

CADENZA

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Introduction: A cadenza is a section of music where the musician is allowed to put his or her own interpretation on a certain passage by changing the tempo or dynamics.

On a bright and unidentifiable morning weekday morning, I wake up as the shuffling of feet pad against the tile floor of the kitchen. It is morning again and my hungry stomach urges me to sink my teeth into the variety of scrumptious culinary surprises that wait patiently downstairs for me. A menu fit for gourmet eating, pop tarts and stale cereal. I think that I will wait until after my shower for breakfast. Just a few more minutes. I am so tired that I can barely keep my eyes open. Finally, without hesitation, I press the snooze once more and silence the buzzing music of my deafening alarm.

Life is a cadenza. If anyone knew that, she did. I watch as she walks onto the stage, a mischievous look sparking in her eyes under the gleaming lights. Her face beams with youthful vitality as her hands fly across the silver keys in a fountain of mellow tones. The sounds escalate throughout the staff, a flowing line of crescendos and decrescendos. I can feel the veins in her hands pulsating in a rush for instantaneous perfection. Nail the trill. Sustain the hold. The audience explodes into applause as the curtain drops.

My lazy eyelids open as I pull myself out of bed and meander my way over to the bathroom. Towel and fresh clothes in hand, I close the door in the hopeful anticipation that a morning shower will chase away the sleepiness that overpowers me. Dropping my clothes to the floor, I step into the shower. Gently the knobs turn with my touch and I feel the warm water on my toes. I pull up on the shower knob only to release the hottest water I have ever felt. Burning my skull, I shrink to the side of the shower stall. Steam evaporates from my skin as red dots dance there way across my shoulders and down my legs.

Goosebumps run up and down her bare legs as she boards a train to the city. She has never done this before, skipping school. Her heart thumps to the beat of forbidden adrenaline. No one will ever guess that she would do something like this, at least no one at school. The thought tickles her to laugh silently to herself. This was a perfect idea, true genius. She is sick of being who her parents, her teachers, and even the world tell her to be. She is just sick of trying.

I find myself trying, with often limited success, to keep my head above my cornflakes. Eyes drooping, I watch my spoon swirl the milk and soggy cereal bits in circles at the bottom of a pale green bowl. Last night was crazy. I should have given up writing that paper and gone to bed hours earlier. I look around the table. Smiling morning faces, bright with anticipation of a new day mock my exhaustion. I wish they would all disappear.

As the light disappears into the night, he kisses her tender lips with his lying ones. She didn't want him too. Not here, not now, not ever. Her mind screams at her all too

willing lips to stop and think about what she is doing. Nothing is going to happen after tonight. This doesn't mean anything. But for logic and common sense resistance is pointless. I watch him seduce her and like a fool she becomes victim to his carnal desires. The irony of this oddly familiar moment strikes her as humorous. She breaks into an inopportune laughter and in utter astonishment he stops.

I stop at the red light on Center Street next to the new fried fast food delight of a restaurant. The smell fills the air with a subtle lack of sophistication. The seatbelt chaffs my shoulder and I pull it away for temporary relief. Sipping the coffee slowly, I savor every single drop. This should wake me up. Caffeine usually does. The sound of mediocre music sings through the speakers and my fingers instinctively reach for my presets.

Her fingers find the play button on the stereo. The music floats through the room as her traditional principles fade and her subconscious takes over. I watch as her arms and legs move in synchronized harmony with the beat of some utterly forgettable song. She kicks clothes and boxes out of her way to create a dance floor in the center of her room. She inhales the aroma of solitary freedom and of the white voodoo candle which burns slowly on the corner of her desk.

"Class, put your text books on your desks and turn to page one fifty one," the teacher requests to a room of gabbing seventeen year olds. I open the book and stare at pictures of people from other countries. Congo, Madagascar, Belgium, France; everything is so different there. I would love to go some place exotic, some place new. Someday I'll get out of my hometown and away from the same people, away from the same daily routine, away from the same everything that I have ever known.

This house had become unlike any place she had ever known. Hidden in the forest, it sat at the end of a cul-de-sac offering paradise, rebellion, the unknown. There were no parents. There were no rules. She reminisces in disgust at those thoughts that used to con her into coming here. She sits on a plastic lawn chair watching the fire pop and sizzle, illuminating blank faces drinking bland beer. The faces laugh at jokes too meaningless to be repeated. Why is she here and why won't she leave? She watches in silence as bottle caps rocket through the air, impaling the burning embers of the dying bonfire.

A fire erupts in my skull as a headache burns whatever little form of concentration I had left into a heap of ashes. The pain is unbearable, throbbing against the very walls of my cranium. I feel as though my brain is about to explode out of my ears into a melting mess in the floor. I don't think that I can take this anymore. My eyes are spinning like tornadoes as I run for the nearest door. My sight begins to blacken. I have got to get out of here.

She looks around the pitch black room and realizes that she has got to get out of here. Bottles lie on the floor with passed out lumps, grunting and groaning as she stumbles over them in the darkness. Half intoxicated; she pulls on her sweatshirt which reeks of stale alcohol and dried vomit. Finally she reaches the screen door and slips into the night. This was never supposed to happen to her. She was going places. She had a future and she threw it all away for one night of drunken pleasure. Digging in her pockets, she pulls out the keys to her car. The key turns in the ignition, waking the engine from its frosty hibernation. She does not know where she is going. All she knows is that she has to go somewhere. Anywhere but here.

When I finally realize where I am, I discover that I have wandered into the bathroom. It appears to be a bathroom from heaven with its celestial white tiles and sterile golden faucets. I turn the knobs to adjust them to the optimal perfection of warm and rub the foamy soap between my palms. I look up from the sink and there she is. There is the girl from my dreams. Her bloodshot eyes cry silently sending toxic tears down to stain her tattered clothes. I reach out my right hand to wipe away her bitter tears. Simultaneously, her hand touches mine and I shrink back in surprise. She looks so familiar and for a good reason, because she is me.