

## Sketches of the Inchoate

*My Song for America*



*By Charles Davi*

**Sketches of the Inchoate***Table of contents*

- “American Gladiators”, page 3.
- “Immigrant Song”, page 7.
- “Ramble On”, page 11.
- “The voodoo child returns”, page 13.
- “Sending out an SOS”, page 14.
- “It worked”, page 15.
- “London Grammar”, page 16.
- “The Beach Just Beyond The Woods”, page 21.
- Musical references, page 23.
- “Clair de lune”, page 24.
- “Baby”, page 25.

*American Gladiators*

Personally and professionally, my music is a total failure, as even Ida can't stand it, since it has apparently gotten only more avant-garde, and annoying -

She thinks it sounds like, "Shostakovich, with the addition of crippling anxiety."

I am nonetheless already quite rich thanks to my software, so I don't really care, as there's an audience of one that appreciates it quite a bit -

Me.

Our children also hate my music, and run out of the room whenever I start playing it, mocking its sound, making buzzing sounds, like bees, whenever I play it, once even baiting me, suggesting that they were about to jointly listen to one of my compositions, asking me to join them, to my legitimate enthusiasm, sitting on the bed with them, only to instead witness my oldest son quickly pull up the "dramatic hamster" video on YouTube, which they had apparently queued up in advance, and minimized, all three of them then laughing at me, even the baby, only three years old, too young to fully understand the joke, but nonetheless understanding that she should be laughing at her dad, because he writes weird music.

Ida has since quit her job in private equity, and instead retooled as a pianist, and is now somewhat popular in Norway and Denmark, playing at large churches, and several small concert halls.

She plays mostly French music, with some German, almost entirely from the early 20th century, in particular Poulenc, Ravel, Debussy, Germaine Tailleferre, Brahms, and some Scriabin and Rachmaninoff as well, at times.

She has also dabbled in composing, though she hides it from me, so I sneak into her office to listen to recordings she keeps on what is basically a small electronic dictaphone, to her legitimate aggravation.

She's also been experimenting with arrangements of jazz standards for solo piano, which she's played for me, and I think they work quite well for her aesthetic -

The goal being to take the jazz format and apply it once, to create a distilled arrangement of a standard that she can take with her to different venues -

She sticks to ballads, which works well with her selections generally.

This works as a practical matter as well, since she can't improvise well enough to spontaneously compose, but she can improvise well enough to com-

pose an arrangement.

We have small performances in our home, from chamber music to jazz ensembles, which the children really enjoy -

The kinetics of live instruments always fascinate children.

The flood trashed the studio and everything in it, and severely damaged the Clara Schumann portrait, making me feel awful for my selfishness -

I was an alcoholic millionaire with no regard for history, and took a public item and purchased it to quench my own unhappiness, ultimately failing, cosmically.

The painting has since been restored, with no visible damage, absent x-rays, which we had done on the painting, both out of curiosity, and for insurance, but the house was damaged to the point that we decided to settle with our insurance company, who took title to the house and all insured items, except Pandora, which was undamaged, since there was no flooding on the roof, since the rain was ultimately not that bad -

There were electrical fires all over the city, before they ultimately cut the power to certain neighborhoods, including in the wiring under the flooring of the studio, creating damage that was wide spread, but small in scale, making repair pointless in the case of our house.

We now live in New York, on Governor's Island, which has since been privatized -

We bought a bit of land, and built a truly incredible home, which looks like a spaceship from a distance.

There's a small bit of sand and beach on our land just behind the house.

The kids all go to public school, but have private music education on the weekends at Manhattan School of Music Prep, my alma-matter.

They all grew up taking Suzuki lessons, and the baby is doing exactly that now, for piano.

Ida travels often, but almost never for more than a week at a time.

The house is basically alive -

It's always on in the background, my complete set of algorithms, that knows where we are at all times, monitors and predicts everything, and provides security:

The house is bounded by extremely dense bushes that cannot be walked through, since there's insufficient space in between the branches, leaving only two walkways up to the clearing that contains the house and our property.

As you proceed along the identical walkways, unaccompanied by one of us, things get increasingly weird:

It begins with a simple red sign attached to a low, green-painted metal post, tilted, for kitsch, with a white font that reads:

“Warning: if you don't stop, you will have a bad time.”

If you pass it, a recording of my voice plays, simply reading the words on the sign, played from a speaker hidden in a bush nearby.

Then, at the first perimeter, the ground starts rumbling beneath you, and sprinklers turn on, except they're mounted to autonomous rotors that know where you are, and deliberately spray you, randomly firing from positions hidden in bushes about the property.

If you continue past this confusing and humiliating experience, autonomous red laser pointers mounted to the roof of the house fire, to create the impression of snipers on the roof -

They're totally harmless, but they track your movements, and it's not the most comforting experience.

If you continue past the lasers, which don't stop, then an autonomous spotlight, mounted to an extremely noisy rotor on the roof, turns on and follows you, and also calls the police, as a recording of my voice says,

“Your life is about to get very strange.”

This happens just as a second sign becomes visible along the path, in this case, it's a black and white photo, the size of an ad at a bus stop, about 4x6 feet, housed in an aluminum casing, with white fluorescent lighting around the inner boundary to display the photograph:

It's my mugshot from jail in Copenhagen, that I've vandalized on the glass encasing the photo, with the words, “Giant Baby”, written across the top, above the pixelated industrial print, in a thick, black graffiti marker, that I top up on occasion.

If you still don't stop, then water balloons filled with non-toxic paint get chucked at you, by another autonomous arm mounted on the roof of the house, powered by an algorithm I came up with designed to track rockets,<sup>1</sup> which

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<sup>1</sup>C. Davi, “Tracking Moving Objects in 3-Space”.

has no trouble tracking people clumsily moving about a relatively small space getting pelted by paint-filled balloons -

As punishment, they don't stop until you actually leave the property.

Our oldest son of course uses the system to prank his friends, some of whom are very young, and out of fear, run forward, into the madness, presumably because they associate the house itself with safety.

This ruins their clothes, sometimes upsets them, and requires us to clean paint off small children and the floors of our house, which is infuriating, and also requires us to explain to enraged parents why their children come home from our house completely covered in paint, wearing new clothes.

But it is the natural consequence of thinking at least in part like a child when you have children, and it is on balance worth the inconvenience, since it has at least once foiled what we suspect was an attempted robbery, with the ostensible bandits quitting after being mercilessly barraged with paint balloons, ultimately getting arrested, with a spectacular spread in the New York Post a few days later, featuring what was apparently a couple, completely covered in what was a carefully selected spectrum of nonsense -

I of course shared the lowfi security camera footage with The Post, which they loved, showing the bandits attempting to hide in the bushes, as a mechanical arm hurled balloons at them from the roof, with an astonishing rate of precision, that I also shared with The Post -

Approximately 92% of the balloons made contact -

As they clumsily tried to hide in what was impenetrably dense bush, ultimately running away out of confusion and merciless inconvenience.

The reporter asked me for my inspiration for the security system, to which I replied,

“American Gladiators.” †

### ***Immigrant Song***

We go over the Williamsburg bridge, currently renting a place just off McCarren Park, ultimately heading to upstate New York, to visit my uncle, who's not really my uncle, but I call him that, having grown up with him, working in his recording studio from the age of twelve onward, until law school.

I've put on the Turina Piano Quartet in A Minor, which I'm singing along to, to highlight the melody for William, being overly dramatic at all times, and even though it's certainly modern, it has a listenable melody that I'm hoping will eventually stick in his head, as he gets older, providing him with a tune he can whistle, that will unfold in complexity over time, as he learns more about music, and the context of the melody changes its meaning.

Leaving William was not easy, though this isn't the first time we've done so, having spent a weekend with Ida's parents in Norway, without us -

He is so well-adjusted, that it's not that he doesn't care that we're gone, he instead already has an appropriate understanding of our relationship, knowing somehow we'll come back, and that he'll be fine, and that our affections for him carry even in our physical absence.

On this occasion, he actually waved back to us as we closed the door, causing Ida to get a bit upset, and cry in the elevator down from our mutual friend's apartment in Tribeca, which she eventually shrugged off, before exiting the building.

...

My uncle now lives in a decidedly massive Victorian mansion in a small town that he's turned into a record studio, plus a home.

This is our first quasi-real trip without William since he was born eight months ago, since then doing almost nothing other than taking care of him, moving to New York, and settling out our life in Copenhagen.

Once we get onto the FDR (to avoid the lights on West Street), which is fairly empty, presumably because it's a Thursday afternoon during work hours, I crank the volume up, and start blasting, "Immigrant Song", by Led Zeppelin, loud enough that you can hear the faders open up one by one in the beginning of the track, together with someone counting them in, "two, three, four ..." -

Ida opens up the glove compartment as the guitar and drums come in, pulls out a pair of wayfarers, this time white, with small black polka dots, slides them on, with both hands, staring forward into the open road ahead, while John Bonham terrorizes a drum set, both of us feeling completely awesome.

...

I can see him standing on his giant wrap around porch as we approach the massive house, complete with a bell tower that he's converted into a den filled with rare comic books.

As we get closer, an enormous American flag now becomes visible in the windows of his home, clearly spanning an entire room -

He stands before it, outside, on his porch, wearing black jeans, a white button-down shirt, neatly pressed, snakeskin boots, with a matching snakeskin belt, a black cowboy hat, with an actual revolver pistol in a holster attached to his belt, his long, black, rock star hair obscuring his face.

Taking in the presentment, I hear Ida say,

"Oh my God.", under her breath.

...

We make some small talk in his main kitchen, as we're the first guests to arrive, and Ida sees a water cooler -

Preferring bottled over tap, and ignoring the large, cautionary Grey Goose sticker planted over whatever brand of water was originally there, she grabs a glass from the table beside the cooler, after gesturing for permission, she fills it up, then taking a sip, only to realize it's actually vodka -

He compliments her, seeing a full glass,

"I like this one.", he says, as he then supplements a cup of coffee he's holding with some vodka, as an acknowledgement, lifting it to toast, and having a sip as he smiles at Ida, who is now in the awkward position of trying to balance impressing a person of legendary status in my own personal narrative, with the fact that she is now a mother of a small child, and also simply never in the mood for a tall glass of straight vodka.

So she passes me the glass, and simply walks over to the sink, grabbing a new cup from the drying rack, atop a rustic wooden counter, pouring herself a glass of water from the sink, as my uncle watches, confused -

Perhaps she prefers Belvedere, he thinks to himself.

...

The control room of the studio on the first floor of the house overlooks a lake positioned about two-hundred feet in front of the house, and has a handmade vocal booth, made of reclaimed wood generated by demo work we did inside the

house together, that we then lined with grey insulating foam.

Ida looks about the room, looks at me, and then stares out the old windows lining the control room, leaded glass, like our home in Copenhagen, suddenly getting a much better look into my own personal narrative, despite knowing me for five years at this point.

...

He's organized a party for us, and himself, inviting many of the people I grew up with at his studio, including some of the other engineers, some of the musicians I worked with regularly, as well as some of the locals from the town.

Ida is entertained by the unusual company, and my uncle's legitimately beautiful home, which varies from proper Victorian mansion, complete with original Edison recordings and playback devices, and Victorian furniture and art, to the madman's house, loaded with vintage and modern recording equipment, and instruments, absolutely everywhere.

The music is awesome, as he plays all of the songs I grew up with -

Frank Zappa, "Baby Snakes";

King Crimson, "Red";

Yes, "The Gates to Delirium", which makes me a bit sad, hearing the dreamy opening harmonics, wishing William were old enough to be here with us, and hear this, in this setting, the lake beyond the old windows, listening to music that sounds as though it's from a different future;

Steve Vai, "For the Love of God";

Cream, "White Room";

Then, finally, Jimi Hendrix, "All Along the Watchtower".

We leave the music in the control room to grab a bite to eat, and Ida is pleased to find that my uncle is a gourmand, with an excellent spread of great champagne, baked cheeses and baguettes, and a hearty salad of vegetables grown in his own garden, loaded with sea salt and olive oil, supplemented with several meats that he's hunted himself, including cured venison, which she tries, thinking it's quite good.

This goes on for a few hours, with him manually loading CDs and playing records, despite having a home filled with professional audio equipment, after which his band from years ago plays a set, in his live room, which is in terms of appearance, true to the original house, with high tin ceilings, old, small plank hardwood floors below, that are heavily worn in, with a small, black iron, wood-

burning stove, unlit with a few small logs within for effect, since it's a warm spring night, though the room is filled with instruments, equipment racks, and amplifiers, and has some sound panels on the walls to absorb the sounds in the room.

The performance is completely mental -

American Yngwie Malmsteen:

Heavy metal of an unprecedeted, yet dated variety, featuring furious, harmonic minor guitar solos, riddled with impossibly fast lines, randomly palm-muted riffs, and a double-bass drummer peddling fast enough to power a small car.

Ida is amused, as we sit on the couch, this being the first time either of us have been drunk since William was born, on the perfect occasion, totally unpredictable from her perspective, exactly the kind of moment that defines our relationship -

The random.

They then of course cover a Malmsteen track, "Eclipse" -

Epic.

The song ends in a fury of palm-muted riffs, crashing into him slamming the pedal to his vintage tape echo, playing an outro solo, harmonizing with himself, throwing his hair back once done, using his right hand, the final note still sustaining, and echoing, with a slight one-hand vibrato using his left, as he continues to fix his hair.

They follow up with another Malmsteen song, this time, "Leviathan" -

My uncle, sweating like a beast, his shirt now partially unbuttoned, hammering down on the floor pedals of a Moog synthesizer, as his guitar roars, the synthesizer setting off a massive bass tone, shaking the floors, bringing a smile to Ida's face, reminding both of us how much fun we have together. †

### ***Ramble On***

We wake up before the others, with many people staying over my uncle's house, which has three floors, and over twenty rooms, so everyone that stayed has their own space, including us, taking a bedroom on the second floor, featuring in its center, a glass-topped, wooden, museum-style display case, fit for a collection of butterflies, that instead contains a rare issue of Spider Man, causing Ida to laugh first thing in the morning.

I head downstairs to make us coffee, toasting some baguette leftovers from the night before, ultimately setting up a small spread on a stone stage that my uncle constructed about twenty feet from his porch.

As we're seated, Ida stops eating for a moment, clearly about to say something, so I look at her,

“Yes?”, I ask.

She says nothing, and continues eating, shaking her head, signaling a nothing.

But then pauses again, this time puts her plate and coffee down, as, “Ramble On” by Led Zeppelin plays from my phone -

As the lyrics come in, “ ... magic filled the air”, she finally asks,

“Charles, he looks just like you, but older -

Who is he to you?”, to which I reply,

“I know -

I don't know”.

She accepts this answer, as we continue eating breakfast, admiring the lake just beyond the house.

Otherwise enjoying a tranquil spring day in the countryside, we see a formation of ducks fly first over the house, then make their way overhead, when suddenly, my uncle bursts onto the scene, at the drop of the final chorus, he kicks the screen door open, holding a chrome shotgun, standing on his porch, pointing the gun into the sky, prompting Ida to hide behind me -

He opens fire, appearing this time as a total madman, wearing a black Looney Tunes t-shirt, and the same jeans from last night, a cigar in his mouth, he reloads the chamber from shells in his pocket, cocks the gun, firing and reloading again and again, causing Ida to scream, the gun blasting, deafeningly loud, Ida hiding behind me, now even closer to the surface of the stage, covering her ears, pressing

herself against my back, as I laugh hysterically.

This continues for about fifteen seconds, after which he stops, having hit nothing, he returns to the house, saying nothing.

She immediately sits up and stares at me, astonished, though she sees me laughing, and so she starts to laugh as well, and as the lyrics continue, rambling into the outro,

“Baby baby baby baby baby ...”,

We both start to laugh hysterically, Ida now suspecting we somehow teamed up to do this, together with the ducks. †

*The voodoo child returns*

On the drive back to Brooklyn, the sun setting again behind the trees, “Voodoo Child” glaring, continuing on into “Freedom”, painting the interior with shadows and ghosts, she sees the benevolent devil within me, again, perhaps in herself as well, the weekend having transformed the way she sees me, with my biography now coming together, after years of politely not asking. †

*Sending out an SOS*

We end up in Soho, following instructions from my phone, and I take the opportunity to get one more moment of freedom in before we return to adulthood in Tribeca, playing, “Message in a Bottle”.

We drive past CBGB’s on Bowery, seeing it’s now a Varvatos shop, which I like, but it says something -

Independent music has moved, but where?

I see time for one more, about to turn off Bowery at a red light -

“Blind Faith”, Chase and Status, rolling the windows down, singing at the top of my lungs, slamming the roof of the car with my hand on the downbeats, people on Bowery staring at us, the block completely lit up with the track, blasting, as Ida laughs at me, a group of punk-looking kids pass the car on skateboards and bikes, some throwing their arms into the air, others shouting, some singing along as well, several popping wheelies, one reaching out and grabbing my hand, which is now hanging out of the car window, pointing up, for a brief moment as he passes -

He looks back and smiles, we make eye contact, he looks like I did when I was a kid, with my eyes, long hair, then turns forward, kicking the ground to catch up, as Ida and I turn left off Bowery. †

***It worked***

I wake up the next morning after our trip to my uncle's place, as Ida is still sleeping, and I lean into William's crib, just to check on him - he's sleeping.

So I leave him alone, though I want to grab him and shout, which leaves a smile on my face -

I walk quietly into the living room, which overlooks North Williamsburg, the height allowing visibility all the way out to the Empire State Building, which I can see through blue skies, with some clouds.

I look out the other way, facing South, across, to see my old building, on the water in South Williamsburg, just before I moved to Oslo -

I remember what a maniac I was, always partying like I might die the next minute, desperate to fall in love with my own life, I put a simply unreasonable amount of thought and effort into my social life, though since it yielded results, in retrospect, now staring into my own past, with some distance, it worked. †

*London Grammar*

It's the weekend after we visited my uncle's house, and I check my watch to see it's 22:00, just before I pull the gallery door:

A long, roughly rectangular wooden handle, just wide enough to fit into the center of a grip, and unlocked -

It swings open, to the right, just in time for me to hear the first verse of, "The What" kick off, already excited by the scene -

Ida's not interested, and not here.

I hate to say it, but she's basically a very open-minded snob.

We already live in Williamsburg, where every day is some kind of highly curated experience rooted in contemporary culture, with only ironic references to classical culture, clearly planted to please the snobs -

She likes it, but that's not who she really is, which is a person from a small town, in an already small country, that grew up wearing knitted sweaters and heavy socks, spending summer weekends in the woods, in a cabin.

I am instead quite certain that any sensible visual representation of my mind will look like a blasted mural, including the broken concrete, held together by some new and poorly understood force of Nature, like an updated version of Raphaelesque Head Exploding - nothing planted, but a disaster, organized through necessity.

I spot my friends, mostly Swedes, mostly from Stockholm, and as I approach, I hear one of them say, "Precis", with something that borders on a lisp, the sound of Stockholmska coming back to me, the old habits as well, so I say hello to the whole group at once, like some kind of local celebrity.

Though there's a new face I don't recognize, a woman that looks about her late twenties -

She is clearly interested in me.

She looks like Ava Gardner, and appears to be just as cruel.

She's so attractive that it makes me a bit sick to my stomach, and so partially in response, I immediately walk to the bar to get a drink, just to get away from her.

I turn around to look at her again while at the bar, and she catches me, turning her back towards me, without breaking eye contact -

I'm simply caught, with no sensible alternative theory to explain why I've turned around, and so I own it, despite her display, and smile, politely.

I come back to the group, which is broken into smaller groups, holding a bottle of Pilsner, innocently picking the group that includes her, and she is astonishingly forward -

Right after the chorus, she says,

“What do you ask the world for, Charles?”, which I took as both wildly inappropriate, and a challenge, so I fire back with,

“As suggested, I don’t ask the world for anything”, so she fires back,

“So you’re a rapist then?”, to which I reply,

“I’m typically the recipient of what is a plain offer in these matters”.

“So you’re gay?”

I laugh, reminded of Ida’s humor, which makes me feel bad, but I’m doing my best to be polite about an inappropriate subject in front of people that know me, and so I keep it going, having quickly reasoned through my guilt.

“Will that steer the conversation to a more appropriate topic?”, I ask.

“Not likely.”, she says, callously, as she’s checking the bottom of her shoes, because she’s apparently stepped on a wet napkin, with no concern at all for what she’s plainly suggesting, simply plucking it off, throwing it on the floor, then staring me directly in the eyes, as she quickly shrugs her shoulders, pouting her lips a bit.

“I think I need a minute.”, as I walk away to check out the gallery.

Lincoln Jesser, “Wicked Son” plays.

...

It’s a big space on Allen Street, just off East Houston.

The gallery is similar to every other LES and East Village commercial gallery I’m familiar with -

White walls and ceilings, concrete floors.

There are some standout features, including one big brick wall at the back, with a self-service bar set up in front of it, with a solid spread catered by DBGB, featuring massive bowls of truffle fries, and proportionally massive trays

of sliders, with some loser salad no one is paying attention to, that you can tell even the chef gave up on, knowing full well this will get attention from only the worst people, who deserve exactly what they get -

There are veggie sliders.

The space is big, about 1500 square feet, with some iron columns, otherwise open, all the art on the walls, except for what I suspect is a Dale Chihuly glass piece hanging from the center of the ceiling, as an unlit chandelier, with actual lighting recessed into the ceilings, and not notable.

There are two thin ropes hanging in front of the two opposite white walls of the gallery, creating about three feet of distance from the art, and there are some works hanging behind the temporary bar setup along the brick wall as well, in no danger of being touched.

The rear brick wall is bordered by two massive beams that extend floor to ceiling, that I thought were made of heavily damaged wood, but when I actually got up to the bar, I realized they are instead deliberately rusted steel beams, of the type you'd find in the frame of a commercial building, which are paired with steel segments, about 3 inches wide by 1 foot long, also rusted, randomly mounted along the brick wall, creating an awesome overall aesthetic -

Raw, creative intellectual power, applied to the arbitrary, giving them a pass for the noticeable, lamentable smell of fresh paint, that probably goes well the loser salad.

One Basquiat painting, multiple Keith Haring paintings, not his street art, actual paintings, some of which are sizable, providing the otherwise colorless space with a bit of life, some small paintings and sketches by Dalí, and a handful of small Picasso sketches, and some other artist I've never heard of.

Overall, it's the kind of art you'd find at a large gallery on West Broadway, but with the vibe of a indie gallery on the LES, suggesting nothing under \$100,000, with some of the larger Keith Harings likely grabbing a few million, and the Basquiat almost certainly pulling in a few million, at a minimum.

The space also has a booming system, invisible, mounted into the ceiling, and though brightly lit, respecting the art, the atmosphere clearly borders on a party.

A piece catches my eye on my way back to the group -

It's by the new artist, apparently a woman, and I've never heard of her.

She uses water color, as a base, on a white canvas, abstract, but with real world objects mounted onto the canvas, presumably with a glue between the

object and the canvas -

In this case, green leaves, pieces of grayish tree bark, some grass, and pine needles, assembled sparsely atop the canvas, other than the grass, which is in patches, that are themselves sparsely distributed;

The canvas is basically stained by the water colors, with some white spaces, in greens and blues, taken from the ocean, framed with what is plainly driftwood;

There are uneven horizontal white lines drawn into the blues and greens, that look like they may have been done with a very fine sponge, dabbed in white;

Then looking closer, I can see faint, nearly translucent stones mounted about the surface of the canvas, that look like giant sand, or salt crystals, and I then realize what she's done:

It's a memory of a beach, near a tree line, which would litter the sand with bark and leaves, and the title of the piece is in fact, "The Beach Just Beyond The Woods".

This, as "Deja Vu" plays, Oliver Nelson Remix.

...

"Just Ride" starts playing, which I like, just as I return to the group, this time to a deliberately different subset, ex Christine, but she doesn't care -

She walks right over to me.

"I got rid of that napkin, so now we can finally talk.", she says, and though I couldn't politely confront her on the issue, or even alter my behavior, I got the sense she was suggesting that marriage is dispensable, like a spent, wet napkin, attached to your shoe, to my total astonishment at the level of craftsmanship in her mind-game, though again offended.

All that said, I'm not going to let this ruin my night, so I'm polite, talking to her and others, attempting to steer the conversation as best I can in a sensible, and respectable direction.

...

We all go out to Gold Bar afterwards, and, "Trap Queen" starts playing -

She looks right at me, across the group, across the room, as if she knew my immediate association -

She is quite plainly a trap, but not of the variety that will facilitate stable

growth, but instead of the type that ensnares a thing, to its detriment, and possibly death.

Nonetheless, I am drunk, and all of us start dancing the moment we reach a clearing in the back room, in between the tightly spaced aisle, with some of us breaking off, though at this point, her overt allusions to desire have been replaced by a much more subtle game, that I have yet to figure out.

So I overtly avoid her, and eventually, this erodes her confidence, and so she just goes for it -

She calmly walks right up to me, standing some immeasurable, but non-zero distance from me, puts her right pointer finger on my bottom lip, in the dark lights of the main room, people smoking, she stares at me, her finger starting to separate my lips, as I hear the singer from London Grammar, and though I don't know the song, I know her voice, and so I take her finger off my lip, and hold it in my hand tightly, but not rudely, or aggressively, and then politely step beside her, and leave, gently letting go. †

### ***The Beach Just Beyond The Woods***

I come home, quietly open the door, and immediately wash my face in the bathroom.

I stare at myself in the mirror, asking whether I have anything I should apologize for, or tell her about, and I think the answer's no, but it was enough to make me miss Ida terribly in the cab ride home -

I just want to forget everything else.

So I go into our living room, the bedroom door just beside open a bit, as I quietly, but noticeably, start playing, "Your Song", by Elton John.

I poke my head into the bedroom -

"Hey.", I whisper, as William sleeps just before the right wall of the room, in his little wooden crib.

She quietly replies, "Hi.", clearly already awoken by me coming home, and possibly the music as well.

"Come hang out with me.", I say,

And she gets up, almost immediately, wearing a pair of my boxers, and a cotton t-shirt, quietly skipping over to me, and as she gets closer, I can see her smile, breaking my useless heart, she gives me a huge hug -

I squeeze her, pick her up in the air, just a bit off the floor.

I hold her, in my arms, feeling her arms around my ribs, she presses her head into the nape of my neck, for a few seconds, and then she throws her legs around my hips, squeezing unexpectedly hard, telling she missed me too.

She lifts her head, so I put her down, and brush her hair out of her eyes, fighting back tears, just so unreasonably happy to see that's she's OK -

That I didn't fuck this up.

She looks beautiful -

She's shorter than me, and this is funny, for some reason, and so I laugh at her, and she laughs in response, waking William, who struggles to sit up, seeing both of us, his little head barely lit by the dim light of our living room, we both wave to him, and he marches over to the edge of his crib, clumsily, and does a little baby dance in reply, also laughing, understanding he's participating in something.

She sits down on the long bench aside our dining room table, as I open a bottle of cannonau, bringing two glasses over at the same time, leaving the bottle behind me on the kitchen counter.

I sit unreasonably close to her, causing her to laugh again, The Empire State Building, lit up again in blue, though further away, as Pandora hangs on a new wall, now closer to us, just to our right, this time in America, in New York -

I wrote a song for Ida when I first bought the painting, also called, "Pandora", that I never played for her, or told her about:

I took Pandora's vase, and turned into a reason for me to live -

To rebuild it.

What I hoped for, was to rebuild the family I never knew, with Ida -

To rebuild a broken past, by making something new, with her, looking forward, selfish as that might be, I trusted in what I know is my unselfish love for her.

So tonight, I don't say anything at all, and instead, finally, just the three of us, doing nothing, let someone else far more normal than I am do the talking -

I listen, and I look, with the help of the words and the music of a man, even more unafraid than I am, to simply say what he really thinks:

A real artist:

Someone who helps a clumsy beast like me, tell someone else how much I really love them. †

## Sketches of the Inchoate

### *Musical references*

*Note that song titles are hyperlinks*

1. Joaquín Turina, “Piano Quartet in A Minor, Mov. 2” (1931).
2. Led Zeppelin, “Immigrant Song” (1970).
3. Frank Zappa, “Baby Snakes” (1979).
4. King Crimson, “Red” (1974).
5. Yes, “The Gates of Delirium” (1974).
6. Steve Vai, “For the Love of God” (1990).
7. Cream, “White Room” (1968).
8. Bob Dylan, arr. Jimi Hendrix, “All Along the Watchtower” (1968).
9. Yngwie Malmsteen, “Eclipse” (1990).
10. Yngwie Malmsteen, “Leviathan” (1992).
11. Led Zeppelin, “Ramble On” (1969).
12. Jimi Hendrix, “Voodoo Child (Slight Return)” (1968).
13. Jimi Hendrix, “Freedom” (1971).
14. The Police, “Message in a Bottle” (1979).
15. Chase & Status, “Blind Faith” (2011).
16. Christopher Wallace, “The What” (1994).
17. Lincoln Jesser, “Wicked Son” (2014).
18. Urban Cone, “Deja Vu (Oliver Nelson Remix)” (2012).
19. Steven A. Clark, “Just Ride” (2014).
20. Willie Junior Maxwell II, “Trap Queen” (2014).
21. Flume feat. London Grammar, “Let Me Know (N. C. Remix)” (2019).
22. Elton John, “Your Song” (1970). †

**Sketches of the Inchoate***Clair de lune*

La clair de lune -

La clair de lune,

Sur la mer,

Est la langue de mon mere. †

**Sketches of the Inchoate**

For America -

If you disappoint me,

I swear to God,

I will find a way ... †



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