Title
Noon at dusk: a chamber opera in one act

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Noon at Dusk: A Chamber Opera In One Act

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Stephen Edward Lewis

Committee in charge:

Professor Rand Steiger, Chair
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Aleck Karis
Professor Susan Narucki
Professor Chinary Ung
Professor Shahrokh Yadegari

2015
The Dissertation of Stephen Edward Lewis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2015
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate *Noon at Dusk* to my wife, Yi Hong Sim, who provided both the perfect libretto to set to music as well as incredible support throughout the composition of the work. I could not have done this without her.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Yi Hong Sim for writing the libretto to *Noon at Dusk*.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Rand Steiger for his guidance and support throughout the process of composing *Noon at Dusk*, as well as throughout my degree program.

I would like to acknowledge Professor Susan Narucki for agreeing to produce *Noon at Dusk* and for providing support and invaluable guidance through the process of composing *Noon at Dusk*.

I would like to acknowledge the Department of Music for its generous support, both in pledging to produce *Noon at Dusk* in May 2016 and for providing resources during the process of composing it.
## VITA

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<td>2006</td>
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<tr>
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Noon at Dusk:
A Chamber Opera In One Act

by

Stephen Edward Lewis

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, San Diego, 2015

Professor Rand Steiger, Chair

Noon at Dusk is a one-act chamber opera in six scenes based on a libretto by Yi Hong Sim. The narrative explores contemporary problems faced by people who are expected to be willing to sacrifice their relationships, families, and sense of belonging to a home in order to pursue their careers. The opera has six characters, four of whom are in relationships that are tested by job opportunities that require relocation. In both cases, someone would need to be left behind. Noon at Dusk does not take a simplistic view of
this widespread modern problem, but instead explores its subtleties and contradictions. In short, there is no good solution to this dilemma, once one is faced with it. One must sacrifice something, and one must live with this sacrifice, like a shadow of a life once desired but now impossible to attain.

*Noon at Dusk* is in one act with six scenes. The opera lasts approximately 75 minutes. Important musical moments include the prelude, the duet at the end of Scene 1, the short aria in Scene 2A, the bravura set-piece in Scene 2C, the dramatic climax that is Scene 4, the duet in Scene 5A, the Vocalise in Scene 5B, and the final aria in Scene 6.
Noon at Dusk
an opera in one act for four sopranos, two baritones, and ensemble
(2015)
Performance Notes

Performing forces:

Annelise (soprano)
Daniela (soprano)
Eliot (baritone)
Maya (soprano)
Eliot’s Boss (baritone)
Lisha (soprano)

2 flutes
2 clarinets
1 percussion
1 piano
2 violins
2 violas
2 cellos
2 double basses

General:

- Glissandi: ALL glissandi, in ALL instruments and voices, should completely and evenly fill the pitch interval and the timespan depicted.

- Extended techniques: All extended techniques are explained within the score and parts.

- A note on dynamics and time: all written dynamics and tempi should be treated with some musical and dramatic flexibility, allowing for Noon at Dusk to sound good and be compelling in a variety of spaces and acoustics.

Woodwinds:

- Both flutists must have a C flute, an alto flute, and a piccolo.

- Both clarinetists must have A clarinets and bass clarinets with a low concert B-flat.

- One of the clarinetists must have a contrabass clarinet.
Percussion:

- The choice of mallets is left up to the percussionist with a few well-marked exceptions in the score.

Piano:

- The piano must have a functional *sostenuto* pedal.
- There is no inside-the-piano playing.

Strings:

- All string players must have mutes available.
Noon at Dusk

Score is transposed

Prelude

Music by Stephen Lewis
Libretto by Yi Hong Sim
[DANIELA enters, prepares her breakfast.]
Scene 1
Annelise, Daniela

Annelise and Daniela are in the kitchen. Daniela in her pajamas, Annelise in a bathrobe.
Daniela pours herself some coffee, then turns to Annelise and smiles. She leans against the counter, drinking her coffee.

Scene 1
Annelise, Daniela

Annelise and Daniela are in the kitchen, Daniela in her pajamas, Annelise in a bathrobe. Daniela pours herself some coffee, then turns to Annelise and smiles. She leans against the counter, drinking her coffee.
Our lives have come so well...
[putting her hand over Daniela's, looking her in the eyes seriously]

[they kiss, then separate, lingering]
These two years have only left me wanting more. Imagine us to gather our work, our affectation, our past times, our days.

Meno mosso

q = 60
hest, my lady! You gave this poor independent architect her lucky break!

I still recall the look in your eyes.
when you first came to me. The first time I met you.

You were my librarian in shining armor or with a vision for the palace where the people of Philadelphia...
This Saturday will be a night to remember, Danelia,
the happiest of our two years. By whatever
Two doves, 3:2

Two doves,
A tempo, \( q = 52 \)

[Sheet music with various musical notes and symbols]
Intermezzo 1
"Sphynx"
Scene 2A
Eliot, Lisha

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<td>( \text{Violin I} )</td>
<td>( \text{Violin II} )</td>
<td>( \text{Viola I} )</td>
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</table>
I could see the lights from my bedroom. Sometimes they kept me up at night.

"Blues and reds..."
When I saw you yesterday, at the table,
The look on your face

It felt

I was

I knew what you were thinking,

...
Work never ends.

5:4

In conclusion...

Sp. Pizz. F

molto staccato
It is as old
It is one thing to be brave, but it is another to feel the fear of not being brave. — Voltaire
There is no thing
In the morning, E. wakes up, dresses, kisses L. goodbye, then sets off to work in high spirits.
Scene 2B
Eliot
There is no fear that I...
Picc. 1

Pno.

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

A Cl. 2

B. Cl. 2

E.

Perc.

Timp.

Crt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla. I

Vla. II

Vc. I

Vc. II

D.B. I

D.B. II

may be she will

pumped, not quite delirious

leggiero ma marcato

with alacrity and verve, but quiet

p

f
[arrives at his workplace; he heads to his boss's office]
Scene 2C
Eliot, Eliot's Boss

[Fll. 1
Fl. 2
B. Cl. 1
B. Cl. 2
E.
E. B.
Perc.
Timp.
Crot.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

P
heavy

[K[ Eliot arrives at his workplace.]

P
P
non-legato

F

"con molto espressione"

P

P

"con molto espressione"

F

"con molto espressione"

F

"con molto espressione"

F

"con molto espressione"

F

"con molto espressione"

F

"con molto espressione"

F
That's "old school" now. No need for young.
I thought it was rather...
Head quarters? You'll be spending all your days at a desk now.
But they just sent me out!
search, my boy! All the in for...
Poco meno mosso

\[ \text{Tempo} = 66 \]
As soon as Eliot takes the paper from his boss’s hands, his boss looks down and begins busying about the papers on his desk. Resigned but reluctant, Eliot turns to leave.

But we may still need...
They'll fly you in. Just until all loose ends are re-solved.

Every now and then? For a little growing more hopeful.

I could come back?

you from time to time.
Intermezzo 2
Scene 3
Annelise, Maya
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578

Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

578
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A. M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

No doubt you will have this if you want it. Re-lish.

582

Spend our lives... a hard earned
[A. smiles, but, due in part to embarrassment and in part her uncertainty of M’s intentions, does not respond.]

I’ve been invited to lead and exciting project. A dream come true, if such things are possible.

[Testing the waters]
A green living, low rise building in an up town site, with commercial space and offices on the ground floor, and middle income housing above. Solar panels, natural insulation, [seeing A's eyes light up, she continues more excitedly]...
How wonderful! Everything!
in terms of sustainability and sourcing as much building material. We'll have to spend quite some time gathering those sources. The water catchment system too, could take us further. This is the water distribution system within...
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.

Fl. 1
Fl. 2

[slowly realizing]

[trying to break the news kindly]

[A. sits in shocked silence.]

months of on site surveying.

Water catchment? Where is this job?

[Arizona. Not exactly in the neighborhood, I know.]
The best opportunities come where they come. [with genuinely regretful compassion]

So far away from my dear Daniel.
I was going to propose to her this Saturday. This project could take a couple years.
They want us to supervise construction.

- - - - -

(softly and at slow tempo)

- - - - -

... and this job would be my heart's desire,

... but

- - - - -
She can't leave her.

And... it's such a long time... We've been together a

...
How do I know for certain that I will come back?

We go when we must go. And we go.

[gently]
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
A.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.

647

must stay when we must stay.

Per haps...

[ torn about how to advise A., M. continues in seriousness]
Scene 4
Annelise, Eliot, Lisha, Eliot's Boss
[Annelise continues to sing, wandering unknowingly in Eliot’s direction.]

What do I know of life and its involutions?
you can find some old saying to sympathize:
[A. nears the physiognotrace, and she and Eliot catch sight of each other. They sense an uncanny connection between them, and are awkwardly silent as they try to ascertain its significance. Annelise looks over the physiognotrace curiously before Eliot interjects.]

Would you like to try it? We're testing it out, to see how people like it, looking for things to improve, what things to keep the same.
Like what lords and ladies used to have done.
(hesitating, a little wary) What is it called? I'll be right with you. [notices Lisha approaching] [to A.] You said to meet you on your lunch break. [to L., looking surprised] It's twelve thirty. [she leans over and kisses E.]
I must have got a late start.

I got... held up... at the office.

Not quite... I think.

I did... I do... have a choice.
So this is what you do!

to

It changes as necessary.

It changes

day, at least. It changes

neccessary.

I go where they need me to go.

Lots of variety!

It pays well enough for the level I'm at.

[realizing with despair the truth of what he is about to say]

[optimistically trying to shake the despair]
[L. leaves the park and E. looks longingly after her.]

[E. looks longingly after L. He then stands there numbly for a while, staring uncomprehendingly at the physiognotrace, overwhelmed by his dilemma.]

[addressing E. but unheard by him]

"Which DO you want?"

To throw it all a way
What do you think?
You'll be in and out in no time at all.

I don't mind it taking a moment.

Like I said,
I worked hard, and I was held my head high.

I looked for meaning, kind. I looked for meaning,
Make it a spectacle,

and

made my own way...
[the physiognotrace goes dark. After what seems like a long few moments, A. exits the booth, holding a print of her silhouette. Eliot, holding his clipboard, approaches her awkwardly]
I never knew my...
Scene 5A
Annelise, Daniela
I'll have time to prepare for the somewhat absently Piu mosso, e=152 sul tasto legato sul tasto cold.

It was months before notices Annelise's favorite jacket still hanging in the closet Tempo I, e=132 p p p n n

Your fav'rite jack et?
You would be a strange something of an outburst now really noticing Daniela's state of mind are you all right, my love? You look pale and not your self.
That's what we are supposed to want, isn't it?
No one at all, we seem to think. Un

us in the shadows.

We go where the sun

5:4 all of
Annelise takes out her silhouette from its envelope on the dresser.
[flustered, A. takes out the frame she had prepared and begins placing the silhouette in it.]

I thought you might like it. It'll look better in a frame.

[D. is silent. She stares at the silhouette, trying to ascertain its meaning.]
It's beautiful. And dark.

As if I could love you, but not see

very light, but distinct

you. I've

deeply perturbed sotto voce
[Sheet Music Image]
Exceeding comfort less, and worn,

For a dream's sake.

I hang my sad, but with underlying resolve
It's three! I must take my mother to her appointment!

[A. readies her things and leaves the apartment.]
Scene 5B

Daniela, Maya, Annelise
[Just as D. finishes hanging the silhouette, there is a knock at the door. She opens it to find Maya. Both are surprised.]

[KNOCKS at door]

You're here for surprise... "Ann elise!"

[Daniela tries to think of how to respond.]
Are you all right, my dear?
There's no need for that.

-- - -

We'll be all

[hurriedly, embarrassed]
Some times these things come back to face us...
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[D. looks alarmed, wondering if Maya can really mean to say this. But Maya seems lost in her thoughts, and appears not to realize the effect she is having on D.]

[ominously]
Annelise: Maya! I’m sorry I kept you waiting. Something came up at the last minute.

[Even as D. recoils from M’s touch, she allows her hand to remain in hers. Just then, A. returns home.]
Fl. 1
Fl. 2
A Cl. 1
B. Cl. 1
A Cl. 2
B. Cl. 2
A.
D.
M.
Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.
Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

Annelise smiles her assent. She and M. turn and leave the house together. Alone, D. looks after them with both dread and a grim resolve, then sinks her face heavily dampened; “hwapping” sound

\[ \text{happiness music} \]

\[ \text{music continued, happiness music} \]
Intermezzo 4
"Transvalued Labor"
Scene 6
Eliot

[Fl. 1]

A Cl. 1
B. Cl. 2
E.

Perc.
Timp.
Crt.
Vln. I
Vln. II
Vla. I
Vla. II
Vc. I
Vc. II
D.B. I
D.B. II
Pno.

[Fl. 2]

Cl. 1
Cl. 2
Perc.

[QD = 88]

[H2] is in his bedroom, going about the last details of his departure. He takes picture frame off the walls and puts them in a box, carefully placing bubble wrap between them. A sleeping bag and pillow are laid out on the floor. There is no suitcase in the room. When the walls are empty, Eliot realizes he has forgotten about the curtains. He starts taking them down. His phone beeps--a text message from Lisha.

[Staring at the phone, half in disbelief]

[Are you FREE]
When the curtains are down, he begins folding them bitterly, as if he wished he did not have to bother with folding them, but for some reason felt compelled to anyway.
Slowing down, little by little = 72

He finishes folding the curtains and sets them aside. He picks up his phone again and looks at the message with evident pain.

To say nothing!

Fp

sotto voce

unmeasured

sul pont.
He suddenly feels exhausted, and his anguish turns to grief and introspection. There is a numbness and resignation, a gradual sinking into silence. If my wondrous heart less strange were yours to keep; were mine to claim; and your wondrous heart less strange were yours to worth more, keep...
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Pno.
Lento = 88, with rubato

[Putting the phone away without responding to Lisha's message]
[E. crawls into his sleeping bag and settles into a troubled sleep.]
Scene 1. Annelise and Daniela.

Annelise and Daniela are in the kitchen, Daniela in her pajamas, Annelise in a bathrobe. Daniela pours herself some coffee, then turns to Annelise and smiles. She leans against the counter, drinking her coffee.

Annelise: (reaching over to touch Daniela’s tousled hair, she says fondly, teasingly) You need a haircut. (continuing to fuss with Daniela’s hair) Our reservation is this Saturday at six. A five-course extravaganza for our special day. We’ll get the wine pairing, of course. No expense must be spared!

Daniela: (pleased, teasingly) Yes, I know. You’ve told me! We both bought new outfits, remember? (inspecting her hair cheekily) Maybe I should dye it blue.

Annelise: Dark blue or light blue?

Daniela: Dark but bright. Like a shiny beetle!

Annelise: You would need a new dress then.

Daniela: Or I could really smoke up the place—fiery red, electric blue. (She takes Annelise by the hips.) A fitting tribute to two years of sensational lovemaking! (They kiss, then separate, lingering.)

Annelise: (putting her hand over Daniela’s, looking her in the eyes seriously) Our lives have come so well together—our work, our affection, our pastimes, our delights. These two years have only left me wanting more. I imagine us together, always. Side by side, each other’s equal. Partners. Neither the shadow of the other.

Daniela: (surprised but touched) I imagine the same.

They fall silent, contemplating the import of what has just been said.

Daniela: (flustered by the silence, changes topics) Only a month to the ribbon-cutting! Your first! Are you excited?
Annelise: *(with teasing chivalry)* I dreamed the building at your behest, my lady! You gave this poor independent architect her lucky break. I still recall the look in your eyes when you first came to me. The first time I met you. You were my librarian in shining armor, with a vision for the palace where the people of Philadelphia would gather to learn about themselves and the world. The excitement should be ours both!

Daniela: But it’s your first solo design! Natural light to read by, cozy wooden beams, the grand staircase where we’ll hang new art—people will love it.

Annelise: They’ll love what you love, Librarian of the Year. They love you.

Daniela: *(coyly modest)* I’m a librarian, not a dreamcaster.

Annelise: Close enough in my books.

*Daniela rolls her eyes, but is clearly pleased.*

Annelise: This Saturday will be a night to remember, Daniela, the happiest of our two years. By whatever powers I possess, I will make it so.

BEGIN “SONG” BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Annelise and Daniela: Two doves upon the selfsame branch,
Two lilies on a single stem,
Two butterflies upon one flower:—

Annelise turns away from Daniela and begins singing towards the audience, almost in an aside. Thus, the following stanza functions as an inner monologue, expressing Annelise’s unconscious thoughts as she observes her own moment of happiness with Daniela. Daniela continues to drink her coffee, gazing happily at Annelise.

Annelise: Oh happy they who look on them.
Who look upon them hand in hand
Flushed in the rosy summer light;
Who look upon them hand in hand
And never give a thought to night.

END “SONG” BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
Annelise turns back to Daniela, and the two sit over their coffee, enjoying each other’s company. Lights go down.

Scene 2A. Lisha and Eliot.

Lisha and Eliot are strolling through the park, holding hands.

Eliot: Tell me again the street you lived on.

Lisha: On Tivy, just past Main. The pink house—a dreadful color—with the hammock on the porch. Two boys, three girls. We were all upperclassmen then.

Eliot: (with sudden recognition) Christmas lights! You had them all year round!

Lisha: (amused) I almost didn’t remember those. I could see the lights from my bedroom. Sometimes they kept me up at night, eerie blues and reds casting shadows on the wall, but I liked the nostalgic feeling they conjured. Like I was both there and somewhere else, then and sometime else, all at once.

They walk in silence for a few moments.

Lisha: I wonder that we never met.

Eliot: It seems incredible now to imagine. We must have been destined to meet now, not then.

Lisha: All the days we spent circulating that little town, unknowing.

Eliot: And I, living only two streets away the whole time in that awful apartment! (shaking his head and chuckling at the memory) But it worked well enough.

Lisha: (teasingly and fondly) Show me a picture sometime.

Eliot pulls Lisha into his arms. They kiss.

Lisha: Two streets, four years—it doesn’t matter now. When I saw you yesterday, at the table, all alone, I knew I could ask to share it. The
look on your face—it felt familiar to me, like I knew what you were thinking, and I wasn’t scared of it.

Eliot:  
(gently) You don’t seem scared of much.

Lisha:  
Sticks, stones, war, thrones!  
There is much to fear;  
much that needs courage.  
Work never ends;  
diversions hold hostage.  
Innocence depends  
on horse and carriage.  
So much seems fleeting,  
but something perseveres.  
It is as old as desire,  
but ever-new it appears.

Eliot:  
It is one thing to be brave.

Lisha:  
But another to not feel fear to begin with.

Eliot:  
(realizing he is about to say this to another person for the first time in his life) There is nothing I fear in you.

Lisha and Eliot have now arrived in front of the apartment building where Lisha lives. Lisha leads Eliot upstairs. They make love, then go to sleep.

Scene 2B. Eliot.

In the morning, Eliot wakes up, dresses, kisses Lisha goodbye, then sets off to work in high spirits.

Eliot:  
Lisha! Her entire person fills me with hope and promise. She makes me feel I am where I should be, every moment glowing and fully formed. There is no fear that I abandoned my home unrightly. Better prospects, better pay—that was what I came to this city for, leaving family, leaving friends. But I always hoped there would be something else to make me stay. Maybe Lisha will be the one. Maybe she will make it all worthwhile. So much youthful vagrancy may yet come to a rooted future, here with you, Lisha!

Scene 2C. Eliot and his boss.

Eliot arrives at his workplace.
Eliot’s boss: Eliot! Just the man I’ve been looking for.

Eliot: (buoyantly) Good morning, sir!

Eliot’s boss: You seem well.

Eliot: Indeed, sir. The best!

Eliot’s boss: I like your attitude today! I saw that spark in you when you first came here, and I’m glad it’s still around. You’re one of the smartest product testers I’ve ever hired. Many a good product has made millions on your thoughtful work. It shouldn’t be long now till some of those millions are yours, eh? (he puts a hand on Eliot’s arm, winks conspiratorially)

Eliot: That would be nice, sir!

Eliot’s boss lingers, so Eliot waits for him to speak.

Eliot’s boss: You see, Eliot. (He pauses, unsure of how to go on.) Our company is consolidating. Bit by bit, our business here will be done. We’ll close up shop. The process has already begun. They need fewer product testers on the ground—that’s old-school now. No need for young bodies to do old-fashioned work. Just your brains will do! Kchaugh! (laughs partly to himself, partly to lighten the mood)

Eliot: (taken aback) I like the “old-fashioned” work. I thought it was rather…effective. And real. (pausing, then realizing he might be out of a job) Does the company need me still?

Eliot’s boss: More than ever! They want you back at headquarters. You’ll be spending all your days at a desk now. They’ll get you set up real nice. Maybe it’ll even be a desk you’ve tested yourself! Kchaugh! (laughs)

Eliot: Headquarters! But they just sent me out here not two years ago!

Eliot’s boss: Times change, my boy. You must change with them! It’s how you stay ahead! On top! Inside! Outside! Around! Inbound! Beside! Above! Beyond! (Pausing, shaken by his flight of fancy, he collects himself, then bureaucratically hands Eliot a piece of paper.) You leave in two weeks. It’s this way or the highway. Market research, my boy! All the information we need, at your fingertips. That’s all
we need—your fingertips. Kchaugh! *(laughs again at this little joke with himself)*

_As soon as Eliot takes the paper from his boss’s hands, his boss looks down and begins busying about the papers on his desk. Resigned but reluctant, Eliot turns to leave._

Eliot’s boss: *(absentmindedly while shuffling papers)* But we may still need you here from time to time. They’ll fly you in. Just until all loose ends are resolved.

Eliot: *(brightening up a little)* I could come back? Every now and then? For a little while?

Eliot’s boss: *(fixing Eliot with a look)* IF we need you.

*Crestfallen, Eliot turns and leaves.*

**Scene 3. Annelise and Maya.**

_Annelise and Maya are in Annelise and Daniela’s living room._

Maya: You have such a lovely place together!

Annelise: It’s just a regular house, nothing special, but with Daniela it feels like home. We’re creating it little by little. This lamp from the weekend my parents visited, this table that we had almost given up finding when a friend who was moving called us out of the blue. Everything, it seems, has its small, certain significance.

Maya: *(beaming)* Remember the beautiful bungalow on Lowell Drive? They loved your design for the alcove.

Annelise: *(half dreamily, half bittersweet)* Maybe someday I will have something like that to call my own. A place made from the very foundation for Daniela and I to spend our lives, a hard-earned haven to relish.

Maya: No doubt you will have this if you want it enough. You’ve always been my best and brightest. I know you will align your life as necessary to achieve the best that you can.
Annelise smiles, but, due in part to embarrassment and in part her uncertainty of Maya’s intentions, does not respond. Maya takes a sip of her coffee.

Maya: (testing the waters) I’ve been invited to lead an exciting project. A dream come true, if such things are real. (a little more passionately) A green-living, low-rise building in an uptown site, with commercial space and offices on the ground floor, and mid-income housing above. (seeing Annelise’s eyes light up, she continues more excitedly) Solar panels, natural insulation, gray water management—they want everything!

Annelise: How wonderful!

Maya: I choose my own team. (choosing her words carefully) I would like you to be my right hand, if it interests you.

Annelise: Maya, I am honored that you would think of me! (excitedly) When would it begin?

Maya: Very soon. The investors have a serious interest in sustainability and sourcing as much building material locally as possible. We’ll have to spend quite some time gathering those sources. The water catchment system too could take us months of onsite surveying.

Annelise: …water catchment? (slowly realizing) Where is this job?

Maya: (trying to break the news kindly) Arizona. Not exactly in the neighborhood, I know.

Annelise sits in shocked silence.

Maya: This could be your chance to shine. It’s a dream come true for me, and I want it to be for you as well. I don’t want you to have to wait as long as I have. (with genuinely regretful compassion) The best opportunities come where they come.

Annelise: So far away from my dear Daniela. I was going to propose to her this Saturday.

Maya: Propose and bring her with you! This project could take a couple years.

Annelise: Years!
Maya: They want us to supervise construction.

*Both Maya and Annelise are silent for a while as Annelise absorbs the information.*

Annelise: Maya, this job would be my heart’s desire, but Daniela—her mother is unwell, declining. She can’t leave her. And…it’s such a long time… We’ve been together a little while. I’d like to think we could survive this time apart. But ambition is fickle. Now it’s all advantage and opportunity, but as I feed it, it will grow…and start to feed itself. I cannot see clearly, Maya. How do I know for certain that I will come back?

Maya: *(gently)* We must go when we must go. And we must stay when we must stay. *(torn about how to advise Annelise, she continues in seriousness)* Perhaps…you can find a way to do both.

*Maya hugs Annelise, then leaves.*

**Scene 4. Eliot, Annelise, Eliot’s boss.**

*Annelise is walking the city streets, tormented by the decision she faces.*

Annelise: What do I know? What do I know about the world and its machinations? Our love felt so simple. I was I, she was she. Our future was what we wanted, the best that we could make. Now the best is what makes me!

*In another part of the stage, Eliot begins to set up the physiognotrace on the sidewalk outside the park. At the same time, we see a light come up partially on Eliot’s boss in another part of the stage, where he is doing some desk work, perhaps filing things away in a filing cabinet. Annelise continues to sing, wandering unknowingly in Eliot’s direction.*

Eliot and Annelise: What do I know of life and its invitations?

Eliot: A commitment premature or a life’s love forgone?

Annelise: To be fulfilled one way or another?

Eliot and
Annelise: In coin, in ruin; in fruit or barren; you can find some old saying to sympathize:

Annelise: Sink or swim.

Eliot: Life is but a dream.

Annelise: Everything happens for a reason.

Eliot: What will be, will be!

Eliot and
Annelise: Home is where the heart is!

*Annelise nears the physiognotrace, and she and Eliot catch sight of each other. They sense an uncanny connection between them, and are awkwardly silent as they try to ascertain its significance. Annelise looks over the physiognotrace curiously for a while before Eliot interjects.*

Eliot: Would you like to try it? We’re testing it out, to see how people like it. Looking for things to improve, what things to keep the same. Ways that the product can best satisfy you, the consumer!

Annelise: What is it?

Eliot: It makes a silhouette of your profile, framed with a vintage border. Quite fun—and elegant! Like what lords and ladies used to have done. You have a choice of frames: oval or square. You can make it small for wallets or lockets; make it large to hang on the wall. A nice gift for a loved one to remember you by.

Annelise: *(slightly startled by Eliot’s last remark, but intrigued anyway)* Just your silhouette, not a picture?

Eliot: *(pleasantly, with no trace of condescension)* Exactly.

Eliot’s boss and Eliot: Not you, but a sort of…shadow of you, your essence distilled.

Eliot: All the more charming to gaze upon!

Annelise: *(hesitating, a little wary)* What is it called?

*Eliot suddenly notices Lisha coming towards him.*
Eliot: (to Annelise) I’ll be right with you. (to Lisha, looking surprised) Lisha!

Lisha: You said to meet you on my lunch break. It’s twelve-thirty. (she leans over and she and Eliot kiss)

Eliot: I must have gotten a late start. I got…held up…at the office.

Lisha mimes holding Eliot up at gunpoint, as a joke.

Eliot: (ruefully) Not quite…I think. I did—I do—have a choice.

Lisha: (coyly) So they say. (eyeing the physiognotrace up and down, glancing at Eliot’s clipboard) So this is what you do!

Eliot’s boss and Eliot: Today, at least. It changes as necessary.

Eliot: (realizing with despair the truth of what he is about to say) …I go where they need me to go. (optimistically trying to shake the despair) It’s good, really. Lots of variety! It pays well enough for the level I’m at.

Lisha: It’s amazing what technology can do. Somewhere, someone is making money off of people’s shadows. Who would have thought?

Eliot: I suppose I am too—making money off shadows.

Lisha: (kindly) We do what we have to do. Besides, a different thing tomorrow, right?

Eliot: A different thing tomorrow. (realizing he’s left Annelise alone for a while) I’m sorry—I have to—

Lisha: Don’t be sorry. (tenderly) It was lovely to see you. We’ll have many more chances to have a real lunch together.

Eliot: (longingly) That’s right. If that’s what we want.

Lisha: If that’s what we want.
Lisha leaves the park and Eliot looks longingly after her. He then stands there numbly for a while, staring uncomprehendingly at the physiognotrace, overwhelmed by his dilemma.

Eliot’s boss: (addressing Eliot, but unheard by him) Decide then, why don’t you? Which do you want? To throw it all away for a romance that’s just begun? Fools have done far worse, and far better. Why not make yourself a silhouette while you’re at it? (patronizingly) “A nice gift for a loved one to remember you by.”

Eliot eventually gathers his wits and turns back to Annelise, who has been pondering the physiognotrace and the sample silhouette prints displayed on the booth.

Eliot: What do you think?

Annelise: So it’s a brand new thing.

Eliot’s boss and Eliot: An old idea in a new skin! Much faster than it used to be. It’ll take you less time to do it than to make up your mind.

Eliot: Free of charge today, in exchange for answers to a few questions. (waves his clipboard) You’ll be in and out in no time at all.

Annelise: (mildly) I don’t mind it taking a moment.

Eliot: (pleasantly, gesturing towards the door to the physiognotrace) Like I said, no time at all.

Annelise: (moving towards the physiognotrace, pausing) Daniela! Daniela, I thought I knew my answer. But I see now before me something fascinating, grotesque. A towering wall and two paths that run behind it. Do they meet behind that wall? Do they run their separate ways? I must see what lies behind the fortress, the barrier defying to be breached. I must see both light and shadow and hold them both in my embrace.

Annelise enters the physiognotrace.

Eliot and Annelise: There must be a way to make it through! I’ve done everything I was supposed to do. I worked hard, and I was kind. I looked for
meaning, held my head high. I made my own way…and now there are…two.

Eliot’s boss: Feed it, and it grows hungrier!
Struggle, and it multiplies!
Make it a spectacle, and it looks right back at itself, and magnifies.

*Eliot shuts the door to the physiognotrace and Annelise sits down on the stool. We can see Annelise inside the booth. A bright light shines on her, casting a stark shadow of her profile on the wall behind her.*

Eliot: Lisha, how would our love survive the weight of what I’ll have given up for it? What a great burden to crush our tender dreams. Oh, Lisha, I wish I knew how things were meant to be! Then I wish I could make it so.

Eliot’s boss: Desire so sweet and immediate!
Expectation, when desire dissipates.
It must still deliver, over and over again.

*The physiognotrace begins producing Annelise’s silhouette.*

BEGIN “MEMORY” BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Annelise: *(numbly)* I nursed it in my breast while it lived,  
I hid it in my heart when it was dead;  
In joy I sat alone, even so I grieved  
Alone and nothing said.

Eliot and Annelise: I shut the door to face the naked truth,  
I stood alone—I faced the truth alone,

Eliot’s boss, Annelise, and Eliot: Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth  
Till first and last were shown.

Eliot and Annelise: I have a room whereinto no one enters  
Save I myself alone.

END “MEMORY” BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI
The physiognotrace goes dark. After what seem like a long few moments, Annelise exits the booth, holding a print of her silhouette. Eliot, holding his clipboard, approaches her awkwardly.

Eliot: How do the results strike you?

Annelise: (as if she’d seen a ghost) I chose the oval frame.

Eliot: And? Does it please you?

Annelise: I’m not the one it’s for. (She fingers the outline to her silhouette.) Quite exquisite, really. I never knew my shadow was so…real.

Eliot: (gazing over the print) A lovely rendering. Your profile is ideal for capturing so. The oval was a wise choice.

Annelise: Wise? It was one or the other. Wisdom is irrelevant.

Eliot: (silent, perturbed, then sagely) In our thoughts, not our options, are where wisdom manifests. (He looks down at his clipboard to return to his questionnaire, sees the next question, and grimaces. He asks it anyway.) Would you have liked more options?

Annelise: (flustered) Yes.—No!——I— (silence while she looks away, searching for the true answer) I did not want to choose. (She meets Eliot’s gaze.)

Eliot: (looking steadily at Annelise) Would you do it again?

Lights go to black.

Scene 5A. Annelise and Daniela.

Annelise is packing her suitcase. Daniela lingers in the doorway to their room.

Daniela: (in a strange, melancholy mood) You hear about the deserts, but there is winter, too.

Annelise: (somewhat absently) I’ll have time to prepare for the cold.

Daniela: (noticing Annelise’s winter jacket still hanging in the closet) Your favorite jacket? It was months before you found a scarf that matched.
Annelise: *(bittersweet attempt at light-heartedness)* I’ll come winter in the cold with you, like a bird.

Daniela: You would be a strange bird.

Annelise: Are you all right, my love? You look pale and not yourself.

Daniela: I wish I had the courage to make you stay, or make you declare us finished.

Annelise: *(coming over to Daniela and taking her by the hands)* You know I want this to work. I want what’s best for us, for our future here together. This job could be the sacrifice we both make—for us.

Daniela: I know how much our work means to both of us. I understand why you’d want the best for us and the best for your career. That’s what we are supposed to want, isn’t it? Everything, the best of everything. In a world where we’re all trying to get ahead, who gets left behind? No one at all, we seem to think. Unless, perhaps, we’re all—all of us—in the shadows. We go where the sun shines, or…truly…*(her face turning dark)* we are what makes the sun exist.

_Hesitantly, Annelise takes out her silhouette from its envelope on the dresser._

Annelise: There was a man in the park with this…photo booth…of sorts. He seemed lost.

Daniela is silent. She stares at the silhouette, trying to ascertain its meaning. _Flustered, Annelise takes out the frame she had prepared and begins placing the silhouette in it._

Annelise: I thought you might like it. It’ll look better in the frame.

Daniela: *(interrupting)* It’s beautiful. And dark. As if I could love you, but not see you. *(She pauses, deeply perturbed.)* I’ve never seen you this way before.

Annelise: Light makes shadow.

Light makes— *(She stops, despairing.)*

My shadow clings to me, my flesh.
Now it cleaves
to you. It must
be arms, torso,
pillar, heart, and muscle.
While I, with my
poor body
may only think
of you, this
shadow
must hold you.
It will be
the best
of what I am,
all I am.
It will be what
remains with you. Daniela (to herself): …of
you.

BEGIN “MIRAGE” BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Annelise
and Daniela: The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream’s sake.

Annelise: I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake.

Daniela: I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapped,
For a dream’s sake.

Annelise
and Daniela: Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break.
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream’s sake.

END “MIRAGE” BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Daniela: (wiping away her tears hurriedly) It’s three! I must take my
mother to her appointment.

Annelise: Stay here. Rest. I will take her.
Annelise readies her things and leaves the apartment.

Scene 5B. Daniela and Maya.

[Daniela, vocalise] Alone in the apartment, Daniela eventually collects herself. Gazing at Annelise’s silhouette with pain, but also fondness and determination, she begins to consider where to hang it. She settles for a spot in the living room and proceeds to hang it up.

Just as Daniela finishes hanging the silhouette, there is a knock at the door. She opens it to find Maya. Both are surprised.

Maya: Daniela!

Daniela: You’re here for Annelise!

Maya: She said to come at three-thirty.

Daniela tries to think of how to respond.

Maya: (noticing Daniela’s red eyes) Are you all right, my dear?

Daniela: She’s had a lot on her mind today. She must have forgotten.

Maya: (seeing the framed silhouette on the wall) Oh! Is that Annelise? How pretty!

Daniela: (standing aside to let Maya in) Yes! She just had it done…in the park, I think.

Maya admires the image for a while, then slowly turns around, as if unsure whether or not to say what she’s thinking of saying next.

Maya: I’ll make sure she remembers how important you are.

Daniela: (hurriedly, embarrassed) There’s no need for that. We’ll be…all right.

Maya: (noticing Daniela’s obvious distress) Come sit with me. (They sit down on the couch.) We give ourselves away every day. We make something from nothing. That something goes on to do great things—be great things. Sometimes those things come back to face us, and when they do, they are alien, monstrous, barely seeming to
be of our making. (pauses) Annelise has done well by her talent. She’s done well to find you. Now she faces this. (looks/gestures towards the silhouette) Her love for you, the part of herself she has given to you, faces her like a shadow apart from her.

Daniela looks alarmed, wondering if Maya can really mean to say this. But Maya seems lost in her thoughts, and appears not to realize the effect she is having on Daniela.

Maya: (ominously) I have her shadow too.

Daniela looks overwhelmed.

Maya: Her skill has a life of its own. It makes more than she could ever understand. What riches, powers, and liaisons! What wealth upon wealth! What worlds and visions vanished for not knowing them to be in our grasp! But all she—and I—will ever know are her own contracted recompense—(grasps Daniela’s hands meaningfully) and love—, such as she may be able to keep.

Daniela: (horrified, pulling one hand away) Annelise!

Maya: We are keepers of her shadow, Daniela. (impenetrably) You have me on your side.

Even as Daniela recoils from Maya’s touch, she allows her hand to remain in hers. Just then, Annelise returns home.

Annelise: Maya! I’m sorry I kept you waiting. Something came up at the last minute.

Maya: No need for apologies! There’s always so much to do at the end. Daniela and I had a very nice visit. The two of you are so wonderful together. Hang on to her, Annelise, no matter what you do.

Annelise: (looking at Daniela) No matter what I do. I promise.

Maya: (waits a suitable pause, then brightly) Shall we talk over coffee?

Annelise smiles her assent. She and Maya turn and leave the house together. Alone, Daniela looks after them with both dread and a grim resolve, then sinks her face into her hands. Lights go to black.

Eliot is in his bedroom, going about the last details of his departure. He takes picture frames off the walls and puts them in a box, carefully placing bubble wrap between them. A sleeping bag and pillow are laid out on the floor. There is no suitcase in the room. When the walls are empty, Eliot realizes he has forgotten about the curtains. He starts taking them down. His phone beeps—a text message from Lisha.

Eliot: (staring at his phone, half in disbelief) “Are you FREE Friday evening?”

He puts the phone away. With anxiety, dread, and frustration, he returns to taking down the curtains. When the curtains are down, he begins folding them bitterly, as if he wished he did not have to bother with folding them, but for some reason felt compelled to anyway.

Eliot: (bitterly, while folding) FRIDAY, she wants to know. WHEN will I be FREE. (softening) Lisha, the choice was mine, mine alone. I could stay, be out of work, soon penniless. I would be down on my luck, down on myself. I would pin all my hopes on you, the one I gave it all up for. Could you love me then? Should you love me then? (a turn towards optimism and determination) Best to hope I see you again. That they’ll need me back soon, and we’ll fall deeper in love, enough to tip the scales. Just a few more lucky dates, that’s all we need. (a pause, then, quietly inspired) This fearlessness I feel with you, I take it with me now.

He continues to fold the curtains in a deliberate manner.

Eliot: (summoning a despairing courage) This is MY free will! It is! My FREE will!

He finishes folding the curtains and sets them aside. He picks up his phone again and looks at the message with evident pain.

Eliot: To say nothing—! To say—something—!

He suddenly feels exhausted, and his anguish turns to grief and introspection. There is numbness and resignation, a gradual sinking into silence.

Eliot: If my hours, worth more, were yours to keep
And your wondrous heart, less strange, were mine to claim;
Then, unburdened, would I stay with you to reap,
Instead I wither to speculate and maim.  
Our unfledged love must not be made to blame.  
So fragile a thing!—fear out of fearlessness made.  
Think me heartless; let all else remain the same:  
Fearless, unfledged, till our heads are old and grayed.  
But yet there is a hope, if need relayed  
My return, of seeing you again;  
A fool’s hope, from fool to fool betrayed.  

(putting the phone away without responding to Lisha’s message)  
For this hope—its name “despair”!—I my own self arraign.  
Now I vacillate; uncertainly, I seep  
Into silence. My words endarken the deep.  

Eliot crawls into his sleeping bag and settles into a troubled sleep.