Abandoning Abuse: Acknowledging Adoption in the 21 Century

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Abandoning Abuse:
Acknowledging Adoption in the 21 Century

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music in Music

by

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University of Arkansas - Fort Smith
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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract

The inspiration for this set of pieces arose from a friendship with fellow grad student Morgen Cavanah. Morgen and I were both adopted as children, and it this common background that gave rise to these pieces. The poems chosen were written by Morgen about individuals or events in her life. Though I had planned to set 9 of the original 12 poems, this set is comprised of my four favorites. Each piece uses repetitive piano motives that underlie the melodic lines of the voice, flute, and cello. This choice explores harmonic and melodic possibilities that expand minimal accompaniment. Much of the harmonic language is flavored with jazz through the use of extended chords. To Eli, aims to expand the idea of a ballad. Morgen’s background in opera inspired me to recreate a recitative-like section where the piano acts as harmonic accompaniment for solo voice that is separated by flute and cello interludes. The original melodic material returns as the final cadence is extended in anticipation until the voice concludes the piece measures later. For Witt is a strophic waltz set in a minor mode, but conveying a message of hope. The central moment appears before the final verse, as the flute and cello perform stacattoo pulses in the set 3/4 meter while the vocal line and piano are syncopated to create a 4/4 feel. The third movement, Attn: Chase, is my favorite. It opens with waves as the piano arpeggiates two alternating chords that share 4 common tones: C-E-A-D. The idea of water continues as the voice imitates rain while singing “trickle down.” The piece ends with acapella voice repeating the last line of the poem. This was done to emphasize that we as humans can only do so much to fix or heal our issues, and our problems should be put into higher hands. Dear Joanna is the most
light-hearted of the pieces. Inspired by Sufjan Stevens, I decided to use 7/8 time because of its whimsical nature and the unbalanced lilt that gives a strong momentum.
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Instrumentation

Soprano

Flute

Cello

Piano
Poems

I. For Eli (Tonight)

Tonight

As I always do -

I look up towards the night sky from the blades of grass on which my body rests. Alone.

It usually seems so black, all darkness, but I just can't say the same about-

Tonight.

The sky has transformed itself from black to a hue of handsome blue.

A shade of sapphire I've only ever seen once here on this earth.

The same azure that rests gently, exclusively in his eyes. Limited edition.

This must be the color of the waves that live in heaven. Little splashes of dark blue majesty, lapping ardently at my heart. Creating flutters of unrequited passion, just so much so that the tiny pangs of longing that they create equate perfectly to the greatest hint of love I'll ever be able to witness here on earth. Still worth it. Still incomprehensible how a mere mortal is allowed to gaze upon the beauty of this color, cobalt.

I cannot say, here in this sky, that the beauty lives within glittering grains of sparkle. For, like his eyes, it's not the luster -but the turquoise tinge - that encapsulates my being entirely. Enrapturing me with a unique disposition composed entirely of safety. Like the shade of a weeping willow comforts me from up above, I'm protected by the navy blue that lives within those eyes.
A cooling sensation washes away the hours of grief I spent in many moments without this shade, without his touch. Blue so far from view.

But tonight
When in the sky, I saw the color of his eyes, I was so struck with wonder. Wonder. Will I ever see something so beautiful again? I also wonder, if the sky, just like those eyes, will lead me straight to heaven.

Tonight - as I always do, I look up towards the night sky from the blades of grass on which my body rests. Alone - but this time I'm not alone. Because the sky that hid itself behind a mask of black revealed itself to me in your unique shade of blue. All because you once saw me, and now, I must see you.
II. To Witt (These Flowers Still Grow)

Burning roses there you are
Slowly blackening on the hearth
Ashes, dust, we all just are
Wilting roses of the earth

Burning roses there you are
Melted petals drip and fray
Drifting floating fade away

Through it all this this I know
Though wrought with thorns
These flowers still grow
Carrying beauty to the land

Burning roses there you are
Red with color fading fast
Roses bloom even when life is sad
Sorrow like this is ne’er to last

Watching still the time turn back
As all these roses fade to black
III. Attn: Chase (The Fruit That Was Thusly Planted)

Watering can fears

Trickle down to

Tend to God’s green earth

They can help to form the roots

But only God’s green thumb

Can tend to

The fruit that was thusly planted
IV. Dear Joanna (Oklahoma is OK)

Oklahoma

Solitary adventure bores me

I am magnetized to my patch of happiness

Family

When I realize it is no longer

My inclination to run

But my duty to stay
Poems used with permission by Morgen Cavanah.

Signed: ________________________________  Date: ________________
For Eli
For Eli

up to the night sky from the blades of grass on which my body rests alone

It usually seems so black all darkness but
For Eli

S

I just can't say the same about to-night.

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

S

I just can't say the same about to-night.

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

For Eli

S

I just can't say the same about to-night.

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.
This must be the color of the waves that live in heaven.

Little splashes of the dark blue.
For Eli

majesty lap-ping ar-dent-ly at my heart

Creating flut- ters of un-re-qui-ted pas-sion just so much so that
For Eli

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

the tiny pangs of longing equating perfectly to the greatest hint of love I'll
e're be able to witness here on earth
For Eli

86

S

\text{cobalt} \quad \text{A cooling sensation washes away the}

Fl.

F \quad \text{mp}

Vc.

V \quad \text{mp}

Pno.

compare

92

S

\text{hours of grief} \quad \text{I spent many moments without his shade,}

Fl.

\text{F}

Vc.

\text{V}

Pno.

\text{Pno.}
without his touch. Blue so far from view.
Tonight
as I always

Do
I look up to the night sky from the blades of grass on which my
For Eli

body rests alone

But this time I'm not alone

The sky that hid itself behind a mask of black revealed itself to
me in your unique shade of blue. For once you first saw me and
now, I must see you tonight.
II. To Witt
These Flowers Still Grow

Allegro (\( \text{\textit{c.} 135} \))

Score

Lyrics by Morgen Cavanah

Deborah Ellis
II. To Witt

Burning roses there you are

Melted petals drip and fray Drifting floating fade away fade away
Through it all this I know Through wrought with

thorns these flowers still grow Carrying
II. To Witt
III. Attn: Chase

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

21

21

21

21

fears water can fears trickle down

p mf p

trickle down trickle down trickle down trickle down trickle down

p

mf

p
trickle down to tend to God's green

earth Tend to God's green earth

III. Attn: Chase
III. Attn: Chase

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

The roots. They can help to they can
help form they can help to form the

roots only God's green thumb
III. Attn: Chase

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

\[\text{on-ly God's green thumb}_{69}\]

\[\text{on-ly God's green thumb}_{69}\]

\[\text{Can tend to the fruit}_{73}\]

\[\text{that was}\]
III. Attn: Chase

S

Fl.

Vc.

Pno.

mf

thu-sly plan-ted

But on-ly God's green thumb can

tend to the fruit that was th-us-ly plant-ed

p
89

On ly God's green thumb

95
can tend to the fruit

III. Attn: Chase
On-ly God’s green - thumb can tend to the fruit that was

thu - sly thu - sly plan ted On - ly God can tend to the
fruit that was thusly planted

III. Attn: Chase

45
When I realize it is no longer

When I realize it is no longer

My inclination is to run

My inclination is to run
IV. Dear Joanna

Grandly \( mf \)

\textit{a tempo}

\begin{center}
\begin{align*}
S & \quad \text{But my duty is to stay} \\
\text{Fl.} & \\
\text{Vc.} & \quad \text{Slow gliss.} \\
\text{Pno.} &
\end{align*}
\end{center}