

SUNSET, A FOREST CLEARING

MUSIC:

CARLE JORDAN WIRSHBA

STORY:

CHRISTOPHER CRADDOCK

FOR STRING QUARTET, PIANO,
ACTOR, & ALTO



2017

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Story:

It was late afternoon when the sun broke through the dusty clouds and began its descent through the forest enclave, casting deep shadows of the outstretched birch trees. Footsteps, four of them, wade through the white forest in silence, trudging until the trees dwindle and they come upon the smoldered remains of a desolate clearing. They step into the forest graveyard.

In the still silence the fair-haired Boy is led into the clearing and pushed to his knees, wrists bound. A cold breeze ripples through the forest, sending a shiver through the men as dark clouds push overhead and sweep away the still atmosphere. The first flake begins high in the sky and drifts down, timidly dancing in the soft wind on a path through the dead treetops to the Boy's disheveled, dirty face, and sets down between his watery blue eyes that look towards the waning crimson sky.

They took to the shovels. --

Knees dug into snow, the Boy follows as two of them plunge shovels at the frozen Earth next to a splintered tree. The surrounding trees shook, the impact echoing through the encircling forest and reverberating back into the clearing. The third, the Captain, watched with the Boy, tipping his hat down to shelter a cigarette in his heavy overcoat.

The clouds lingered overhead, full, ready to burst, each strike to the Earth pulling the snow down in a soft flurry that glazed the forest floor. A fierce wind rushed through the forest into the clearing, surging the flakes in a violent draft. The Boy's blonde hair rustled in the wind before settling over his face.

The sun dipped beyond the horizon. --

The death of the sun stained the horizon with a violent red, a broad stroke that persisted a feeble leak into the dead clearing. Daylight fractured, the two chip away at the dirt as the darkness permeates. The cold pushed the warmth away.

A low moan rumbled through the forest and the Boy looked to the sky as the planes broke through the clouds and screamed overhead. He watched as they fly by, towards the dying sun, their low rumble dissipated amongst the pounding of the shovels. The snow fell in a frenzied dive and the clouds stretched deeper through the sky, until the clearing was alone in a snow globe, the forest edge feet away an opaque blur.

They finished the hole. --

The Captain took the last cigarette and tossed the red pack into a rising snow drift while the two stepped from the shallow ditch. The cigarette beamed heavy in the night, flaring as he inhaled, dropping off to a low roseate murmur at his side. The Captain knelt beside the boy whose eyes shimmered in light of the shallow ember.

Hand placed on his back, smoke spiraling out his nose, the Captain held the burning paper to the Boy's mouth. His lips were charred, dried and torn open, beaten by the winter and sealed again. He forced his lips open, tearing them as he looked up to the Captain, who held the cigarette to his mouth.

The bitter snow was hardening. --

The snow fell in a thick blanket weighing heavily without a sound as the Boy was hoisted to his feet. His heart hung heavy in his chest, his stomach crashing on a rough sea, acid flaring into his throat. His feet dragged two abrasions in the snow before he was dropped by the ditch.

The Captain knelt down and left the cigarette pressed between the Boy's bleeding lips. The Captain stepped away leaving the Boy alone. The Boy never heard the subtle unclip of a holster or the cock of a pistol, and he took a deep breath as the firing pin ignited the explosive charge in the primer.

The dead clearing flared in the eyes of the muzzle flash.

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Prayers:

Prayer 1

(Hebrew)

אֶחָד יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע
אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶת וְאֶהְבֵּת
נִפְשָׁהּ וְיִבְכֵל לְבָבָהּ בְּכֹל

Sh'ma Yisra'eil Adonai Eloheinu
Adonai echad. V'ahav'ta eit Adonai
Elohekha b'khol l'vav'kha uv'khol
naf'sh'kha

Hear, O Israel: Lord our God, the Lord is One, Praised be His glory. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, your might. And these words, which I command you this day, you shall take to heart. You shall bind them as a sign. God he is the/a faithful King.

Prayer 2

God is closest to those with broken hearts. If you lie on the ground, you cannot fall. Do not make yourself so big; you are not so small. The only truly dead are those who have been forgotten.

Texts:

(Yiddish)

איינס
צוויי
דריי
פֿיר
פֿינף

evns
tsvet
dray
fir
finf

one
two
three
four
five

(German)

Graben! – Dig!



Photos by
Jacob Cain
Wirshba

Duration
ca. 11 minutes

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Sunset, a Forest Clearing

Text by
Christopher Craddock

Music by
Carle Jordan Wirshba

♩ = 138

♩ = 146 *mf* speak softly

Male Actor

Sunset, a Forest Clearing

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Violoncello

p

sul pont.

mf

mf Speak direct, but without force

eyns
עֵינַן
mf

mf Speak direct, but without force

eyns
עֵינַן
mf

mf Speak direct, but without force

eyns
עֵינַן
mf

sfz *mf* *sfz*

♩ = 138

♩ = 146

Piano

mf

sfz *mf* *sfz*

9

M. Act.

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

mf *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz*

rit. . . ♩ = 138 *f*

It was late afternoon

nat.

p

nat.

p

rit. . . ♩ = 138

Continue to speak in the calming, story-telling tone, with expressivity

2

15

M. Act.

when the sun broke through the dusty clouds and began its descent through the forest enclave, casting deep shadows of the outstretched birch trees. Footsteps, four of them, wade through

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mf *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf*

Pno.

nat.
p

24

M. Act.

the white forest in silence, trudging until the trees dwindle and they come upon the smoldering remains of a desolate clearing. They step into the forest graveyard.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

sfz *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz*

Pno.

33

M. Act.

In the still silence the fair-haired Boy is led into the clearing and pushed to his knees, wrists bound. A cold breeze ripples through the forest,

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

mf *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf*

Pno.

42 **A** 3

M. Act. *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *ff*

sending a shiver through the men as dark clouds
push overhead and sweep away the still atmosphere.

The first flake begins high in the sky and drifts down,

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

50

M. Act. *p*

timidly dancing in the soft wind on a path through the dead treetops
to the Boy's disheveled, dirty face,

and sets down between his watery blue eyes

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

57 *rit.*

M. Act. *mp* *pp*

that look towards the

waning

crimson

sky.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno. *mp* *pp*

4

B $\text{♩} = 88$
mf *A prayer of hope*

A. Solo

Sh' - ma Yis - ra - eil, A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, A - do - nai E - lo - hei - nu, A - do - nai E - chad: V'a -
 שמע יישראל יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה יהוה אחד: אחד

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Pno.

A. Solo

hav - ta eit A - do nai E - lo - he - cha, B' - chawl l' - va - v' - cha uv' -
 את יהוה יהוה אלהינו בך לבנו לבנו ובעל

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Pno.

C *accel.* $\text{♩} = 102$

A. Solo

chawl naf - sh' - cha And these words which I com -
 נפשך ואלהינו ואלהינו ואלהינו ואלהינו ואלהינו ואלהינו ואלהינו ואלהינו

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Pno.

C *accel.* $\text{♩} = 102$

84

A. Solo
mand you this day you shall take to heart. You shall bind them

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc. *pizz.*
mf

Pno.

91

A. Solo
as a sign God he is the faith-ful King

M. Act. *speaking sinister, but with sorrow*
They took to the shovels. *silence*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc. *pizz.*
mf

Pno.

D $\text{♩} = 146$ *Speak direct, but without force* **rit.**

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc. *arco*

sfz *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf*

D $\text{♩} = 146$ **rit.**

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 138$ *Continue to speak in the calming, story-telling tone, with expressivity*

M. Act.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

nat. *p* *nat.* *p* *nat.* *p*

ff

$\text{♩} = 138$

Pno.

$\text{♩} = 138$

M. Act.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

pp *mf* *f* *f*

Pno.

127 **E** 7

M. Act. *a cigarette in his heavy overcoat* *The clouds lingered overhead, full, ready to burst,* *each strike to the Earth pulling the snow down in a soft flurry that glazed the*

Vln. 1 *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *pp* *mf*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

Pno. *f*

136

M. Act. *forest floor.* *A fierce wind rushed through the forest into the clearing,* *surging the flakes in a violent draft. The Boy's blonde hair*

Vln. 1 *p*³ *pp* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*³

Vln. 2 *pp* *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *pp* *mf* *pp*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

Pno. *f*

145 **F** *A persistent prayer of hope*

A. Solo *mf* Sh' - ma Yis - ra - eil, A - do - nai E - lo -
שמע יהוה אלהינו

M. Act. *rustled in the wind before* *settling over* *his face.*

Vln. 1 *pp* *p* *f* *mp*

Vln. 2 *mf* *mf* *mf* *mf* *p* *f* *p*

Vla. *p* *f* *p*

Vc. *p* *f* *f*

Pno. *f*

154

A. Solo

he-i-nu, A-do-nai E-lo-hei-nu, A-do-nai E-chad: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with

יהוה אלהינו יהוה אחד

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

164

A. Solo

all your soul, your might. And these words which I com - mand you this day you

G

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

173

A. Solo

shall take to heart. You shall bind them as a sign

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

179

A. Solo
God he is a faith— ful King.

M. Act.
speaking sinister, but with sorrow
The sun dipped beyond the horizon. *silence*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.
p
sul pont.

Vc.

Pno.
p

187

Pno.
f
♩ = 46
mf

192

Pno.

10

I

195 $\text{♩} = 150$ $\text{♩} = 136$ *Continue to speak in the calming, story-telling tone, with expressivity*

M. Act. *ff*
The death of the sun stained the horizon with a violent red.

Vln. 1 *sul pont.*
p

Vln. 2 *Speak with haste, but without anger*
dray
mf
nat.
mf

Vla. *Speak with haste, but without anger*
dray
mf
8^{va}
nat.
p

Vc. *with anger and force*
mf sfz mf sfz mf sfz mf sfz

Pno. *f*
Red

203

M. Act. *a broad stroke that persisted a feeble leak into the dead clearing*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc. *mf*

Pno. *Red*

207 11

M. Act. Daylight fractured, the two chip away at the dirt as the darkness permeates.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc. *mf* *mf*

Pno.

211 J

M. Act. The cold pushed the warmth away.

Vln. 1 *nat.* *f*

Vln. 2 *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

Pno. J

215

M. Act. A low moan rumbled through the forest and the Boy looked to the sky

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

M. Act. *as the planes broke through the clouds and screamed overhead.*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *ff*

Vc.

Pno.

M. Act. *He watched as they fly by, towards the dying sun.*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

M. Act. *their low rumble dissipated amongst the pounding of the shovels.*

Vln. 1 *ff*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

231

M. Act. *The snow fell in a frenzied dive and the clouds stretched deeper through the sky,*

Vln. 1 *ff* *f* *ff* *f*

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

235

K $\text{♩} = 150$
whisper, but loud enough to be heard

Vln. 1 *ff*
Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben!

Vln. 2 *ff*
whisper, but loud enough to be heard
Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben!

Vla. *ff*
whisper, but loud enough to be heard
Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben!

Vc. *ff*
whisper, but loud enough to be heard
Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben! Gra - ben!

K $\text{♩} = 150$
mp

Pno.

M

237 $\text{♩} = 136$ **L** rit. $\text{♩} = 112$ $\text{♩} = 148$ *ff* *A hasteful prayer of fleeting hope*
 A. Solo Hear, O_ Is - rael:

M. Act. until the clearing was alone in a snow globe, the forest edge feet away an opaque blur.

Vln. 1 nat. *ff* *f* *ff* *f* *p* *f* *mp*
 Vln. 2 nat. *p* *f* *p*
 Vla. nat. *p* *f* *p*
 Vc. nat. *p* *f*

$\text{♩} = 136$ **L** rit. $\text{♩} = 112$ $\text{♩} = 148$ **M**
 Pno. *fff* *mf*
 Ped.

245
 A. Solo Lord our God, the Lord is One, Praised be His glo - ry. Love the Lord your God with all your

Vln. 1
 Vln. 2
 Vla.
 Vc.
 Pno.

255 N

A. Solo heart, with all your soul, your might. And these words which I com - mand you this

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla. *f* *p*

Vc.

Pno. N

264

A. Solo day shall take to heart.

M. Act. *speaking sinister, but with sorrow* *silence*
They finished the hole.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

O

271 ♩ = 164

Speak direct, but without force

Vln. 1 *f* fir פִּיר

Vln. 2 *sul tasto* *mf*

Vla. *Speak direct, but without force* *f* fir פִּיר

Vc. *Speak direct, but without force* *f* fir פִּיר

O

♩ = 164

f

Pno.

==

♩ = 160 *Continue to speak in the calming, story-telling tone, with expressivity*

275 *f*

M. Act. *f* [The Captain took the last cigarette and tossed the red pack into a rising snow drift] while the two stepped from the shallow ditch. The cigarette

Vln. 1 *nat.* *mp*

Vln. 2 *sul tasto* *mp*

Vla. *nat.* *mp*

Vc. *nat.* *f*

♩ = 160

Pno.

281 17

M. Act. *beamed heavy in the night,* *flaring as he inhaled, dropping off to a low roseate murmur at his side.*

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc.

Pno.

P

287

M. Act. *The Captain knelt beside the boy whose eyes shimmered in light of the shallow ember.* *Hand placed on his back, smoke spiraling out his nose, the Captain*

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp* *8va nat.* *p*

Vla. *mp*

Vc.

Pno.

P

293

M. Act. *held the burning paper to the Boy's mouth.* *His lips were charred, dried and torn open, beaten by the winter and sealed again.*

Vln. 1 *mp*

Vln. 2 *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc.

Pno.

18

M. Act.

298

He forced his lips open, tearing them as he looked up to the Captain, who held the cigarette to his mouth.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.



Q

303 $\text{♩} = 125$

A. Solo

God is clos-est to those with bro-ken hearts. If you lie on the ground, you can-not fall. Do not

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

Q

$\text{♩} = 125$

Pno.



312

A. Solo

make your-self so big, you are not so

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

317 19

R
♩ = 164

A. Solo *small.*

M. Act. *speaking sinister, but with sorrow* *silence*
The bitter snow was hardening.

Vln. 1 *Speak direct, but without force*
finf פנין *f*

Vln. 2 *sul tasto*
mf

Vla. *Speak direct, but without force*
finf פנין *f*

Vc. *Speak direct, but without force*
finf פנין *f*

Pno. *f*

R
♩ = 164

324

♩ = 160 *Continue to speak in the calming, story-telling tone, with expressivity*

M. Act. *f*
The snow fell in a thick blanket weighing heavily without a sound as the Boy was hoisted to his feet.

Vln. 1 *nat.*
mp

Vln. 2 *nat.*
p

Vla. *nat.*
mp

Vc. *nat.*
f

Pno. *f*

330

M. Act. *[Lyrics: His heart hung heavy in his chest, his stomach crashing on a rough sea, acid flaring into his throat. His feet dragged two abrasions]*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

336

M. Act. *[Lyrics: in the snow, before he was dropped by the ditch.]*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

342

M. Act. *[Lyrics: The Captain knelt down and left the cigarette pressed between the Boy's bleeding lips, The Captain stepped away leaving the Boy alone.]*

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

348 21

M. Act. The Boy never heard the subtle unclip of a holster or the cock of a pistol.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

353

M. Act. and he took a deep breath as the firing pin ignited the explosive charge in the primer.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

T 358 f $\text{♩} = 125$

A. Solo God is clos-est to those with bro-ken hearts. If you lie on the ground, you can-not fall. Do not

Vln. 1 f

Vln. 2 p

Vla. p

Vc. f

T $\text{♩} = 125$

Pno. f ff

22

367

A. Solo

make your - self so big, you are not so

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

372

A. Solo

small. The on - ly tru - ly dead are

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

377

A. Solo

those who have been been for - got - - ten.

let string ring out until nothing left

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Pno.

let string ring out until nothing left

let string ring out until nothing left

let string ring out until nothing left

let reverb ring out until nothing left

384 *speaking sinister, but with sorrow* *silence* **U** *close book aggressively and then drop the book on floor*

M. Act. *The dead clearing flared in the eyes of the muzzle flash*

Vln. 1 *p*

Vln. 2 *p*

Vla. *p*

Vc. *p*

388

Vln. 1 *p* *fff*

Vln. 2 *p* *fff*

Vla. *p* *fff*

Vc. *p* *fff*