leaf-covered ground.

"I'm sorry!" Lyla says again. "It's not the end of the world, is it? You have other picks, right?" Her phone rings. She doesn't answer it. "Use your cell phone like a flashlight," she suggests.

He opens his phone and crouches down, pointing the light at the leaves around his feet.

"I'll buy you a new pick, Tripp," she calls down.

More silence . . . just the rustle of leaves as he searches through them.

"I'll come back when it's light and look for it tomorrow," she offers.

He keeps looking.

"Are you mad at me?" she asks.

He doesn't say anything.

"This is kind of ridiculous," she says. "It's just a pick."

"It's not just a pick." Tripp kicks the leaves aside and continues to look.

"Fine," she says.

He can hear her covering the guitar with blankets, closing the shutters. When she climbs down the ladder,

he moves aside to let her down, and she opens her cell phone to help him look. Her phone buzzes.

“My dad again.”

“That’s okay. I’ll look for it myself,” he says.

She answers. “Hi, Dad, I’m on my—” She listens. “No! . . . I’ll be home!” Her voice tenses and then snaps. “No! . . . Five minutes. Dad! I’ll be home in five minutes.” She closes her phone. “This is bad. I should’ve answered his call right away. When I didn’t pick up, he called Annie.” She starts to pace. “This is so bad. I told him I was at Annie’s, and Annie just said she had no idea where I am. So now they both know I lied.”

Tripp keeps looking at the ground, and she explodes. “I’m sorry, but just so you know, I think this whole reaction here is not very nice. Somebody once said to me, ‘Why get worked up about something that isn’t that important in the big scheme of life?’ I mean, it’s a little piece of plastic. How much did it cost, like seventy-five cents? Compare that to what it took for me to get this guitar, to get here. And now I’m in trouble.”

Tripp doesn’t say anything.

She storms off.

## LYLA’S HOUSE; 8:08 P.M.

When Lyla arrives home, her dad is waiting by the door.

"I do not appreciate your lying to me. Where were you?"

Lyla walks in and sets her case down. "Please do not make this into a big deal. I was going to go to Annie's, but then I changed my mind because I haven't been getting along so great with her lately. I should have called and told you. I just wasn't thinking."

"So where did you go?"

"I just walked around for a while."

"With your cello?"

"I went to the park on Walnut and sat for a while," she says.

"Sat for a while? Doing what?"

"Just thinking. Is it against the law to sit and think?"

"I don't like this tone, Lyla."

"I'm sorry. Really, Dad. I'm sorry."

"It's not like you. Why didn't you answer my call?"

"I had the ringer off. I'm sorry, Dad. I don't know what else to say."

"Well, keep the ringer on, Lyla. That's the reason you have a cell phone. So I can reach you."

"Okay. I'm sorry."

"Why did you bring your cello home from school anyway? Dr. Prevski told you that she wants you to practice on your mom's."

"I know. Mr. Jacoby made everybody bring their instruments home for the weekend because the school is cleaning out the storage rooms."

He shakes his head. "I'm very confused by all this. And Annie sounded really upset."

"Annie is always upset, Dad."

The doorbell rings. Trick-or-treaters.

"I'll get it," Lyla says, picking up the bowl of candy. "I'm going to practice in here so I can get the door."

The home phone rings, fortunately, and he goes to answer it.

She hands out the Halloween candy and then rushes to put the empty cello case in her bedroom and to get her mom's cello. In the living room, she sets up a chair and her music stand and is about to start playing when her phone buzzes.

**Tripp**/I found the pick.

**Lyla**/I'm so happy for you.

**Tripp**/I'm sorry. hard to explain.

**Lyla**/yeah. Gotta go.

Flushed, Lyla puts her phone away and picks up her bow. For the next hour, she plays as a penance for her sins; she plays to reassure her dad that everything is all right; she plays to keep her mind off the worry that she has made some fatal mistake with Tripp; she plays because the house itself seems to demand the music from her.

After a while, there is another knock.

There is Tripp, out of breath, standing in the yellow



glow of their porch light. Before she can react, he puts a letter in the bowl, takes a candy bar, and leaves.

Dear Lyla,

I was upset and maybe I am a psycho, but I want to explain about the pick. It has to do with my dad. My favorite thing to do with him was to go to our place by Little Deer Lake. It's this piece of land in the woods with this lake behind it, and the idea was that we'd build a cabin eventually, but I wasn't strong or big enough to do actual construction, so we did small stuff first. We dug a fire pit and put logs in a circle around it. Then we made wind chimes and hung them up in the trees. Another time, we made a mailbox, which was funny because who would send us mail there? Each time, we'd pitch a tent and light a fire. We'd kayak and take hikes during the day, and at night sit around the campfire and talk about what the cabin would look like.

The last time we went, we found a note in the mailbox. It was a thank-you note from a guy who said he and his friends were hiking and they used our

fire pit. He said how much they liked the mailbox and wind chimes, and he left his guitar pick folded up in the note. We thought that was so cool, and I put the pick in my jacket pocket.

It's so strange how you never know what's coming. We went home, and everything was normal. And then that Tuesday, I got called to the office during math class, and my mom was standing there crying. She took me into the parking lot and told me that my dad was in the hospital. He had a brain aneurysm. I wanted to go see him, but she wouldn't let me. That night, I had to stay at home with my aunt, and I just sat there wondering what was going on. Then my mom came home the next day and said he died. I didn't cry. It seemed completely unreal. Then all these relatives came. My dad was Jewish, and Jewish funerals happen really quickly, so the next day, I was at the cemetery, feeling numb, wearing my big jacket over my suit because it was cold. At one point, I stuck my hand in my jacket pocket and when my fingers found the pick, my skin tingled like it had an

electric current running through it. Instead of listening to the Rabbi, I kept rubbing my thumb over the pick, thinking about all the times my dad and I spent together at the lake. It gave me something good to focus on. It wasn't until the casket was lowered into the ground that it hit me. The Rabbi handed my mom a shovel, and she started to sob, and then she got ahold of herself, and the sound of the dirt hitting the casket went straight into my chest. It was like-boom. Your dad is really dead. He's not coming back. Ever. I felt the truth of it for the first time, and this huge sadness exploded inside me, and I didn't know how to handle it. I started crying, and I just held on to the pick in my pocket and started talking to my dad in my head. I told him how much I loved him and how much fun we had at the lake and then out of the blue I told him that I was going to get a guitar and learn how to play. A month later, I got one.

I never told anybody about the pick until now. When you dropped it, I thought I was going to die, but I didn't

know how to explain all that because I knew you'd feel really badly if it was gone for good.

Now that it's back, safe and sound, I thought I should explain.

Cell phone light was a good idea, Ms. Even. And we wrote a whole song tonight.

-Mr. Odd

### TRIPP'S HOUSE; 9:57 P.M.

Lights are glowing in the windows of his house when Tripp rides up the driveway. As he puts his bike in the garage, his phone rings. He sees that it's Lyla calling, and instead of walking in, he sits on the concrete steps to his front door and answers.

"Hi."

"Hi."

"Are you eating Halloween candy?" he asks.

"No. I should. Chocolate is good. Full of antioxidants."

"Why are you whispering?"

"My dad thinks I'm asleep."

"Already?"

"I know. I have MYO and a recital tomorrow. My dad is a big believer in sleep."

"Did you get in trouble?"

"It's okay."

"What about Annie?"

"That's another story. She isn't talking to me."

"I'm sorry." He adds, "I'm really glad you opened the door. I'm kind of afraid of your dad."

Lyla laughs. "How come?"

"I've seen him a couple of times. He looks very . . . intense."

"When have you seen him?"

"Picking you up from school and videotaping at school concerts."

"Yeah. He's intense."

"I was wondering . . . wouldn't he be sad if you went away to Coles?"

"If I get in, he said he's willing to move. He's an accountant, and he can work pretty much anywhere. Hey, thanks for the letter. I'm glad you told me about the pick. I'm sorry I grabbed it, and I'm glad you found it."

"I didn't want you to think I was crazy. I mean, I know you think I'm odd, but I'm not crazy."

"Hey, I uploaded the MP3 of 'The Pomegranate Waltz' to our website. The harmony sounds great."

"Can't wait to hear it."

"I think I hear my dad," Lyla whispers. "I'd better go."

"Do you want to meet at the tree house tomorrow?"

"Can't. I could come on Sunday, though."

"Do you mind if I go by myself tomorrow?"

“That’s what it’s for.”

“Thanks.”

“Bye.”

Tripp slips into the house and goes straight to his room. He puts on his headphones, calls up their website, and listens to their song. Their voices fit together so perfectly, it makes him, for the first time, actually like the concept of perfection.



NOVEMBER 1. SATURDAY.

TREE HOUSE; 4:31 P.M.

Waiting in a Tree

(Another instant classic by Tripp Broody)

I'm gonna wait out on this limb  
All by myself and count my sins  
While ants go marching two by two  
Looking for you

← start with  
finger snaps?

add  
breath →

Hang on... Hang on...  
I'm just waiting for someone to come  
Hang on.. Hang on...  
Rescue me from what I've done

add  
keys

I should go cause you are late  
Stuck with the hook, forgot the bait  
The seconds crawl, the minutes stall  
I'm gonna fall

→ something here?

try  
low  
voice

Hang on... Hang on...  
I'm just waiting for someone to come  
Hang on... Hang on...  
Rescue me from what I have done

— "HORNS" —

drums  
harmony

Rock paper scissors and the paper covers rock  
I can't win against myself, I'm all out of luck  
Rock paper scissors and the paper flies away  
Saying: I don't got all day

Hang on... Hang on...  
I'm just waiting for someone to come  
Hang on... Hang on...  
Rescue me from what I have done

HORNS AGAIN

add  
horns!

Hang on... Hang on...  
Hang on... Hang on...

[ Hang, Hang on...  
Hang, Hang on... ] add harmony

maybe end with  
just the beat?





## NOVEMBER 2. SUNDAY.

### TREE HOUSE; 1:31 P.M.

Tripp is in the tree house. He hears the crunch of footsteps first and then Lyla appears below.

"Hark!" He leans out the window, his face flushed and happy. "I brought chocolate and some very juicy news."

"Yeah? Good juicy news or bad juicy news?"

"Sort of good and bad. Come up and I'll tell you."

"How long have you been here?" She starts climbing up.

"Two days. Just kidding. I have been trying to stay as far away from my house as possible. The air in my house is toxic." He picks up the guitar so there is space for her to sit down.

“I need tree air, too,” she says. “Yesterday was so hard. Annie and I aren’t really talking, but we have to carpool to MYO, so we’re sort of just pretending that nothing is wrong when we’re around our parents. And at lunch today, my dad was going on and on, planning the Coles audition, and I wanted to tell him that I don’t want to go. But I can’t. It’s really tense.” Her face is full of worry. “And then when I was walking over here, I was thinking about how this whole tree house thing isn’t going to last. I mean, it’s going to get too cold and we’re not going to be able to play because our fingers will freeze and your mom will send you to Crenshaw and—”

He stops her. “First of all, we are going to have record high temperatures this fall and winter, so our fingers won’t freeze off. Second of all, I’m going to get my grades up so my mom won’t send me to Crenshaw. And third of all, you’re just going to tell your dad that you don’t want to audition for Coles. And—”

“I can’t do that.”

“Yes, you can. And fourth of all, and here’s the good juicy news. . . .” He does a drumroll on top of the guitar. “We have a gig.” He smiles.

“What?”

“Listen.” He pulls out his phone and calls up his e-mail.

To: trippbroody@sixstrings.com

From: PomegranatePlayers

Date: November 2

Re: wedding

Dear Thrum Society,

We have an Internet alert set up so that every time someone posts an item with the word “pomegranate,” we are notified. The MP3 of “The Pomegranate Waltz” is just beautiful. We’d like to book you to play for an upcoming wedding, which will be at our place on Saturday, November 22, at noon. Short notice, I know. Our musician friends who would ordinarily perform are out of the country for the next few weeks, and as soon as we heard your song and saw that you’re located only an hour from our place, we thought it was a sign that you should join us. Please let us know if you’re interested and how much you charge.

Ruby Darling

The Pomegranate Playhouse

Loblolly, MD

Winner of the Best Regional

Theater Award, NETC

“You wrote that,” Lyla says.

“I didn’t. I swear. Ruby Darling, whoever that is, wrote it.” He hands her the phone so she can see for herself. “The bad news is that we can’t do it because it’s the day of your Coles audition. Still, I think it is amazing that she wants us.”

Lyla reads it again. "I'm going to be really mad at you if this is a joke."

"It's not a joke."

Lyla grins. "Wow."

"Indeed."

"I think we should go for it," she says.

"We can't."

"She says it's an hour from here. The wedding starts at noon. My audition is scheduled at six."

"Isn't your audition in Boston?"

"No. They set up these audition spots all over the country. November twenty-second is the DC audition. I could tell my dad that I have to be somewhere during the afternoon and promise to be back in time." She starts bouncing. "Okay. Okay. Here's the plan. I mean the big plan. First, you're right: we have to get your grades up. I've been thinking . . . there's a physics test and an algebra quiz coming up. So, since you can't play in the little room anymore, let's use our lunchtime to study together. I'll be your Benjamin Fick."

"But then you'd miss out on the little room."

"The guitar isn't there anymore, so I don't need the room. What we need to do is come here so we can practice for the wedding. I was thinking that I could tell my dad that I signed up for something that meets Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays after school, and then I could meet you here every Monday, Tuesday, and Friday."

Tripp smiles. "You're a genius."

“Thank you.”

“But how would we get to the wedding?”

“We shall take a cab! And we’ll be back in time for the audition, so I won’t get in trouble.”

“Wow. Sounds like a plan.”

Lyla smiles. “Let’s sing.”

## TRIPP’S ROOM; 10:01 P.M.

<To: Tripp Broody> November 2

Mr. Odd! I have hatched a brilliant new mini-plan to add to our big plan. I’m supposed to give my cello teacher money for the next four private lessons. But if I tell her I can only do two lessons and keep that money, then we’ll have enough to pay for a cab to the wedding and back. How about it? Your partner in crime, Ms. Even

<To: Lyla Marks> November 2

Ms. Even! You are becoming ever more devious. A brilliant plan, indeed, like Bonnie and Clyde. But I’ve been thinking maybe we’re not ready to play in public. —Mr. Odd

<To: Tripp Broody> November 2

Do I hear a bawk? Bawk?

<To: Lyla Marks> November 2

Yes. Yes.

<To: Tripp Broody> November 2

Remember, you are an aardvark, not a chicken.  
We're going! Send me Ruby's address so I have it.  
Your job is to e-mail Ruby back and say yes.



NOVEMBER 4. TUESDAY.

ROCKLAND HALLWAY; 11:25 A.M.

**Tripp**/hey, talent show audition today. are you trying out with Annie?

**Lyla**/nope.

**Tripp**/you okay with that? I feel bad like I caused it

**Lyla**/don't feel bad. i didn't want to do it. did you e-mail Ruby?

**Tripp**/yep.

**Lyla**/woohoo!



NOVEMBER 5. WEDNESDAY.

CAFETERIA; 11:27 A.M.

"You should like science right now," Lyla says, pulling her sandwich out of her bag. "Forced vibration and resonance."

"Ms. Peakly has a way of turning any material into burned toast," Tripp says, biting into his sandwich.

A table of girls is watching them, and Lyla guesses that they will report what they're seeing to Annie. Lyla doesn't care. She turns her chair so that she can't see them, rummages in her backpack, and pulls out two pencils. She hands one to him. "Okay, let's review what happens when you strike one tuning fork." She taps her pencil against the table and holds it up. "What happened when you did this in class?"



“We didn’t do it. Peakly lost control of the class and made us read without talking.”

“Well, if I make my tuning fork ring, then the vibrations send a chain reaction through the air all the way to your tuning fork.” Lyla makes waves with her fingers moving from her pencil to his. “Then if our tuning forks are identical, yours will ring even if you don’t hit it.”

“One bell can make another bell ring?”

She nods. “It’s called resonance. One object vibrating at the same natural frequency of a second object causes that object to vibrate. That’s why we say the phrase ‘that resonates’ when we agree with something someone says.”

He stops eating. “Okay. That matches my Thrum Theory.”

“About inanimate objects?”

“No. That’s my Vibe Theory.” He leans in, blocking out the noise of the cafeteria, and looks at the pencil in her hand. “Here’s my Thrum Theory. I think every soul vibrates at a certain frequency,” he explains. “It’s sort of like each soul has a sound that is its signature—and your soul just wants to feel the vibrations of this sound. I think the vibrations of my soul and the vibrations of the guitar match each other, which is why it feels so right for me to play it.”

Lyla’s eyes sparkle. “So my vibrations want to connect with vibrations that are in tune with me? And when something feels really right to me—like a song or the way the red leaves of the maple tree are shining—it’s because

that song or those leaves vibrate with a frequency that matches my frequency?"

Tripp smiles and shrugs. "Why not?"

She nods. "I like it. Maybe it explains something."

"What?"

"Maybe it explains the reason why one person likes another. It's because their souls both thrum at the same frequency."

They are leaning in toward each other, knees almost touching, the smile between them as intense as a flame. "To resonance," he says, and they tap their pencils as if they are glasses of champagne.



NOVEMBER 6. THURSDAY.

BROODY'S RUG & CARPET; 5:31 P.M.

**Tripp**/I'm at my mom's store. Remember the blasty rug?

**Lyla**/Yeah. Poor Henry!

**Tripp**/I checked the orders on the computer and found his address. I'm thinking about making a special delivery tomorrow night. . . . Want to join me in some criminal activity?

**Lyla**/Yes! Yes! Yes!



## NOVEMBER 7. FRIDAY.

### THE ALLEY; 7:31 P.M.

The alley is narrow and dark with a rivulet of black, oily liquid running down the center and lined on either side with Dumpsters and empty cardboard boxes.

Tripp is waiting by the back door to Broody's Rug & Carpet, under the light. Lyla appears at the far end of the alley, sees him, and runs toward him. The collar of her short coat is turned up. She's wearing black mittens, a black beret, and, even though it's dark, big black sunglasses.

She starts laughing as soon as she is close enough to see him clearly.

"I like your disguise, Bonnie," Tripp calls out. "Why are you laughing? I'm supposed to look criminally

exciting.” He adjusts his black knit cap and fake mustache.

“You look criminally insane. I like it.”

“Here’s the goods.” He pats a rug, which is rolled and wrapped in plastic.

“Oooh. I want to see it!”

He rotates it so she can see the pomegranate-colored label.

“How did you get it out?” she asks.

“When my mom was busy, I set it out here. Then I told her I had to go and walked out the front door.”

“Is she still in there? What if she comes out?”

“She never comes out back here. She’s afraid of rats.”

Lyla starts looking around nervously, and he laughs.

He pulls a piece of paper out of his back pocket. “Our destination is 830 Bradford Road. I mapquested it, and it’s four miles away. That’s a long walk.”

“We shall take a cab!” Lyla announces.

“You keep suggesting that. Have you ever done it?”

“Not by myself. But my dad and I have done it in New York.”

Lyla takes off her mittens and picks up one end of the rug, and Tripp grabs the other.

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Tripp whispers.

“It’s like a dead body!” She starts laughing.

“Shh!”

By the time they walk the rug to the main street, they’re

breathing hard. "This way, so my mom doesn't see us through the window." He pulls her to the left.

"It's so cold, I can see your breath," she says. She brings two fingers to her lips as if she's smoking a cigarette. "Bonnie and Clyde always light up after a heist."

After a few minutes, they manage to flag down a taxi. As it pulls over, Lyla takes off her sunglasses and points to Tripp's mustache. "Quick! We have to look normal or he'll freak."

He pulls it off and winces, and she laughs again.

The driver, a man with a bright orange turban, leans over as the passenger-side window rolls down. He looks at them suspiciously and says, "Show me, please, you have moneys."

They pull out enough money between the two of them and get in, the rug on their laps. It's slightly too long, so they roll down the window and stick one end out.

"One extra dollar for window," the driver says, accent thick.

"For opening the window?" Tripp asks.

Lyla elbows him. "Fine."

"We are going where?" the driver asks.

"830 Bradford Road," Tripp says.

As the cab pulls out, Lyla whispers, "It's a magic carpet ride."

The cabdriver looks in the rearview mirror and asks if they went rug shopping, except with his accent, it sounds like he says rug chopping.

Lyla and Tripp smile at each other. "We are redecorating," Lyla says.

"Indeed," Tripp adds.

Lyla's phone buzzes, signaling a text message. "Daddy checking in . . . he's asking if I'm warm enough," she says. "I'm cozy. Bake sale going well," she says as she texts. "Selling lots!" She leans toward Tripp and whispers, "Should we feel guilty for . . ."—she looks at the rug on their laps—"rug chopping?"

"This rug has been in our store for five years and nobody has bought it." He whispers. "So we are really doing the rug a favor."

Lyla laughs. "It will be loved by Henry."

"Henry is a little man with a mind of his own. Just my style."

"Henry's little mind is about to be blown."

Silently, they watch the passing lights out the window. After a while, Lyla starts to hum.

The driver smiles, warming to them, and says loudly, "Singing is a much pleasing thing."

"Indeed," Tripp and Lyla both say at the same time and try to keep from laughing.

"My cousin is a rock star in India," the driver says.

"Does he play the guitar?" Tripp asks.

"Sitar," the man says. "Strings, but not a guitar."

"We have a band," Lyla says. "It's called the Thrum Society."

"No kidding me?" the driver exclaims. "You are famous?"

"Not yet. But we have a gig."

"Sing me a song!" He stops at a light and looks back at them.

Lyla starts singing their waltz song, and Tripp joins in. The light turns green. The driver's head nods to their song.

"That was good!" he exclaims when they're done. "That was really good!" He hands Lyla a card. "My name is Aamod. Call me if you need a ride to your music gigs. No extra dollar for the window."

"How much would it cost for you to take us to Loblolly, Maryland, and back?"

"Never heard of this place."

"There's a theater there called the Pomegranate Playhouse," Lyla explains.

"Call me with the address and I can price you the quote."

Tripp and Lyla look at each other and smile.

The driver turns down a side street and slows down. "Which one is it?"

Tripp peers out. "Um . . . it's number 830. . . ."

"That one," Lyla says. "The one with the porch."

They pool their money and pay, then Lyla slides out with the rug, and Tripp follows. "Wave and look natural, like this is our house," Lyla whispers as the cab pulls away.

"I don't think people wave good-bye to their cab-drivers," Tripp says.



"He's not just our cabdriver. He's our fan." She waves.

The cab turns the corner, and the street is quiet. The air is freezing, and they both shiver. "What now, Bonnie?"

"We put it on the porch and run."

"We need to write his name on it."

"No, that'll seem like we're stalking."

"All right. How about 'From Santa'?"

Lyla laughs. "From the Thrum Society."

The porch light in the neighboring house goes on and Tripp panics, lunging toward the shadowy part of the lawn, pulling the rug and Lyla with him. His foot hits a skateboard and he goes down while the skateboard flies out from under him and bangs against the bottom step of the porch.

"Are you okay?" Lyla whispers, laughing.

"Ssh! Duck!"

Lyla crouches down as a man from the house next door walks to the street and gets in his car.

"If he looks up, he'll see us," Lyla whispers.

"Make like a lawn troll and freeze." Tripp's face takes on a ridiculous frozen grin.

Lyla laughs.

"Shh! Trolls don't laugh," he says through his teeth.

After the car disappears, they pick up the rug. When Tripp hits the first stair, it creaks noisily.

"Shh!" Lyla says.

"I can't help it," Tripp says. He sets his end of the rug on the porch and they slide it the rest of the way.

"Knock!"

"No. You knock!"

"Shh!"

"Same time."

They both tiptoe up, look at each other, start laughing, knock, and run.

Tripp looks back twice. The second time, he sees the front door open and someone step out. They run past houses, parked cars, and piles of fallen leaves. He pulls Lyla down a side street. A dog barks and they run faster, laughing.

"Do you know where we are?" Lyla asks, breathless.

"I think we need to turn left on the next street."

A police car enters the next intersection and turns toward them.

Lyla grabs Tripp's arm.

"Don't run," Tripp says. "Look completely natural. It's going to pass right by us."

Lyla's hand stays on his arm. "We're doomed, Clyde," she whispers. "We have guilt written all over us. We probably have rug fibers on our clothes!"

As they walk fast, past the headlights, Tripp starts to hum Lyla's guilt song.

"What are you doing?" Lyla whispers.

"I'm acting natural. People always hum a cheery tune when they walk down the street."

As soon as the patrol car is gone, Lyla bends over. "I wasn't breathing!"

"Come on." Tripp runs across the street and pulls Lyla with him.

When they hit the sidewalk on the other side, Lyla stops. "Look!" She stares straight up.

In the glow of the streetlight, specks dance in the sky.

Lyla brings her hand down. There is a snowflake on her outstretched fingertip. She holds it out to Tripp. "Confetti!"

"Yeah." He smiles. "The sky is throwing us a party."



NOVEMBER 12. WEDNESDAY.

Name: *Tripp Broody*

Unit Quiz: The Physics of Sound

*A -  
Nice job,  
Tripp*

1. A sound wave traveling through air is an example of a:

- a. transverse wave.      c. standing wave.  
☒ b. longitudinal wave.      d. surface wave.

2. In which medium does sound travel the fastest?

- a. salt water      c. air  
b. fresh water      ☒ d. cast iron

3. A piano, violin, or guitar uses the resonance of a wooden soundboard to

- ☒ a. amplify the sound.      c. raise the pitch.  
b. dampen the sound.      d. limit standing waves.

4. An ambulance siren sounds different as it approaches you than when it moves away from you. What scientific term would you use to explain how this happens?

- a. ultrasound      c. rarefaction  
b. diffraction      ☒ d. the Doppler effect



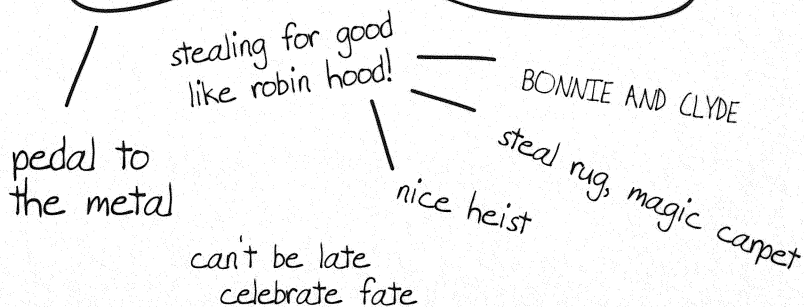
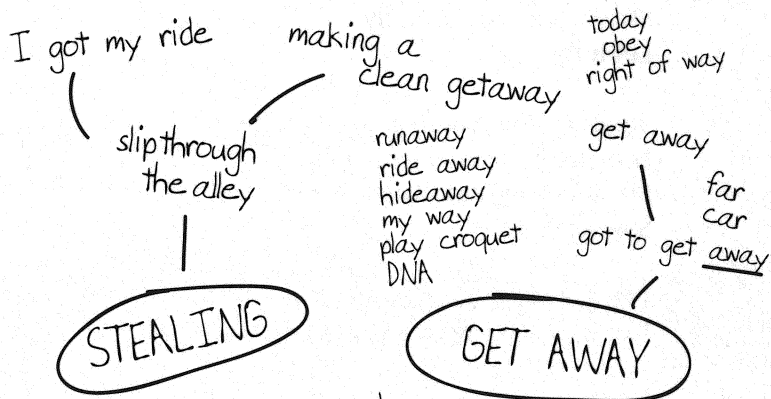
NOVEMBER 21. FRIDAY.

**Tripp**/I think you should add cello to your Little Room song.

**Lyla**/I heard a violinist at the metro. I'm applying for a permit for us!

Hey Mr. Odd,  
Annie joined the Canticle Quartet which makes it a Quintet. Even though we're still avoiding each other, I think it's great.  
—Ms. Even

# NEW SONG ABOUT OUR RUG ADVENTURE



Get Away

*Tripp, how's this  
for a start?*

I'll be Bonnie, you be Clyde  
Steal the snow out of the sky  
Steal a joke and let it fly  
Let it fly

Steal the show with your disguise  
Hide away from prying eyes  
Steal the fun and say surprise  
Say surprise

I've got to get away somehow  
I've got to get away right now



## NOVEMBER 22. SATURDAY.

### THE POMEGRANATE PLAYHOUSE; 11:31 A.M.

In the clearing on the right are an ancient-looking stone house and a beautiful wooden barn. Above the front doors of the barn is a big, brightly colored hand-painted sign: *THE POMEGRANATE PLAYHOUSE*.

After the cab pulls away, Tripp sets down the guitar case and turns to Lyla. "I can't do this," he says.

She picks up the case. "Yes, you can."

"You've played in front of billions of people. I haven't."

She pulls his arm. "Come on. We're going."

Cars are already parked on the grass next to the barn, and another car is just arriving. They head down a stone path decorated with pumpkins that have been scooped



out and filled with wildflowers, catching a glimpse of water and a small dock with a rowboat through the woods. Inside the barn is a stage with an ornately painted proscenium and shimmering curtains that are pulled aside. A dozen people are already sitting in the audience. More are coming in behind them.

Lyla motions for Tripp to look on the walls. Large paintings of pomegranates line both sides of the room.

A man in a suit comes over, and Lyla explains who they are. "Mom," he calls to an old woman talking to another woman by the stage. "The musicians are here!"

The old woman walks over, wildflowers in her hands. Although her face is lined with wrinkles, her eyes are blue and disarmingly clear, and a thick white braid hangs over her shoulder. Her dress is wine-colored with bright splashes of white and blue. "I'm Ruby. You're the Thrum Society?" She is clearly surprised.

"If you don't want us to play—" Tripp pulls back, and Lyla elbows him.

"Of course I want you to play!" A smile lights her face. "I'm delighted! So young! What talent! Come in, come in! I know we said we'd start at noon, but as soon as everybody's here, we're going to dive right in."

"No rehearsal?" Lyla asks.

"You'll be great." She smiles, walking them up the side stairs onto the stage, where there are two chairs and microphones off to the right. A woman wearing a

ministerial robe walks onto the stage, adjusting her collar, and Ruby introduces them to her. "Romeo is going to play the accordion for the entrance and the exit. So just sit tight. After the vows, Reverend Liz will give you a nod and you can play your waltz. How does this setup look? Need anything else?"

Tripp and Lyla look at each other. "Looks fine," Lyla says.

More people come in, and Ruby squeals with delight and rushes off to greet them.

Tripp and Lyla sit down.

"I didn't think we'd be on a stage," Tripp whispers. "I feel like everybody is looking at us."

Finally, just after all the seats fill, Reverend Liz stands in the center of the stage and looks at the doorway with an expectant smile. A tiny old man appears in the frame with a small button accordion, wearing a striped tuxedo with tails and a top hat. At first, it appears as though he is too frail to move, but he begins to play the accordion and does a funny shuffling dance up the aisle, stopping halfway to catch his breath. When he gets to the stairs leading up to the stage, he stops and gives a shrug and smile, saying in an Italian accent, "A long way up, no?"

Everybody laughs. Ruby's son and another man get one of the chairs from the stage and bring it down to him. After he sits, they carry the chair, with him in it, up the stairs and set it onstage.

Romeo plays louder and everyone turns to face the doorway.

Ruby appears with the wildflowers in her hands. She smiles at everyone as she walks down the aisle and up the stage steps to take the chair next to Romeo.

“Can I kiss my bride now?” the old man asks Reverend Liz. “Because maybe I don’t make it to the end.”

Everybody cheers them on, and he and Ruby share a kiss.

“I didn’t think she was the bride,” Lyla whispers.

“Me neither,” Tripp whispers back.

While the minister tells the story of how Ruby and Romeo met in Italy when Ruby wandered into a gallery and saw his paintings of pomegranates, Tripp thinks about how perfect and happy they look together. Then it’s time for the vows, and he can feel the nervousness approaching like a tidal wave; at any moment, the minister will be turning to give them the cue to sing. But the way Romeo takes Ruby’s face in his hands and looks straight into her eyes catches Tripp off guard. He was expecting the standard recitation of vows; instead, Romeo is speaking in a voice that—even though Tripp can’t understand the words—seems to be springing directly from the old man’s heart. “*Prometto di ascoltarti quando sei triste e di ridere con te quando sei felice.*” Romeo puts his hand on his chest. “I feel you in here, Ruby. And no matter what happens, I will always love you.” He smiles and puts a ring on her finger.

Ruby wipes away a tear and kisses him and whispers, "How did I get so lucky?"

He shrugs and she laughs. Then, through her tears, she says, "I, Ruby, take you, Romeo, to be my husband. I promise to listen to you when you are sad and to laugh with you when you are happy. I feel you in my heart. And no matter what happens, I will always love you." She puts a ring on his finger.

They kiss.

The minister nods at Tripp and Lyla to play their song.

Tripp feels all the blood rush from his head as the room grows silent and all eyes turn to them. He cannot possibly sing, and then he looks at Lyla, and her smile is like a hand on his arm. He takes a breath and starts to play. They sing the first few notes, and the familiar sound of their voices together gives him an added breath of confidence. His body relaxes and he lets the song pour out, their voices surging in harmony. It is the first time they have ever played in a large, open room; and, as their sound fills the room, it seems to join forces with the love that is emanating from Ruby and Romeo and the love that is pouring out of the entire audience, and it fills a space inside Tripp's chest and makes him feel more alive than he has ever felt.

When the last note ends, the silence that comes after it feels holy. He looks at Lyla. Her eyes are glistening, and she gives him a secret smile. They did it.

"I now pronounce you husband and wife!" the minister exclaims.

After Romeo and Ruby kiss, Romeo picks up his accordion and starts to play. Ruby's son and other men jump onstage and lift up both Ruby and Romeo in their chairs and carry them around while everyone follows, dancing and clapping, in a line.

Lyla jumps up and grabs Tripp's hand and they join the line. Lyla looks as if she couldn't possibly be happier, and it makes Tripp laugh out loud.

"What's so funny?" she yells over the noise.

He grins and shakes his head, unable to explain it.

The whole procession spills out of the barn, and when the song is over, Ruby invites everyone inside to eat lunch in the house, to return to the barn for more dancing, or to take the rowboat out for a ride.

"Let's take the boat out before it's time for the cab to come," Tripp suggests.

Lyla grabs the guitar and they head down to the dock.

Bordered on all sides by pine trees, the lake is full of small inlets edged with marsh grasses. Tripp rows, and Lyla sits opposite him with the guitar in her lap. They glide, listening to the splash of the oars and the creak of the boat, and then she starts to play. When they get to the middle of the lake, the gathering clouds drift over half of the sun, creating a ray that illuminates a path on the water. She stops and gives the guitar to Tripp. He

starts to play the chords she was playing, but plucks a rhythm that he has never tried before.

She leans forward. "I like how that sounds. Play it again."

He repeats the rhythm.

"We need to make up a new song," she says.

"What should it be about?"

She looks across the water and says, "All this."

"The lake?"

She smiles. "This feeling. This whole day has been so cool. I feel so lucky." The boat rocks gently.

He stops playing. "Did you ever think about how if I had been assigned to Room A instead of Room B, you wouldn't have seen my trash or the guitar, and we wouldn't have started writing notes, and we wouldn't be here right now?"

She nods. "That's what I mean. I feel lucky."

"*Trash is so lucky*," he sings and strums.

She laughs. "I want it to be a thrumming song. . . . When we were singing in there . . ."

He looks up.

". . . I felt like all our souls were thrumming at the same frequency." Her eyes are bright. "Yours. Mine. Ruby's. Romeo's. Everybody's."

He knew she felt the same way he did. He plays the chord progression again and sings, "*Lucky, lucky me.*"

"I like it!" she says. "That should be in the chorus. Let's get it down before we forget." She reaches into her

coat pocket and produces her digital recorder with a smile. "I'm like a Girl Scout. Always prepared." They sing it again and she records it.

"Let's have a verse that is kind of sad and then when it gets to the chorus, it's happy."

"I can do sad." He strums and sings, "*Before today, my days were blue. I was locked in a closet . . .*"

*. . . with mops and shampoo . . .*" Lyla laughs.

*. . . and a kangaroo,*" he adds, "*and a stinkin' shoe . . .*"

They start to experiment with different lines when they hear a voice.

"Lyla!"

It sends a shock through them at the same time. They look back toward the dock, and there, against the backdrop of the darkening sky, is Lyla's dad.

"Oh, this is not good," Lyla says.

"How did he find us?"

"Lyla!" her dad calls again.

"What should we do?" Tripp asks.

"What do you mean? What choice do we have? We have to row back." Lyla takes the guitar from him.

Tripp grabs the oars and begins turning the boat around as Lyla pulls out her phone and turns it on. Fifteen messages. "He must have found out I wasn't at school," Lyla says.

"What did you tell him?"

"That I was at a French club thing. I should've known this wouldn't work."

"But how did he find out we're here?"

"He must have read all our messages on my computer."

"He has your password?"

She nods. "He made it a rule that he has to have it, but I never thought he'd actually go snooping."

They fall silent as they approach the dock. Her father yells as soon as they get close enough to hear. "This is the most irresponsible thing —"

Tripp winces and keeps rowing.

"We were just coming in. I swear," Lyla says, her voice thick and anxious. "We were planning on being back in time —"

"I called fifteen times."

She holds up her phone. "I was just about to call you, Dad. Please don't overreact. . . ."

Tripp has rowed too hard; he plunges one oar in the water to turn the boat, but the bow slams against a dock post.

Mr. Marks crouches down. Holding the post with one arm, he reaches out and grabs the rope on the bow. "I know about everything," he says. "The lies . . . the secret meetings . . . stealing the guitar from school and the money from me that was supposed to go toward lessons. . . ." He throws a disgusted look at Tripp. "All this ugliness is stopping right now."

Tripp flinches. "It's not —"

"You don't have the right to say a single word," Mr. Marks says. "This friendship is over. I've already taken



steps. . . .” With one hand he pulls the rope so that the rowboat glides against the dock, then he reaches down and steadies it with the other hand. “Come on, Lyla. We’re leaving right now.” He glances back at Tripp. “Your mom knows, too, by the way.”

Lyla hands Tripp the guitar. The rock of the boat as she steps out breaks his heart. *Tell him, Lyla. Please tell him that it wasn’t ugly.*

Mr. Marks puts his arm around Lyla and leads her away. Lyla turns back and looks at Tripp, her eyes full of tears. Tripp sits in the boat and watches as they walk up the path and out of sight, everything good inside him draining out.

He pulls out his phone, turns it on, types in a message to her, and hits SEND, but it bounces back. *Message failed.* He tries again and again. Could Mr. Marks have blocked his number from Lyla’s phone? Is that what he meant by “already taken steps”?

Lyla’s digital recorder is on the seat. As he picks it up and puts it in his pocket, his phone buzzes. Mom calling. Reluctantly, he answers. “Yeah?”

Her exhale is loud. “Finally. Somebody named Lyla’s dad called me up and basically told me what a horrible person you are.”

“It’s not what you think—”

“I don’t know what’s going on. It was humiliating, Tripp. I’m on my way—I’m at a red light. When I get there, we’re going to—”

“You don’t have to come. There’s a cab coming—”

“A cab?”

“It’s how we came. We already paid him for the return trip. He’s coming back at—”

“You’re not taking a cab. I’ll be there in half an hour.”

“Mom—”

“The light turned green. I have to go. I’m hanging up.”

Tripp slides his phone closed. He sits for a long minute, staring at the water. Then he reluctantly gets out. On his way past the house, Ruby’s son stops him and hands him an envelope with cash and tells him how much they enjoyed their music. Guitar in hand, he heads up the driveway to the road and sits on a tree stump. He calls Aamod, who is already on his way, and cancels.

“No refund,” Aamod says.

“Yeah, I know.” Tripp replies.

A raindrop lands on his hand, and he looks up at the clouds.

## THE MARKSES’ CAR; 3:14 P.M.

Mr. Marks’s voice is stretched thin. “We can make it. I have your cello and dress clothes in the backseat. We’ll go straight there and you can change and have a good forty minutes to warm up.” He leans forward and wipes the condensation collecting on the inside of the windshield.

Lyla looks at the raindrops on the window. The beauty

of the wedding ceremony, of their music, and of the boat ride with Tripp seem like scenes from a play. She didn't stick up for Tripp. She left without even saying good-bye. Tripp must think she is a coward.

"Lyla?" Her father's voice cracks. His hands are gripping the wheel, his eyes are brimming with tears. "Lyla, I don't understand how you could do something like this today. Didn't you realize how worried I'd be?"

One raindrop pools into another and they form a narrow river running down her window.

"It's like you don't even care about the audition," her father continues. "This is so unlike you."

"I told you," Lyla says. "We arranged for a cab to get us. I would've gotten home on time."

"On time!? On the day of a big audition, you do not go running away from home and playing around with —"

"I wasn't running away from home. I was —"

"This whole guitar thing. I know you feel sorry for this boy, for whatever he's been through, but he is trouble. . . ."

Lyla closes her eyes.

"That's the thing about your age group," he goes on. "One day you like this . . . the next day you like that . . . but you can't let an opportunity like Coles slip by and regret it."

She can't breathe.

The road curves sharply and he brakes and swerves to follow it.

She pulls out her phone and checks her messages.

They are all from her dad. Nothing from Tripp yet. She starts typing a new message.

"You're not texting him," he says.

"Dad—"

"I blocked his number from your phone."

"Dad, you can't just do that—"

"Lyla." Her dad flicks on the windshield wipers and leans forward. "Hold on. See that piece of paper? I wrote down the directions. What's the name of the next road? Pine Top?"

"Dad, you can't just block people from my phone."

"Lyla, a friendship with that boy is not a good idea." The road curves again, and he passes a turnoff for another road. "I think that was Pine Top. Look at the directions, please, and tell me if I should find a place to turn around."

"Dad, you don't understand. Tripp isn't a bad person—"

"Lyla, I don't think you're in a position to judge—"

The road curves again and, between one sweep of the wiper's arm, Lyla sees the deer leap from the woods onto the asphalt: the pronged antlers, the muscular haunches, the delicate legs.

She knows the instant she sees the deer that it is too late. Her father slams on the brakes, and the car begins to spin out of control. Lyla hears a scream, and she doesn't know if it's coming from her father, herself, the deer, or the screeching tires.

*But I'm not ready to die*, she thinks; and in that split

second, she imagines she is still sitting in the rowboat, playing the guitar with Tripp, the boat rocking gently on the surface of the water.

The deer touches down just inches beyond the car and leaps again, his back hoof clearing the bumper. The car swerves off the road and heads for a large pine tree. Lyla braces herself as the tree seems to rush forward to meet them. A crack as loud as the splitting of the earth hits her ears as they crash. The spinning stops, and then the world goes silent.

The deer is gone.

### THE BROODYS' CAR; 3:21 P.M.

"Enlighten me, Tripp," his mom says as she drives. "How on earth did you talk this poor girl into stealing a guitar from school and skimming money from her dad's pocket so that you could take a sixty-minute cab ride to—"

"It wasn't like that. You're making it sound like I'm—"

"I'm just relaying what her dad said to me. Do you have any idea what it's like to have a complete stranger call you up and tell you, essentially, that your kid is a criminal and that you are a bad parent?"

"I'm not a criminal."

"According to Mr. Marks, this girl was a perfect student until you came along. He called you a 'terrible influence.'" His mother's voice rages on like a fire. "He

wants you to stay as far away from his daughter as is humanly possible. What is wrong with you?"

"We're friends. We—"

"Oh, come on."

"What? You don't believe I have a friend?"

"Frankly, I don't. You haven't made an effort since Josh moved away. That was a year and a half ago, Tripp."

"Well, she's a friend. I have a friend."

"More like you have someone who can get you a precious guitar."

Tripp looks out the window.

The sky opens, and the rain pours.

"No, really. I'm waiting to be enlightened, Tripp. Explain what this supposed music gig was all about. You expect me to believe that someone would hire a kid they don't even know to play at something as important as a wedding?"

"I'm not just a kid. And they're really nice people—"

"—who could have been ax murderers. Did you ever think of that?" She throws him a look. "Did you ever think that somebody could have been posing as a bride and groom to get you to lure this girl out and kidnap her? Reckless and dangerous." She shakes her head.

Through the rain, he watches the blur of passing trees. He will not bother to explain anything to her. She just shoots him down as soon as he starts to talk.

"You're going to write a letter of apology to that girl's

father and pay him back the money that you basically stole from him for this cab ride. I'll drive you to their house tomorrow night and you can deliver it personally. On Monday, you're going to return the guitar to school with an apology to that music teacher. You're going to report to the store every day after school to do your homework. No ifs, ands, or buts. And Thanksgiving weekend, I expect you to work for me." She throws another hard glance. "You're going to Crenshaw if they accept you." The road curves. She turns right onto Pine Top Road and heads toward home.

### THE MARKSES' CAR; 3:24 P.M.

"Lyla?" Her father's voice is frantic. "Lyla?"

When Lyla opens her eyes, she sees a jumble of images like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that have been dumped into one pile. Jagged metal on her left leg and a tree branch where the window should be. Diamonds are scattered everywhere and a red river is running over her and dripping into her lap.

She tries to move her head, and the pain rips through her. Her eyes close and she feels herself sinking even though she is pinned against the seat. The rain is pouring down her neck, and she decides that she must be in the lake. *It's so cold*, she says, but her lips don't move.

Pinned to the seat next to her, her father manages to

pull his cell phone out of his pocket to dial 911. "Yes, it's an emergency. An accident. We need an ambulance. My daughter . . ." He is breathless.

She hears his voice. *He must be swimming, she thinks, trying to hold his head above the water. Is he talking about me? Am I the daughter? I should call out to him. . . .*

She feels as if she is sinking into dark green water.

## TRIPP'S ROOM; 5:13 P.M.

<To: Lyla Marks> November 22

Lyla, I think your dad blocked my number from your phone. Please, please meet me in the tree house tomorrow. Tomorrow night my mom is driving me to your house to deliver an apology and the money we took from your lessons. On Monday, I have to return the school guitar. That reminds me. I have the money from the gig. They paid us in cash. I have it in my wallet and I want you to have it. I'll give it to you at school on Monday. Please write back. I'm going crazy.—Tripp





NOVEMBER 23. SUNDAY.

TRIPP'S ROOM; 1:37 P.M.

Dear Mr. Marks,

~~Please accept this apology. I'm sorry  
for being alive.~~

Dear Mr. Marks,

~~Please accept this apology. And  
please stop forcing the cello down your  
daughter's throat. This will damage her  
singing voice, which is really beautiful.~~

Dear Mr. Marks,

I'm sorry for encouraging your daughter to let her soul thrum.

Dear Mr. Marks,

Why don't you play the cello and leave Lyla alone?

Dear Mr. Marks,

Please don't take Lyla away. She is my best friend.

Dear Mr. Marks,

I am sorry about all the secrets. Please don't be mad at Lyla. I'm not a criminal and I wasn't using her. We became friends, and we started playing the guitar together and writing songs together, and it was a good thing. Lyla is an amazing songwriter, and she was also helping me with my homework, which was genuinely nice because I started to really like science. But I know you're upset because all these things were keeping her from playing the cello.

Please accept this apology.

-Tripp Broody

## TRIPP'S ROOM; 8:57 P.M.

<To: Lyla Marks> November 23

Lyla, I waited all day. Are you mad at me? I get the fact that your dad probably blocked my phone number and my e-mail address, but I thought you'd find some way to talk to me. My mom drove me to your house, but no one was home. She didn't want me to leave cash, but I left a note for your dad. I hope it helps. Tell him my mom is going to mail a check. I'm having a panic attack that he has taken you away and locked you up someplace. Did you do the audition yesterday? Please find a way to tell me what's going on. Tomorrow I'm going to the grocery store to stock up on pomegranates. If your dad won't let me see you, I'm going to lob them at his head. We have to finish our thrumming song. I have your digital recorder.—Tripp

## HOSPITAL; 8:58 P.M.

Down a gleaming white corridor through a set of double doors marked SURGICAL INTENSIVE CARE UNIT, Lyla is lying in a bed, slightly upright, with her arms at her

sides, bound to the metal rails to keep her from moving. Her face is swollen, and her eyelids are purple and puffy. Her head is shaved, and underneath the bandage, a piece of her skull has been removed. A breathing tube is in her mouth, held in place by white tape. A trickle of liquid is snaking out her right ear and down her neck. A thinner tube is taped to her right arm and connected to a bag that is hanging from a silver stand. Through the needle in her arm, cold liquid drips into her veins, medicine to reduce the swelling of her brain and to keep her asleep, and fluids to keep her hydrated. Underneath the blue hospital blanket, her left leg is in a cast. The hiss of the ventilator fills the room.

She is somewhere past a dream, floating in a dark green lake. Hour after hour, the current gently tries to pull her farther away.



## NOVEMBER 24. MONDAY.

### ORCHESTRA ROOM; 8:13 A.M.

Tripp walks into the music room with the guitar and a note of apology. It's an even day, which means Lyla should be coming to the orchestra room first period, so he is hoping she will walk through the door and smile.

Instead, he overhears Mr. Jacoby talking with Mr. Sanders about the accident. Bit by bit he pieces together what has happened to Lyla, then Mr. Jacoby notices him and stops talking. The teacher takes the guitar and the note and pauses, as if he doesn't know what to say. Finally, he gives him a nod and tells him to go to class.

Tripp walks out in a daze. Ahead, he sees Annie approaching and he stops her.

She looks sick to her stomach and says, "I don't want to talk about it."

The bell rings and she hurries into the music room.

"I'm sure you have somewhere to go, Tripp," Mr. Handlon says as he walks by.

Tripp walks to class and sits down. He wants to scream, but he is locked in the reality of this classroom, this day.

He gets through his morning classes. At lunch, he calls Lyla even though he knows it's pointless, and then he writes three notes to Annie, asking her to tell him what she knows, but he throws them all away. By the afternoon, differing rumors about Lyla's accident are all over school. She has a broken leg. She has a concussion. She is going to be all right. She is dying.

As soon as school is over, his mom calls and reminds him that he has to come to the store. When he gets there, she peppers him with meaningless questions. Did you give the guitar back with an apology? Yes. Do you have your algebra book? Yes. Do you know what you're supposed to do for science? Yes.

He goes into the back workroom and enters his zip code and the word *hospital* in a search engine on the computer. Fifteen hospitals are listed. He calls each one and asks if there is a patient named Lyla Marks. No each time. A thought occurs to him. He puts in the address for the Pomegranate Playhouse and finds the nearest hospital. He calls it, and the woman on the end of the line tells him that she's there. Time seems to stop.

"Is she okay?"

"Are you a family member?"

"I'm a friend."

"Information about this patient is unavailable at this time."

"Why? Can't you just tell me if she's going to be okay?"

"I'm sorry," the woman says. "It says here that family members only should have access to patient information."

He doesn't know what to do. To keep his mom off his back, he does his homework.

As soon as they get home, he disappears into his room. He listens to the recording that they made on the boat, their voices singing *lucky, lucky me*, and then he switches it off. It's like a horrible taunt.



NOVEMBER 25. TUESDAY.

ROCKLAND SCHOOL; 8:11 A.M.

A group of girls from Advanced Orchestra put a big white basket and a note about Lyla by the music room. Three stuffed animals are in the basket as well as cards that people are signing. Someone is going to bring it to the hospital tomorrow.

All day he hears more rumors. Lyla is in a coma. Lyla is brain-dead.

Annie is absent, and someone says she's visiting Lyla. Someone else says Annie's at home, sick because she's worried that Lyla is going to die hating her. She and Lyla were in a big fight over him. People are talking. No one talks to him directly, but they know that he and Lyla were



caught in the music room together; they know that they were eating lunch together. People are looking at him strangely. Like maybe he is to blame. Then he hears Marisse say that the reason Annie is sick is because she thinks she caused the accident; that day she had called Marisse and confessed that she was hoping that Lyla wouldn't make it to the Coles audition. It was like a jinx, Marisse says.

As soon as school is out, Tripp leaves. He calls Lyla's home phone number and listens to the recorded message. "You've reached the Marks residence. Please leave your name and number after the beep."

Tripp takes a breath. "This is Tripp Broody. . . . I know I'm not supposed to call. But I just need to know how Lyla is. This is my cell phone number. Please call back."



NOVEMBER 26. WEDNESDAY.

ROCKLAND SCHOOL; 8:21 A.M.

Tripp hears from Mr. Sanders that Lyla was transferred to a special hospital nearby. He says that Lyla isn't snapping out of it; yes—it's really a coma. Tripp wants to ask what that means, but he is too afraid.

At lunchtime, he sees Annie in the hallway and hears that she and another girl are going to take the basket, overflowing now with stuffed animals, to the hospital after school today. All day he wants to put a note in the basket, but he is worried that Mr. Marks will read it and get even more angry.

## TRIPP'S ROOM; 7:53 P.M.

Tripp is sitting at his desk, reading articles about comas on the web. People in comas can often hear, but they can't get a certain part of the brain to wake up, so they can't respond. He clicks on a story about a woman who was in a car accident at the age of twenty-six and never woke up. The story hits him like a kick to the stomach.

The door to his room opens, and his mom walks in, oblivious to what he's going through. "I just got an e-mail from Crenshaw about your status." She holds up a print-out. "We have to talk about this sooner or later, so it might as well be sooner."

He holds his breath and stares at his screen, trying to keep from falling apart.

"So you're not talking? Is that it, Tripp?"

"Please just leave me alone, Mom."

"Don't give me that attitude."

Her voice shoves against him, and his composure breaks. He gets up, sending his chair to the floor with a crash, and meets his mother's gaze. "Lyla got in a car accident on the way home from the wedding. Okay, Mom? And I don't know if she's going to be all right."

He pushes past her, walks out the back door and down the steps, and stands in the backyard. The ground under his feet is cold, the air, too—he can see his breath. No moon. No stars. Nothing but black. Why is it that

everything he loves gets taken away from him? It's like there's a black hole in the sky with his name on it and its job is to suck everything that he loves out of existence.

Lining either side of the concrete patio are rows of autumn mums in clay flowerpots, and the cheerful symmetry, for some reason, makes him even angrier. He picks up a flowerpot and hurls it at their fence. Even as the satisfying crash hits his ears, he knows that it is pointless. The flowerpots are not to blame. He picks up another and throws it anyway and then another, until all six are broken, and finally he sits on the bottom step.

After a few minutes, he hears the sound of the door opening behind him. His mom walks down the stairs and sits next to him, hugging herself to stay warm. She sees the broken pots and says nothing about them. Finally, she speaks. "I called Tina Chan, a mom I know from last year's silent auction committee to see if she had any information about Lyla. I remember that she was involved with the music program and thought she might know Lyla's family."

Tripp doesn't move.

"A deer jumped in front of the Marks's car, Tripp. I don't want you to blame yourself or Lyla's dad, for that matter. It's nobody's fault. It just happened."

Tripp takes this in. "Is she going to be okay?"

"Kids are resilient. I bet she'll get better soon."

He looks at the broken pots. "That means you don't know."

She is silent. "Yeah. I don't know, Tripp. It's definitely a serious injury."

He lets his breath out in a small stream. "I want to go to the hospital."

She puts an arm around his shoulder. "It's really nice that you want to visit her, Tripp. Really nice. But . . . I don't know . . . her dad must be so overwhelmed, and it might upset him. I don't think we should be adding tension to the situation, do you?"

Tripp looks at the black sky.

She pats his leg. "It's freezing. Come inside."

He nods, but he doesn't move.

"You know you can't go around breaking flowerpots, either." She attempts a smile. He nods again. "Come inside, honey."

"In a minute."

She goes in, and he closes his eyes.

*Lyla . . . just wake up. Please.*

## HOSPITAL; 9:06 P.M.

"Sweetie, feel this. Feel how soft it is." Lyla's dad picks up her hand and slips a small stuffed teddy bear underneath it. "Feel that? If you can hear my voice, just wiggle your fingers."

The voice washes over her. She has sunk to the bottom of the lake, too deep for the voice to reach her.

“The doctor said the swelling is gone. The medicine is out of your system. All you have to do is open your eyes. . . .” His voice chokes. “Sweetie, please . . .”



NOVEMBER 27. THURSDAY.

THE BROODYS' CAR; 3:07 P.M.

The drive to Aunt Gertrude's is long and quiet. It's Thanksgiving. Tripp thinks about Lyla, and Ruby, and Romeo, and Annie, and even Benjamin Fick, but mostly he thinks about Lyla and how much he misses her. He imagines her in the hospital, and his body aches. Over and over, he says her name in his mind. His mom had said nobody was to blame for the accident and maybe that's true. But Lyla's life might have been better if she hadn't met him, and this is the thought that makes him the saddest. She would not have been on that road, and the deer would not have crossed her path, and she and Annie wouldn't have gotten into such a big fight, and she

would have aced the Coles audition and would live happily ever after. He should've stayed away. That was the trick. To stay separate from people. Keep a block of ice around his soul. Don't dream. Don't sing. Don't thrum.

"You can turn on the radio if you want," his mother says from the driver's seat.

He shakes his head, leans against the window, and closes his eyes.

*Lucky, lucky me.* He hates the fact that they were singing that in the boat right before the accident. He isn't lucky at all. He is cursed, and he brought that to Lyla. Just when he feels he won't be able to breathe, his mom turns to him.

"Tripp," she says gently. "If you want, I can try calling Tina Chan later today to see if I can get an update."

He takes in a small silent breath of gratitude and nods his head, and she seems to know that he can't say or do anything more than this.

## AUNT GERTRUDE'S HOUSE; 7:33 P.M.

Just after dinner, Tripp's mom steps into Aunt Gertrude's foyer to make the call. Tripp follows her and waits until she is done.

"She is off the ventilator, which means she is breathing on her own. She's also swallowing, which is good," she



says. "And she's getting really great care. The best doctors are on it." She has chosen her words carefully and she tries to smile.

Tripp knows she's trying to make him feel better, but he can see through it. If Lyla were improving, she wouldn't need the best doctors.



## NOVEMBER 30. SUNDAY.

### BROODY'S RUG & CARPET; 2:37 P.M.

Tripp is in the back workroom. He is supposed to be tossing the old samples into the Dumpster in the alley, but he is pacing. Since Thursday, every report about Lyla has been the same: no change. She isn't waking up.

His mom has been more sympathetic, but she doesn't really know who Lyla is or what their friendship was like. She has made it clear that she thinks the way to handle the tension is to keep on track with work. Neither of them has mentioned Crenshaw or the guitar. He can't talk about anything. He can't escape from the feeling that he brought nothing but trouble to Lyla. *Lucky, lucky me.*

As he passes the closet where his guitar is hidden, he bangs the padlock angrily.

After a few laps, he goes to the computer and checks his e-mail. He isn't expecting anything, and so it is a shock to see something in his in-box after all.

To: TrippBroody  
From: JamesDarling  
Date: November 30  
Re: Wedding video  
Attach: PSsong.wmv

Hi. Thought you might enjoy this video clip of you singing. You guys blew us all away. You added so much to the experience. We're really grateful you could share your music with us all. Thanks again.

—Jimmy (Ruby's son)

Tripp clicks on the video and it begins to play. Framed in the small video window are Ruby and Romeo sitting side by side on the stage, beaming, in the crazy elegance of the barn; and then the camera shifts and focuses on Lyla and him with the guitar. He can see the nervousness that he was trying to hide, and then Lyla smiles at him, and he feels that rush of warmth again, as if she is smiling at him right now. They start to play and their voices rise together; and, as he watches, an intense ripple of joy dances across his heart. The song pulses through him and lifts him, and

he can't move until it's over. He plays it again and again.

When he finally turns it off, the silence seems to draw the walls of the workroom closer toward one another. He flashes back to the night his dad died in the hospital, to that feeling of helplessness he felt when he was sitting at home. He can't just sit here and do nothing. He opens the back door, looking out at the alley as if he'll see Lyla there in her Bonnie beret, blowing fake smoke through her lips. Puddles gleam on the black asphalt. A cat pokes through the empty boxes next to the Dumpster.

Lost, he closes the door, pulls Lyla's digital recorder and earbuds out of his backpack, and listens again to them singing in the boat, while he paces between the carpet remnants, the tool bench, and the trash bins. *Lucky, lucky me.* This time, instead of hearing the words as a taunt, he hears the joy in their voices as an undeniable truth. They were lucky to find each other. Nobody could take that away.

Grabbing a piece of paper out of the recycling bin, he starts working on the new song. He starts to pace again, singing it to himself, jotting down the lyrics as they come, reading the song over and over and adding more. When he's done, he stuffs it into his back pocket and walks into the showroom. His mom is behind the sales counter, thumbing through a stack of bills.

"Mom." He takes a breath. "Please open the closet. I'm going to get my guitar and I'm going to the hospital."

Her shoulders sag. "Tripp."

“I’m asking nicely.”

“Tripp, I’m sure your intentions—” The bell on the front door jingles, and two women walk in. Tripp’s mom looks at him with pity, but he can tell she isn’t going to give. “You can’t barge in on a family at a time like this. We need to give it more time. We’ll talk about it in a few minutes,” she whispers, and turns to greet the customers.

She is wrong. She was wrong about not letting him see his dad in the hospital, and she is wrong about this. He walks into the back room and picks up a crowbar. He sticks one end between the closet door and its frame and pushes. The door doesn’t budge, but a dent appears in the frame. He tries again. Then he holds it with one hand, steps back, and gives the crowbar a good hard kick. The wood of the door frame splinters, but the lock is still in place. He wedges the end of the crowbar right against the tongue of the lock and kicks it again. The door pops open.

His guitar is in the back, in its case, between a mop and a bucket. He grabs it and walks out just as his mom is heading in to see what the noise was about.

“I have to go,” he says.

“Tripp!” his mom calls out, but he keeps walking out the door, his heart pounding. The guitar case feels so right in his hand. “Tripp! Wait!”

He runs for a full block without looking back and then stops and pulls out his wallet. Luckily, he never took the wedding money out. He catches the next cab he sees.

When he arrives at the hospital, he tells the woman at

the visitor's desk that he is Lyla Marks's brother — just in case they only allow family — and she gives him the room number. When he gets to the third floor, he sees Mr. Marks, back toward him, talking with several people at the nurses' station in the middle of the hallway. Room 302 is on the right. He ducks in without being seen, and there is Lyla, lying still, a row of small stuffed animals lining either side of her bed.

He can't look at her.

The basket from school is on a table next to her bed. Above it, a bouquet of blue foil balloons kiss the ceiling, their strings tied to the basket handle. Curtains are drawn against the window. A stack of get-well cards is sitting on the chair. He walks around her bed, sets down his guitar case, and gets out his guitar. When he finally turns and wills himself to look at her, his throat burns.

Lyla's face is so still, she doesn't seem real. Her arms are on top of the blanket. An IV tube is attached to her right hand, which is bruised, and the other arm is bandaged. She looks so different, so fragile, like if he touched her, she might crumble.

A part of him is so scared he wants to leave, but he fights the fear and keeps his eyes on her face. He remembers the articles he read describing how people in comas can often hear, even if they can't respond. It takes him a minute to work up the courage to say her name out loud, and when he does, it comes out in barely a whisper.

"Lyla . . . look . . ." He holds up the guitar, lifts the

strap over his head, and manages a shaky smile. "I broke the door down, Lyla."

No response.

One at a time, he plucks each string, tuning as he goes. He strums it once and lets the sound fill the quiet of the room.

A yellow bruise still runs the entire length of the left side of her face, but the curve of her ear facing him is untouched and perfect.

He clears his throat and tries to get rid of the shakiness in his voice, to speak louder. "Lyla, it's me, Tripp. We were in the middle of making up a new song, remember?" He thinks about how bright her eyes looked that day on the lake. "I worked on it, Lyla. So you have to wake up and listen." He stops and pulls her digital recorder out of his pocket. "I'm going to record this. I came prepared . . . like a Girl Scout." He manages a quick laugh and turns it on, gently setting it next to her arm on the bed. "I'm going to leave the recorder here so you can listen to it anytime you want, okay? All our songs are on here, too. Okay?"

Her face is still. Her eyelashes are curved and pretty, the light on the wall behind her bed throwing tiny shadows of them on her skin.

*Open your eyes, Lyla. Just open your eyes.* His throat closes and his eyes fill with tears. He blinks them back and leans in closer. "I really need you to wake up, Lyla. I'm hearing a harmony on this. It doesn't sound good with just me. It needs your voice."

The room is silent.

“You said . . . in the boat . . . you said that you wanted the verse to be sad and then the chorus to be happy, so that’s what I tried to do.” When he starts to play, his fingers falter and he stops. He closes his eyes. Then he takes a breath and starts again.

As he sings, he imagines that he is pouring all of his energy into the air. He imagines that it is entering her ear and filling her, waking her up, molecule by molecule. He sings with everything he’s got, and when he’s done, he opens his eyes and sees his mom standing inside the doorway, tears streaming down her face. She can hardly get the words out, but Tripp understands her.

She says, “That was beautiful.”

Tripp looks at Lyla and starts to cry. Then he looks back up at his mom. “She has to wake up,” he says.

She nods through her tears.

The door opens, and Lyla’s dad walks in, speechless.

“I’m sorry.” Tripp wipes his face quickly. He fumbles to put his guitar back in the case and then he stops and slips his pick under Lyla’s hand. He looks at her one more time. Then he grabs his case and walks out, his head buzzing, his feet unable to feel the floor.

Just as the elevator door is opening, his mother arrives behind him. She doesn’t say a word, but she puts her arm around his shoulders and she holds him against her side.

After the small thump signals their arrival at the lobby and while they’re waiting for the elevator doors



to open, the words spill out. "None of it was ugly, Mom."

Her words come back quickly. "I can see that."

The doors open and she reaches into her pocket and takes out a tissue, which she hands to him, and then she picks up his guitar case. "Don't worry. I'm just carrying it to the car, not stealing it." She laughs as she wipes away her own tears and steps out.

Still in the elevator, he laughs and then he thinks of Lyla and starts to cry again, and his mom dives back in, stopping the doors with the guitar, to hug him.

## HOSPITAL; 6:36 P.M.

"Lyla?" Her dad's voice is a whisper.

He pulls the chair close to her bed, and when he tries to hold her hand, he finds the red guitar pick that Tripp has left. One word is written on it in permanent marker: *Thrum*.

He puts the pick back in her hand and folds her fingers over it. Then he gently puts an earbud in each of her ears and pushes the play button on the recorder.

The sound of the guitar comes first and then Tripp's voice.

*The sun was tied up in clouds  
And the moon wrung out of its songs.  
Up on Twelfth Street the trees were just trees*

*Holding nothing but leaves in their arms.  
All my days were locked in a closet with the  
Rags and the brooms and the mops,  
Nothing to feel but the feel of nothing  
Slipping through keyholes and locks.*

*But you know what I need,  
You strum against my strings  
And make me sing,  
Sing lucky, lucky me,  
Sing lucky, lucky me.*

The music rides on a wave into her.

*You were telling your little white lie,  
Making everybody happy, crying inside,  
Staying so long with what they chose,  
You almost missed what you needed most.  
All your days were stuck in a rhythm  
That you couldn't change or stop,  
Nothing to say 'cause your words and emotions  
Were twisted and chained in a knot.*

*But I know what you need,  
I strum against your strings  
And make you sing,  
Sing lucky, lucky me,  
Sing lucky, lucky me.*

The sound travels through her and strikes against the strings of her soul. Deep inside, she begins to feel the vibration. It has rippled all the way to the bottom of the lake through the dark green water.

She sees the boat, far above her, on the surface. Tripp is playing the guitar. They are singing. The day is beautiful.

She tries to rise toward the boat, but the weight of the water is too heavy. And then she hears his voice. . . .

*We can't let this pass us by,  
Can't let it go without a fight.  
We are who we're meant to be,  
Singing lucky, lucky me.*

### TRIPP'S ROOM; 11:31 P.M.

Tripp is lying in his bed, unable to sleep, when his phone buzzes. He answers.

"Is this Tripp? This is Lyla's dad."

Tripp sits up. "Yeah, it's me."

"Sorry for calling so late, but . . ." Tripp hears Mr. Marks choke back tears, and he feels as if his heart has stopped beating. "She . . . she squeezed my hand." Tripp hears his happy laugh break through. "It's a really good sign. It's what we've been waiting for, Tripp."

A chill runs up Tripp's spine.

“I’ll call you tomorrow and give you a progress report.”

“Thanks,” Tripp says.

There is a moment of silence on the other end and then Mr. Marks says, “I think it was the music, Tripp. Your music.”

The tears stream down Tripp’s face and he breaks into a smile. When the call is over, he gets out of bed and knocks on his mom’s door.

“Tripp? What is it?”

He opens it, and she sits up in bed and switches on her light.

He looks at her, happy that she is here, in her plain nightgown and her messed-up hair with that worried look on her face, to witness what he is about to say.

“Lyla’s dad called.” He smiles. “She squeezed his hand.”



## DECEMBER-MARCH

To: gillias\_t@crenshaw.com

From: tBroody@broodyrc.com

Date: 12-1

Re: Tripp Broody

Dear Mr. Gillias,

My son and I have discussed it and have decided that it is best for him to remain in his current school. We enjoyed meeting the Crenshaw staff and thank you for your time.

**M+H** METRO HEALTHCARE, LLC.

---

To: Franklin Marks

From: Husna Ahuja, M.D.

Dear Mr. Marks,

Great news. Results from the neurological tests came back yesterday. No residual problems with brain or motor functioning. Everything looks normal. Report from Point Orthopedics indicates that Lyla responded well to physical therapy and the follow-up x-ray of the femur was also normal. She should be able to participate fully in school and continue with extracurricular activities. We'd like to see her for a follow-up in two weeks.

Name: *Tripp Broody*

Physics Unit Exam

*A*

*Perfect!*

1. When a sound source approaches you, the pitch you hear is

- a. lower than when the source is stationary
- ☒ b. higher than when the source is stationary
- c. the same as when the source is stationary
- d. first higher and then lower than the pitch of the source when stationary

2. To calculate the frequency of an electromagnetic wave, you need to know the speed of the wave and its

- ☒ a. wavelength
- b. refraction
- c. intensity
- d. amplitude

3. Electromagnetic waves vary in

- a. the speed they travel in a vacuum
- ☒ b. wavelength and frequency
- c. the way they reflect
- d. the orientation of their electric and magnetic fields



## *A note from Annie...*

Hey Lyla,

I'm glad we talked it all out, too. I decided to say yes to Coles after all. I'm excited & scared. I'll probably hate it, but I agree with my mom that it's too important to not try.

I found out that Bethany, that girl we met at camp last year, is going so I'll at least know one other person. I'll miss you & everybody at Rockland, except for a few people & teachers. Ha ha. BTW I listened to your songs on your website, & I thought they were amazing. Really.

Love, Annie

<To: Lyla Marks> February 16

Lyla, I was just listening to our recording of Lucky Me. You should add cello! I could hear it in my head and it sounded so cool.

## House of Musical Traditions

-----  
Date: 03/10  
Staff: Molly

Time: 4:07  
Trans: 4628823  
-----

\*\*\*COPY\*\*\*

Luna Acoustic Guitar \$399.00

SUBTOTAL	399.00
SALES TAX	24.94
TOTAL	423.94

THANK YOU FOR SHOPPING WITH US!





## MARCH 28. SATURDAY.

### TRIPP'S ROOM; 10:01 A.M.

. . . SUNNY AND WARM. HIGHS AROUND 50. SOUTHWEST WINDS FIVE TO TEN MILES PER HOUR. 97.3 FM WEATHER. STAY TUNED TO THIRTY MINUTES OF UNINTERRUPTED MUSIC BROUGHT TO YOU BY . . .

The sound of the radio drills into Tripp Broody's ears, and his eyelids open. His right hand reaches up and swats off the clock's alarm button. Why is his alarm on? It's Saturday. After three slow blinks, he notices the note stuck between the strings of his guitar, which is in the stand by his bed.

Dear Tripp,

Before I went to work this morning, Lyla's dad called asking if he and Lyla could swing by and pick you up at 10:30. So I set your alarm. I'll let them explain what it's about. It's fine with me if you want to do it. Have a great day, and tell me all about it when I come home.

Love, Mom

Tripp lifts up the shade of his window. The sky is cloudless; the trees are all green with new leaves. His phone buzzes. A message from Lyla.

**Lyla**/are you up?

**Tripp**/yeah. what's going on?

**Lyla**/not telling. we'll be there soon. bye.

He pulls on jeans and a shirt and eats a quick breakfast. After a few minutes, there is a knock on the door, and Tripp runs to answer it.

Lyla is standing on his steps in her red coat, with her black beret over her short hair, a guitar case in her hand.

"Hello, Mr. Odd," she says, smiling.

"Hello, Ms. Even," he says.

"Get your guitar because . . ." She grins.

"What?"

"We have a gig today," she says.

"We do?"

She pulls a piece of paper from her pocket and hands it to him.

**Washington Metropolitan Transit Authority  
Musicians in the Metro Permit  
Granted to Tripp Broody and Lyla Marks**

Behind her, waiting, is her dad in his car.

“Are you in?” she asks.

He smiles. “Indeed.”

When they arrive at the station, Tripp and Lyla show their permit to the Metro attendant and set up on the platform. People are streaming off the train and through the Metro turnstile: business types in suits, shoppers with bags, everybody in a hurry.

Even though they have a permit, they still feel self-conscious in the bustling, focused atmosphere. People are here to get on and off trains, not to hear music. But Tripp and Lyla tune up and look at each other for encouragement, and when they start to play, the chords rise and echo off the curved walls with such a bright, huge sound, there is no turning back.

They begin to sing. Tripp relaxes into the sound and lets his voice pour out. Lyla feels his confidence and sings out, too.

A woman pulling a wheeled suitcase steps off the train, and when she hears the music, she stops and listens. The trains whoosh by. A man carrying a small boy stops. He

sets down his son and listens with him, nodding his head. The boy bends his knees up and down to the beat, and the dad grins.

Tripp and Lyla sing, and their song rides on a wave in all directions: it fills the station, and enters into the ears of all the people getting off the trains, and rises up the long escalators, and flows out into the March air.

And they are thrumming.



# THE THRUM SOCIETY SONGBOOK

*Words and Music by  
Tripp Broody and Lyla Marks*

[WWW.THRUMSOCIETY.COM](http://WWW.THRUMSOCIETY.COM)

# A Little Room to Play

## VERSE

**G**

Fill in the blank, it's time for a test

**G**

As soon as I'm done, it's on to the next

**C**

**G**

True or false, just choose the one that's best

**A7**

**Am7**

**D Dsus4**

Through the halls, I'm running out of breath

## CHORUS

**C**

**Dadd4**

**C**

**G**

But now I've got myself a little room to play

**C**

**Dadd4**

**C**

**Dadd4**

Now I've got myself a little room to play

**C**

**Dadd4**

**Em**

**Dadd4**

**C**

**G**

All my worries fade away . . . as soon as I start to play

## VERSE

**G**

Someone measures every step of mine

**G**

A to B straight down the line

**C** **G**  
 Everybody's waiting all the while  
**A7** **Am7** **D** **Dsus4**  
 I'm supposed to show up and smile

## REPEAT CHORUS

## BRIDGE

**D** **F/D** **D** **F/D**  
 Now no one's watching me . . . No one hears  
**D** **F/D** **C** **Dsus4**  
 I walk into the room . . . And I disappear

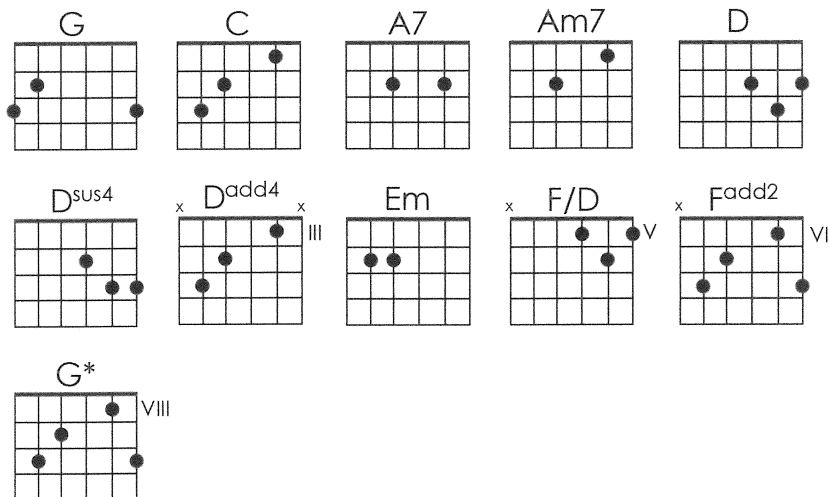
## VERSE

**G**  
 Why do I choose this way to follow?  
**G**  
 All the answers are due tomorrow  
**C** **G**  
 Everybody's waiting all the while  
**A7** **D** **Dsus4**  
 Maybe I won't show up and smile . . . Oh



## END CHORUS

**C      Dadd4      C      G**  
 'Cause I got myself a little room to play  
**C      Dadd4      C      Dadd4**  
 Now I've got myself a little room to play  
**C      Dadd4      Fadd2      G\***  
 All my worries fade away . . . they fade away  
**Dadd4      C      G**  
 As soon as I start to play



# Mr. Odd

## VERSE

**B**            **A**            **F#**            **A**  
Woke up today, saw my face in the mirror  
**B**            **A**            **F#**            **A**  
Eyes don't lie, message is clear  
          **B**            **A**            **F#**            **A**  
I can hear it. I can see it. I can say it.  
          **A#**    **A**  
I'm odd.

## CHORUS

**B**                    **A**                    **B**                    **A**  
I'm a graph without coordinates, a shape without form  
**B**            **G**            **A**                    **A#**  
Always deviating away from the norm  
**B**                    **A**                    **B**                    **A**  
Logic can't fix what's wrong with me  
          **G**            **A**                    **B A B A**  
I'm odd. I'm odd. I'm odd . . .  
**B A B A**  
Indeed.

## VERSE

**B            A   F#    A**

I've got superhuman cilia in my ear

**B                    A        F#        A**

Which gives me the ability to hear the fears

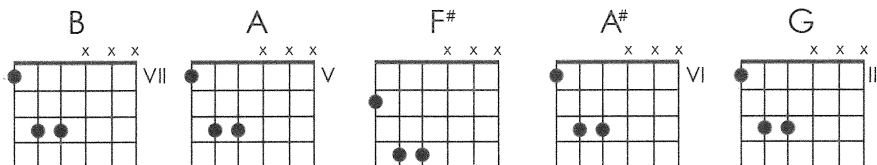
**B                    A            F#            A**

And the lies that people hide behind and what's more

**A#    A**

I can hear which crayon's happy in a box of sixty-four

## REPEAT CHORUS



# Tell-Tale Heart

## VERSE

**E7** **A7**  
Guilt on my sleeve and the bottom of my shoe  
**E7** **A7**  
Guilt under my collar, sticks to me like glue  
**E7** **A7**  
Swallowed it on Sunday, and it's eatin' me alive  
**B7** **A7**  
Buried it on Monday, but it just won't die

## CHORUS

**E7#9** **A7\***  
And it's beating beating beating like a tell-tale heart  
**E7#9** **A7\***  
Beating beating beating like a tell-tale heart  
**E7#9** **A7\***  
Beating beating beating like a tell-tale heart  
**B7\*** **A7\*** **B7**  
Can't make it stop once it starts

## VERSE

**E7** **A7**  
Guilt on my tongue leaves a bitter taste

**E7****A7**

Guilt in my bloodstream, running through my veins

**E7****A7**

Hide it on Tuesday, but I got no choice

**B7****A7**

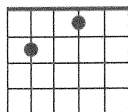
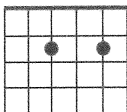
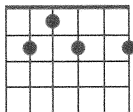
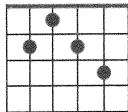
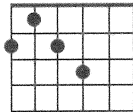
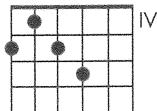
Friday rolls around, and you can hear it in my voice 'cause it's

**REPEAT CHORUS****BRIDGE****A7\*****B7\***

Don't tell me you can't hear it when I walk into the room

**A7\*****B7\***

Louder every minute, going boom boom boom

**REPEAT CHORUS****E7****A7****B7****E7#9****B7\*****A7\***

# Guilty

## VERSE

**E7**

Cheatin, lying, and conniving

**A7**

Fraud and forgery

**E7**

Aggravated screaming

**A7**

Dreaming of conspiracy

**E7**

Flawed in every thought

**A7**

I'm a twisted guarantee

**B7**

I'm a menace I'm a thorn

**A7**

I should never have been born

## CHORUS

**E7**

**A7**

I'm guilty oh guilty (x3)

**B7**

**A7**

Doin' time for my crime

## VERSE

**E7**

War crimes

**A7**

Won't deny 'em

**E7**

Busted, tried

**A7**

Without a trial

**E7**

No lawyer by my side

**A7**

I'm just hanging out to dry

**B7**

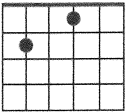
I'm a menace I'm a thorn

**A7**

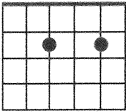
I should never have been born

## REPEAT CHORUS

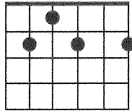
E7



A7



B7



# The Pomegranate Waltz

## VERSE

**C**      **Esus4**      **Am G**

I like the sound of your name in my ear

C	Esus4	Dm7	G
---	-------	-----	---

I like to hear what you have to say

**C** **Esus4**

I'd like to pay attention to you—

**Dm7** **G**

Instead of doing what I have to do

D7sus4      G

Oh...

## CHORUS

C Am

Now something inside me is ready

C Am

Something inside me is ready

D7sus4 Fm

Something in me's ready—oh—here I go . . .

## VERSE

**C**      **Esus4**      **Am G**

I like the way that our time intertwines

**C Esus4 Dm7 G**

I want to design each day so we can meet



**C****Esus4 Dm7**

Each word a seed that's hoping to grow—no need to hurry.

**G**

Let's take it slow

**D7sus4 G**

Oh . . .

## REPEAT CHORUS

## VERSE

**C****Esus4****Am G**

I like the shape of the thoughts in your mind

**C****Esus4****Dm7 G**

You've got the kind of edge that I seem to need

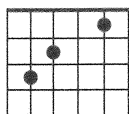
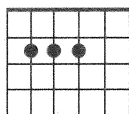
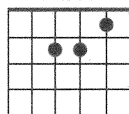
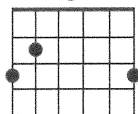
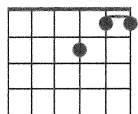
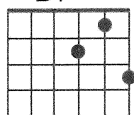
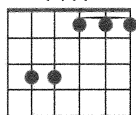
**C****Esus4 Dm7**

And if you feel the world doesn't care—I'll send a message.

**G****D7sus4 G**

You'll know I'm here. Oh . . .

## CHORUS (repeat last line and end on C)

**C****E<sup>sus4</sup>****Am****G****Dm7****D7<sup>sus4</sup>****Fm**

# Waiting in a Tree

## VERSE

A G A G  
I'm gonna wait out on this limb  
A G A G  
All by myself and count my sins  
A G A G  
While ants go marching two by two  
A G A G  
Looking for you

## CHORUS

A G C  
Hang on . . . Hang on . . . Waiting for somebody to come  
A G E  
Hang on . . . Hang on . . . Rescue me from what I have done

## VERSE

A G A G  
I should go cause you are late  
A G A G  
stuck with the hook, forgot the bait  
A G A G  
The seconds crawl, the minutes stall

**A G A G**

I'm gonna fall

## REPEAT CHORUS

**A G A G**

Rock paper scissors and the paper covers rock

**A G A G**

I can't even win against myself, I'm all out of luck

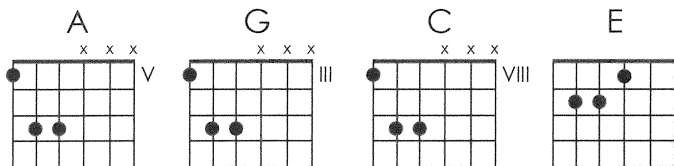
**A G A G**

Rock paper scissors and the paper flies away

**A G A G**

Saying: I don't got all day

## REPEAT CHORUS



# Get Away

## VERSE

**D** **A**  
I'll be Bonnie; you be Clyde  
**D** **A**  
Steal the snow out of the sky  
**D** **Bm** **G** **A**  
Steal a joke and let it fly . . . let it fly  
**D** **A**  
Steal the show with your disguise  
**D** **A**  
Hide away from prying eyes  
**D** **Bm** **G**  
Steal the fun and say surprise . . . say surprise

## PRE-CHORUS

**Em** **G** **A**  
I got to get away somehow  
**Em** **G** **A**  
I got to get away right now

## CHORUS

**D** **A** **Em**  
Got to get away Got to get away Got to get away

**G** **A**  
 Come on, baby, we can't be late  
**G** **A**  
 Got a little something to celebrate  
**D** **A** **Em**  
 Got to get away Got to get away Got to get away  
**G** **A** **D**  
 Got to get away

## VERSE

**D** **A**  
 Keep on running til the dawn  
**D** **A**  
 No more tired in your yawn  
**D** **Bm** **G** **A**  
 Grab the going from your gone . . . Til it's gone, gone, gone  
**D** **A**  
 Steal the lulla from your bye  
**D** **A**  
 No more longing in your sigh  
**D** **Bm** **G**  
 Steal the wrong and make it right . . . make it right

## REPEAT PRE-CHORUS

## REPEAT CHORUS

## BRIDGE

**Em**

**G A**

Oh . . .

**Em**

**G A**

**B**

I got to get away right now, right now . . .

**E**

**B**

Run away, ride away (Got to get away)

**E**

**B**

Steal away in style away (Got to get away)

**E**

**B**

Me away a mile away (Got to get away)

**E**

**B**

Do it all my a-way (Got to get away)

**A**

**B**

We got to fly today

**A**

**B**

Skid on the sky today

## REPEAT CHORUS TWICE IN NEW KEY

**E**

**B**

**F#m**

Got to get away Got to get away Got to get away

**A**

**B**

Come on, baby, we can't be late

**A**

**B**

Got a little something to celebrate

**E**

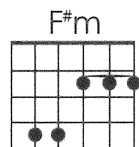
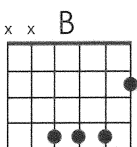
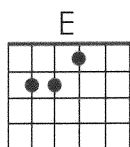
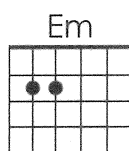
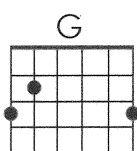
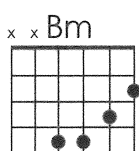
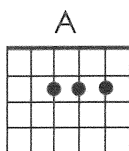
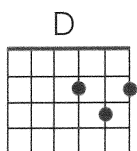
**B**

**F#m**

Got to get away Got to get away Got to get away

**A      B      E**  
 Got to get away

**A      B      E**  
 Got to get away



# Lucky Me

## VERSE

**Em**                      **D6/F#**

The sun was tied up in clouds and

**G**                                      **D6/F#**

The moon wrung out of its songs

**Em**                                      **D6/F#**

Up on 12<sup>th</sup> Street the trees were just trees,

**G**                                      **D6/F#**

Holding nothing but leaves in their arms

**Em**                                      **D6/F#**

All my days were locked in a closet

**G**                                      **D6/F#**

With the rags and the brooms and the mops

**Em**                                      **D6/F#**

Nothing to feel but the feel of nothing

**G**                                      **D6/F#**

Slipping through keyholes and locks

## CHORUS

**Em**                      **Em7**

But you know what I need

**A**                                      **Am**

You strum against my strings and make me

**Em**      **G**      **D**

Sing . . .



**C**                      **G**                      **D**  
 Sing lucky lucky, lucky lucky me  
**C**                      **G**                      **D**  
 Sing lucky lucky, lucky lucky me

## VERSE

**Em**                                      **D6/F#**                                      **G**  
 You were telling your little white lie making everybody happy,  
    **D6/F#**  
 Crying inside  
**Em**                                      **D6/F#**  
 Staying so long with what they chose,  
    **G**                                      **D6/F#**  
 You almost missed what you needed most  
    **Em**                                      **D6/F#**  
 All your days were stuck in a rhythm  
    **G**                                      **D6/F#**  
 That you couldn't change or stop  
    **Em**                                      **D6/F#**  
 Nothing to say 'cause your words and emotions  
    **G**                                      **D6/F#**  
 Were twisted and chained in a knot

## CHORUS

**Em**                      **Em7**                                      **A**                                      **Am**  
 But I know what you need I strum against your strings  
 And make you

**Em G D**

Sing . . .

**C G D**

Sing lucky lucky, lucky lucky me

**C G B7**

Sing lucky lucky, lucky lucky me

## BRIDGE

**Em D6/F# G D6/F#**

We can't let this pass us by, can't let it go without a fight

**Em D6/F# G D6/F#**

We are who we're meant to be

**Em G D**

Singing lucky lucky, lucky lucky me

**C G D**

Sing lucky lucky, lucky lucky me (you make me sing)

**C G D**

Lucky lucky, lucky lucky me

## REPEAT TO END

