

Symphony No. 479

Treatment, 28 November 2022

Cat Bitteker

LOGLINE

An unmotivated, yet talented, pianist must find the inspiration to finish his composition for an upcoming symphony performance, but faces the consequences of procrastinating when his ability to play is taken away from him.

CHARACTERS

EMILE - A quiet and talented pianist/music composer who struggles with procrastination.

ACT I

EMILE sits on a couch in the living room of his apartment, watching a nature documentary on an old box TELEVISION. The room is quaint and tidy. There are a few pieces of art on the walls and a small bookshelf next to the TV. A baby grand PIANO sits in the corner of the room, taking up most of the space.

Emile stares blankly at the TV, sunken into the couch and loosely holding the REMOTE in his hand. Next to him, SHEET MUSIC with notes scribbled on it are splayed across the couch cushion. On top of the sheet music is a FLYER for a symphony performance:

SYMPHONIC ORCHESTRA
WITH SPECIAL GUEST PIANIST, EMILE DUBOIS
MAY 15TH, 2023

An infomercial interrupts the documentary. An over exaggerated performance of procrastinating is displayed on the screen, then a self-help book written by a "New York Times Best Selling Author" is advertised.

INFOMERCIAL

(Preppy)

Are you tired of procrastinating? Well, we
have just the thing for you! *The New York*

Times bestselling self-help book,
"Procrastination: Do Something Before You
Die!", has all the tips and tricks you need
to combat your own laziness! As Buddha once
said, "we must be diligent today. To wait
until tomorrow is too late. Death comes
unexpectedly. How can we bargain with it?"
Millions sold! Buy it now!

Emile turns off the TV, sighing. He tosses the remote on the stack of papers next to him. The room is now silent, except for the sound of occasional cars passing outside the apartment.

He stares at the blank TV screen, then turns his head to look at the sheet music next to him. He moves the remote and flyer to get a good look at the notes scattering the pages, then looks at the piano. A layer of dust has settled on the untouched ivory keys as the baby grand watches Emile silently.

Emile stands and walks over to the piano. The piano itself is in fairly good condition, but aged from years of use. The black paint lacks the lustrous shine it once had, but the strings and hammers inside are well taken care of as if it had just been tuned up. The keys have taken on a slight yellow coloring, which only adds to the rustic charm of the instrument.

Emile plays a single note, which echoes through the room. He sighs.

CUT TO:

Emile puts on his COAT and hooks his KEYS to his belt loop. He grabs the sheet music from the couch and shoves it in his Jansport BACKPACK before slinging the bag over his shoulder. He leaves the apartment, the piano still watching him as he exits.

ACT II

Emile is riding his BIKE down the road while listening to classical music through HEADPHONES. He passes small shops and apartment buildings without paying much attention to his surroundings.

He stops at a convenience store and locks his bike to a pole. He takes his backpack from the basket strapped to the back of his bike and enters the store.

The convenience store is only big enough to fit two or three customers at most, but Emile is the only one there. He moves to the back where beverage refrigerators line the wall and stops in front of one showcasing various soda pops.

He stares at the assortment of drinks as he starts to sway to the music in his ears (*Clair De Lune by Debussy*). He plays along to the song, using his thighs as a keyboard and playing each note with care. The music amplifies around him until he stops and opens the freezer door. He grabs a CAN of Fanta.

CUT TO:

He rides his bike again, a GROCERY BAG hanging from the handlebar. His headphones are still on (*Nocturne No. 2 in E-Flat Major by Chopin*) as he peddles down the road. He passes a school. Children are playing during recess, screaming and laughing. The bell rings and all the children flood to the door to go back to class. Emile pays no mind to the pandemonium.

Emile rounds the street corner and arrives at a park. There is a large grass field, where a few people are walking their dog. Emile dismounts his bike and walks into the middle of the field. He drops his bike in the grass and lays down next to it, stretching out and putting his hands behind his head.

He looks up at the blue sky, watching as clouds travel across the vast expanse. He takes a deep, calm breath, taking in the warm breeze. Emile takes off his headphones and lays them on his stomach. Chopin is replaced by the peaceful sounds of nature. Birds are chirping and bees are buzzing.

Emile closes his eyes in content. He starts to hum a tune, using his hands to subtly play "air-piano" again. Then, he sits up as if he had a revelation. He grabs his bag and digs around for his sheet music. He grabs a pen from his jacket pocket and marks a few notes at the end of the page. He holds the music away from him, studying it, as a smile begins to creep on his face.

CUT TO:

In a frenzy of inspiration, Emile bikes home, pedaling quickly. Everything around him is a blur. He speeds across an intersection, but a car pulls out in front of him. The car hits him.

CUT TO:

The grocery bag is crumpled, flapping in the breeze; its contents (the can of Fanta, a bag of chips, and a pack of Marlboro cigarettes) are littered across the road. The bike is a scratched and twisted mess upon the asphalt. Sheet music flies through the air, floating to the ground in an unorganized mess. Emile lays on the ground unmoving. Only his hands are shown, which twitch slightly.

CUT TO:

Emile is in a wheelchair, being pushed by a NURSE down the hall of the ER. He has a cut on his forehead and a CAST in a SLING on his left arm. A HOSPITAL BRACELET is on his good wrist. His backpack and jacket sit on his lap. The nurse wheels him to the exit and stops outside the lobby. The nurse helps him stand; a sullen look on his face.

Night has fallen and stars sprinkle the sky. It is quiet out. Street lamps illuminate the sidewalk with a dim orange glow. The stark white light from the ER shines through the glass sliding doors to the outside, lighting up the hospital entrance and Emile's face.

The nurse grabs her clipboard and unclips the sheet music, which is now in a neat stack but crumpled and bent. She hands it to Emile. He takes it and stares at it blankly, tire tracks and asphalt smudges stain the white paper. He drops his hand to his side, holding his music, but does not say anything.

NURSE
(Quietly)
I'm sorry.

A SECURITY GUARD walks up to Emile and the nurse with Emile's bike, which is now scratched and bent, but still functional. He takes it

without a word, dropping his belongings in the basket strapped to the back.

ACT III

Emile walks his bike home in silence. He enters his home, which is dark and quiet, cradling his belongings with his broken arm and holding his keys and sheet music in his good hand. He flicks on a light and the baby grand stares at him from across the room. He sighs and tosses his keys on the counter.

He drops his jacket and backpack on the floor. He looks down at the sheet music in his good hand, then at his slinged arm. He furrows his brows and grits his teeth, slamming the music to the ground. He looks back up at the piano with anger. It judges him silently.

His brow relaxes and he takes in a breath. He composes himself then gathers the sheet music off the ground, straightening it out as best he can.

He walks over to the piano, taking off his sling as he does and tossing it on the couch. He sits down at the piano. He displays the abused music on the stand in front of him, the title, *Symphony No. 479*, is visible in handwritten ink.

Emile starts to play the notes on the page with his good hand first. The song is smooth and professional, though it sounds incomplete without the complementary melody from his other hand.

He then gently places his broken hand on the keys. He hesitates, staring at his cast. His eyebrows are stitched in worry as he takes an unsteady breath. He starts to play, but the notes come out shaky and off-tempo. He quickly stops, cringing in pain.

He massages his bad hand, gritting his teeth and cursing under his breath. He cradles his broken arm, his face twisted in pain. His head drops and he stares at his lap, letting the emotion take over.

Emile looks back up at the music in front of him, sniffing and wiping his face with his good hand. His face is flushed with emotion. He closes his eyes to calm himself. He hears the song of nature from

earlier that day. He opens his eyes and takes a deep breath, putting both hands on the keyboard.

He stares at the keys. A beat, then he looks up at the music and starts to play. The slow paced song echoes through the room, a graceful yet sad melody.