

The Appalachian Trail: The Analysis of Intent When Writing a Musical

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Abstract

This thesis is two-fold as the researcher is writing a creative thesis containing analysis as well as the art product itself. The first half consists of an analysis of a musical the researcher has been writing for two years. The analysis includes the intent of telling this specific story, as well as two songs from the musical and the surrounding scenes. In the analysis the researcher explains the musical purpose of melodic structure, lyrical devices and soundscape. The second half contains a full scene synopsis as well as a collection of detailed scenes, cast list, and an appendix attached with sheet music. This demonstrates the researcher's ability as a writer as well as a story teller.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
The Narration	7
Soundscape	8
Cast List	12
Scene Synopsis	13
- Act 1	13
- Act 2	17
Scene Cluster and Song Analysis Intro	22
Song: <i>The Longest Day</i> from Act 2 Scene 3: “ <i>The Longest Day</i> ”	23
Analysis of the song <i>The Longest Day</i> :	34
Act 1 Scene 3 “ <i>Bring on the Slugs</i> ”	37
Act 1 Scene 3 “ <i>Bring on the Slugs</i> ” Analysis	41
Act 1 Scene 4 “Cook Meets Animal”	42
Act 1 Scene 4 “Cook Meets Animal” Analysis	47
Act 1 Scene 6 “ <i>Cook and Animal Catch Up</i> ”	48
Act 1 Scene 6 “ <i>Cook and Animal Catch Up</i> ” Analysis	52
Purpose and Conclusion	53
Bibliography	55

*Murder on The Appalachian Trail: The Analysis of Intent When Writing a Musical***Introduction**

Often overshadowed in the world of musical theater is the intent of the writer. It is overshadowed by detailed pageantry, complex choreography, and unforgettable vocal delivery. While all of these things matter in regard to keeping an audience entertained, they are of less importance when aiming to teach an audience. Not teaching in the context of academic education, but the kind of teaching that instills character, shows how to love, or how to be persistent on one's dreams. Delivery thrives on a message to be delivered, and while the message is often overshadowed by the delivery, this paper serves as a reminder that they are of equal importance.

Coming to Liberty University as a freshman, I was not a huge fan of musical theater. I was not averse to it, but more or less I was disinterested. I had a pre-conceived notion that it was an industry lacking in masculinity and still to this day I have an irrational fear of dancing. But I believe God has a sense of humor, because at random I was placed into a dorm with an at the time English major who had a minor in musical theater. Over the course of my first year in college, I was obliged to listen to the soundtracks of shows like *Hamilton*, *Evita*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *The Music Man* (just to name a few). My roommate, Jacob Stalnaker, never used headphones so the works of Lin-Manuel Miranda, Tim Rice, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Meredith Wilson slowly wore me down over time. I found myself impressed by the lyrical wit and melodic intricacy these writers/composers used, and it wasn't too long until I was singing along to the music I had once found annoying. My disinterest slowly morphed into an interest that

later developed to a true love and appreciation of an art form that is too often taken for granted. What makes the musicals above so great isn't the singing, the dancing, or the acting. It is the story being told through these mediums and when told properly it is capable of leaving a mark that is different from any other art form: "A truly great musical is the sum of its parts. You can have a good or nice show with a terrific score, but without a structured book to attach it too, it will ring somewhat hollow. The coin's other side says a riveting book with mediocre songs can make for an okay evening of theatre. Both shows may run, but probably not for long. But a great musical theatre piece must have the right blend, mixing in bright direction, adept scenic and costume designs and outstanding performances." ¹

For the past two years now, I have been writing a musical loosely based on the true story of a gruesome murder that took place on the Appalachian Trail in 1990. Out of respect for the families of those that are no longer with us, none of the real names will be used in my analysis, scenes, or cast list. There are certain legalities that need to be obtained when telling the true story of someone else's life, and until they have been obtained properly I have no intention of disrespecting anybody who had to walk through this. The musical is about a young lovestruck couple, Colton and Angie, who decided to hike the Appalachian trail after recently becoming unemployed. It tells the story of the journey of their hike and how their lives were sadly taken by someone without motive or reason. It tells the story of how two people, so full of joy, can be stripped from the world undeservingly, and how they remain in the hearts of those that loved them.

¹ Owen Robertson, "Playbill Poll Results: What Makes for a Great Musical," Playbill, August 7th, 1996, <http://www.playbill.com/article/playbill-poll-results-what-makes-for-a-great-musical-com-68253>

The Narration

The musical is told from the viewpoint of a man named Mitchell Cook. Mitchell was on the trail with Colton and Angie. Mitchell met them during their respective journeys and spent some time really getting to know them. Shortly after parting, Colton and Angie met their horrible fate. Mitchell Cook also unknowingly crossed paths with the man who murdered Colton and Angie. The Musical is narrated from present day Mitchell Cook's point of view. The narration is mostly done off stage, but for the times Mitchell's past self is on stage, he deals with fourth wall breaks. "The theatrical device of breaking the fourth wall, wherein on-stage actors acknowledge the presence of the audience, has come to be seen as a characteristic technique of modernist theater. The modern form of this device was developed in the early twentieth century as a rejection of the "suspension of disbelief" demanded by realist and naturalist theater, which Gerhart Hauptmann explained should be written "as though the stage did not have three, but four walls" (qtd. in Mauer 25)."² When acting in a film, television show, play or musical, there is a concept called the suspension of disbelief. The suspension of disbelief is something known in the world of acting, it is a semi-conscious decision the audience makes to ignore their disbelief and accept the story they are being told as real.³ The idea of the Fourth Wall Break acknowledges that an audience is in fact being told a story and disrupts the suspension of disbelief. It adds another dimension to a story when the one

² Nathaniel Davis, "Not a Soul in Sight: Beckett's Fourth Wall" *Journal of Modern Literature* Vol. 38, no. 2 (2015), 86-102.

³ Julia Smith, "How to Watch a Film: Cinema & Suspension of Disbelief" *Film Inquiry*, June 18, 2015, <https://www.filminquiry.com/watch-film-cinema-suspension-disbelief/>

narrating addresses the audience directly. Most often when a musical or movie is narrated, it can add a comedic element when it is done in a way that shows the writer's wit and intelligence. The majority of the musical will not be narrated with fourth wall breaks, this is because the majority of the narration will be when Mitchell Cook's past self is off stage. The fourth wall breaks will have an extra element added because when done, it won't be past Mitchell Cook speaking, but rather current day Mitchell Cook. To my knowledge, there isn't a musical out that is narrated exactly like this, narrated offstage and onstage by fourth wall breaks by a current-time version of one of the characters who happens to be in the story that took place in the past. The audience should be able to understand that they are seeing this story play out through Mitchell Cook's Lens, and because he isn't in every scene, the audience is partially subjected to believe what Cook believed certain scenes would've really been like.

Soundscape

Dictionary.com defines soundscape in two different ways. The first definition is "the component of sounds in the environment".⁴ The second definition is "*the component sounds of a piece of music.*"⁵ Both create an atmosphere that plays into the audience's suspension of disbelief. It makes them feel that instead of watching people on a stage, they are watching people in the streets of New York (as in the musical *Guys and Dolls*), or the inside of a beautiful stone castle (as in the musical *Beauty and the Beast*). A properly done soundscape is two-fold. It can make a musical an immersive experience for

⁴ "Soundscape," Dictionary, accessed February 2, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/soundscape>

⁵ Dictionary, "Soundscape"

the audience and take a production from mediocre to magnificent. The first act of this musical, with the exception of four scenes, is set on the Appalachian Trail. Even the majority of the Trail Shelters along the way only had three walls and a roof (a lean-to), leaving them subject to the ebb and flow of nature's music. In the detailed scenes that will be presented in the second half of this thesis, the reader will learn about sounds in the action side of the paper. Scenes read with Musical lyrics on the far left, character dialogue in the middle, and action statements on the right-hand side. The reader will see major sound cues and other instructions for the actors. The following is an excerpt taken straight from *Murder on the Appalachian Trail*: "The forest thickens, and the sound of the waterfall slowly quiets down. Colton and Angie enter stage left, walking, as the SMALL SHELTER rolls on from stage right" Along the trail the audience will hear the wind ebb and flow, causing brush and trees to rustle. They're should be an underlying track while they are on the trail that eludes to its natural sounds. During the day, we should hear the occasional chirping of birds. At night we will hear the rare howling of a mysterious animal. The trail runs alongside a source of moving water. This is so the hikers have a mildly easy access to drinking and bathing water. The sound effects of running water will fade in and out throughout the story, depending on the proximity of the stream or waterfall. I also have an idea that I feel would add to the immersive experience from the nature aspect of the soundscape. Upon research, I haven't found any sort of device or idea like it. I truthfully don't know if it is possible and if so, how expensive it would be. The idea is to have a device implanted in the shoes of the hikers, so when a step is taken it automatically sends a signal to the sound board that cues a

specific sound effect. The effect would be the crunching of leaves. We've all been on a hike and heard the sound made when we hit a pile of dead leaves, for some the feeling is satisfying. Regardless if it is music to your ears, or nails on the chalkboard, there is no neglecting that it would add to the authenticity of the setting. The other option would be to have actual leaves on stage and have a crew that would be in charge of placing them on stage and sweeping them off during scenery/setting transitions. But it is always exciting to be innovative and think of new ways to utilize technology in traditional arts. Something like this will just depend on the practicality of the effect, is it more cost effective, and does it make it easier or harder?

The second part of the soundscape is the components of the music. The general population often confuses a musical with an opera or P'Opera (pop opera). *Lès Miserable* and *Hamilton* are technically by definition operas. There is a thin line that runs through the divide of musicals and operas. They both consist of songs, choreography and are connected by dialogue between characters or monologue. This is where their differences come in to play. The lines of dialogue in a musical are spoken, this is different from an opera where the lines are performed as a recitative. A recitative is dialogue or monologue that transpires in a melodic or musical pattern. Musicals tend to favor drama over music, where Operas highlight music over drama. *Murder on the Appalachian Trail* is a musical, so not everything will be sung. The pit will play music that underlie scenes not during musical numbers on occasion, but it will not be without void. The pit is the combination of instruments underneath the stage that accompany the actors during the musical numbers. Certain instruments produce specific sounds that are more relatable to certain

settings. An old time musical that takes place in the streets of New York may cause somebody to reminisce over the sounds of brass and jazz piano. Because *Murder on the Appalachian Trail*, that takes place for the most part on the Appalachian Trail, the outdoor and wood-like nature calls for string instruments and woodwinds. String instruments can be played many different ways to create unique sounds and effects. Orchestral instruments are often played with a bow or plucked. Other string instruments that may be more common in a band type setting (guitar or bass) can be strummed or picked. Plucking a violin, cello or viola, can be used to incorporate whimsicality or light-hearted suspension. Bowing the instruments would create more of a ballad type sound that allow the instrument a greater threshold of dynamic contrast, therefore giving it a greater ability to instill emotions such as anger, sadness, love, or joy. The woodwinds can give a fullness to the overall sound. They can be easily used to imitate the sound of the wind, or the whistle of a bird. Larger woodwinds can be used to imitate footsteps or walking along a trail in a whimsical way. Of course, various percussion instruments will be used as well (including piano) but the following instruments will be used in the Orchestra pit of the musical and have the intention of contributing to the ambiance of the trail: *violin, cello, viola, upright bass, harp, acoustic guitar, fingerstyle bass, piccolo, flute, clarinet, bass clarinet, oboe, and bassoon*. Very similar to the kind of soundscape provided from *Into the Woods* (Stephen Sondheim), minus a couple brass instruments. The sounds align properly with the outdoors type themes and will hopefully make it a more immersive experience if soundscaped properly.

Cast List

Mitchell Cook – A former crime reporter from NYC who has set out to hike the Appalachian Trail in an attempt to flee from world.

Colton Creger – A mid-20s former camp counselor who is hiking the Appalachian for adventure. Colton is stoic, reserved, and a well-worn outdoorsman.

Angie Barnsworth – A mid-20s former camp counselor who is hiking the Appalachian Trail for adventure. Angie has a bright personality and is talented in art and poetry.

Drew Singer-Smith – A middle-aged drifter better known as the notorious serial killer “The Roanoke Ripper”. He is unstable and hiding out in the mountains in western Virginia, dangerously close to the Appalachian Trail.

Sandy Barnsworth – Angie’s father.

Carla Barnsworth – Angie’s mother.

Elanor Creger – Colton’s mother.

Josh Hannel “Animal” – Young, outdoors-like man seeking a peaceful time on the trail admiring creation.

Traci Marks – An organized park ranger who had prior suspicions about Drew Singer-Smith spotting a sketchy looking figure one day driving back to her post

Frank and Kim Foster – A young married couple who cross paths with Colton and Angie along the way. They encourage them of the joy of marriage and how much

Goldbond – An animated large man who disrupts a night in a shelter. Safe to say he was under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs.

Jostlin – An eccentric man attempting to be the youngest person to hike the Appalachian Trail. He has an important run in with Colton and Angie.

Officer Brian Log – The Officer who received the call about the bodies found in the Thunder Hill Shelter

Jenny Horn – Singer-Smith’s ex-wife

Unnamed Cast members – Librarian, Reporter, Judge, Defense Attorney, State’s attorney, Jury Foreman

Scene Synopsis**ACT ONE****"The Hike"****SCENE 1: "Thunder Mount"**

Cook, **Colton**, **Angie**. Thunder Mount Shelter.

MITCHELL COOK introduces himself to the audience in the present. He describes the Appalachian Trail which stretches from Maine to Georgia, and details the Thunder Mount shelter, one of many small shelters for hikers to sleep in, which sat along the trail in Pennsylvania. He then introduces COLTON CREGER and ANGIE BARNSWORTH, a young couple that he met while hiking the trail in the 90's. Cook describes their selfless hearts and outdoor skills before revealing that they were murdered in the Thunder Mount shelter during that summer 25 years ago.

SCENE 2: "Take a Hike"

Cook, **Colton**, **Angie**, **Sandy**, **Carla**, **Elanor**. Ohio Restaurant.

Cook takes us back to the day that Colton and Angie decided to hike the Appalachian Trail. They both get laid off from their jobs in Kansas and decide that the six month long Appalachian Trail hike they've been talking about is their next life move.

Colton and Angie meet up with her parents SANDY and CARLA BARNSWORTH and his mother, ELANOR HOOD. She has fun introducing Colton as her boyfriend.

SCENE 3: "Bring on the Slugs"

Colton, **Angie**. Trail in Maine.

Colton and Angie begin their hike at Mount Katahdin in Maine, heading south. They have a rough couple of days but remain positive. Angie leaves a poem in a trail log book for other hikers to read. They awake to a whimsical predicament.

SCENE 4: Cook Meets Animal

Cook, Animal. Trail in Maine.

A few days after Colton and Angie set off, Mitchell Cook sets off on his own hike from Katahdin and meets JOSH "ANIMAL" HANNEL. The two begin to hike the trail together. They read Angie 's slug poem and wonder how one person can be so obnoxiously happy.

SCENE 5: *Singer-Smith in the Library*

Cook, Singer-Smith, Librarian. Pennsylvania Library.

Elsewhere, a stocky, quiet man enters a library in York, Pennsylvania and demands hiking maps. The LIBRARIAN gives him a map and asks who to address it to. He gives her the name "Connor Hart" Present Day Cook tells us that this man is DREW SINGER-SMITH, and that he is dangerous. Cook takes us through Singer-Smith' past.

SCENE 6: "Cook and Animal Catch Up"

Cook, Colton, Angie, Animal. Trail in New Hampshire.

On the trail, Colton and Angie take their time studying nature while Cook and Animal are quickly approaching. Now in New Hampshire, Cook and Animal rendezvous with Colton and Angie, the latter of whom is singing "Bring on the Slugs". One of the first things Cook notices about them is their expertise with their outdoors equipment and Colton 's top notch bright green pack. They begin to settle into a shelter for the night.

SCENE 7: "Goldbond's Worship"

Cook, Colton, Angie, Animal, Goldbond. Shelter in New Hampshire.

A man named GOLDBOND shows up and demands to sleep where Animal has already set up. Animal refuses, ruffling Goldbond's feathers. Cook connects with Colton and Angie about life in Kansas but is continually interrupted by Goldbond and his annoying questions. Cook tells the audience that he wishes every day that he had paid more attention to Colton and Angie that night instead of Goldbond. As everyone begins to sleep, Goldbond begins to

celebrate the Sabbath with drinks, dancing, and singing late into the night.

SCENE 8: *"Weekly Trail Survey"*

Cook, Traci, Singer-Smith. Roadside Trail in Pennsylvania.

Cook introduces TRACI MARKS, an employee of the Appalachian Trail Commission. Traci is preparing to reroute 16 miles of the trail in Pennsylvania from along a paved road into forest that the ATC had recently acquired. She is out surveying a portion of this trail when she drives by Drew Singer-Smith, who she laments cannot be a hiker due to his ill dress. He is carrying 2 red gym bags and following the maps from the library. When she sees him again on the trail later in the day and realizes that he is hiking the trail, Marks becomes very unnerved. Cook says he wishes he could tell her in this instant that Singer-Smith was armed and dangerous and that he was one of Texas's most wanted fugitives.

SCENE 9: *Hiker's Breakfast*

Cook, Colton, Angie, Animal, Frank, Kim. New Hampshire Diner.

The next day the four hikers, happy to be away from the northbound Goldbond, reunite on the trail and spend the night in a bunkhouse together, discussing their lives. Colton and Angie say they want to go to grad school after they reach Georgia. The foursome is joined by another couple - Frank and Kim Foster.

The next morning, after a hearty breakfast, Colton and Angie split from Cook and Animal to hike two different sections of the trail, while Frank and Kim decide to remain in town for a few days to visit relatives. Colton and Angie hitch a ride to their destination and they all plan to meet up on the trail later that night. However, Cook tells the audience that he and Animal covered much more ground than Colton and Angie did and that they would never see each other again.

SCENE 10: Cook at Thunder Mount

Cook, Jostlin. Thunder Mount Shelter.

By this time, Animal has pulled far ahead of Cook and leaves him notes in the logbooks but still manages to stay ahead of him. Cook himself writes to Colton and Angie, who trail him by eight days, wondering if they ever respond. He enters Duncannon, Pennsylvania, and makes his way to the Thunder Mount shelter. At Thunder Mount, Cook meets a teenager calling himself JOSTLIN, a northbound hiker who is playing the ukulele. Cook tells Jostlin about his time on the trail and about Colton and Angie, saying he's bound to run in to them. There is a freshly fallen tree on the shelters open side and the two brainstorm how and why it fell. In the log book, Animal wrote that he plans to end his hike in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia and that he hopes to see Cook there.

SCENE 11: The Proposal

Colton, Angie. Pennsylvania Overlook.

High on a ridge at sunset, Colton proposes to Angie. The two are ecstatic. Elated, they make plans to stop as soon as possible to arrange a meeting with their parents, they want to deliver the exciting news in person.

SCENE 12: "Jostlin's Song"

Colton, Angie, Jostlin. Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Later, in Allentown, days after Cook was at Thunder Mount, Colton and Angie meet the northbound Jostlin. They find out that he has run away from home. Angie counsels Jostlin, who then reveals he was kicked out of his home. The two let Jostlin know he is loved and give him advice on going home.

SCENE 13: "There in Harpers Ferry"

Colton, Angie, Sandy, Carla, Elanor. Allentown / LaRue Home.

Colton and Angie move to a rundown hotel in town for the night and call their parents. They tell them to meet them in Harpers Ferry in a couple of days to resupply and clean their gear. They then say to expect some big news.

SCENE 14: Murder

Cook, Colton, Angie, Singer-Smith. Thunder Mount Shelter.

The next night they find their way into the Thunder Mount shelter. The outside of the shelter is nearly blocked off by the fallen tree, but they decide to stay there nonetheless. Alone, they discuss how to tell their parents they are engaged. However, they are joined shortly after by Drew Singer-Smith. Night falls fast. There are unseen gunshots and screams.

Outside the shelter, the sun rises, and Singer-Smith emerges from Thunder Mount wearing Colton's green pack and hiking boots. It is quiet.

ACT TWO"The Aftermath"SCENE 1: The Morning After

Frank, Kim, Log. Thunder Mount Shelter

Frank and Kim Foster make their way to the Thunder Mount the night after, excited to see Colton and Angie again. They playfully sing "Bring on the Slugs".

Frank and Kim cautiously approach Thunder Mount, noting how quiet it is. Trash and equipment are suspiciously strewn everywhere. Frank discovers the horrifying remains of Colton and Angie. They return to town and call the police, informing OFFICER BRIAN LOG of the bodies.

SCENE 2: "The Two Red Bags of Casey Horn"

Cook, Traci, Frank, Kim, Log. Thunder Mount Shelter.

Traci Marks reads the police report of Officer Log as the investigation at the Thunder Mount unfolds on the stage behind her. Marks informs Log about the stranger with the red gym bags, one of which is with the bodies at Thunder Mount.

Narrating Mitchell Cook says that he had no idea that anything like this was happening at the time- but that news travelled fast for Elanor Hood.

SCENE 3: "The Longest Day"
Elanor. Elanor 's Home.

Over the radio, Elanor Creger hears that two hikers were killed in Pennsylvania. Fearing the worst, she calls Sandy Barnsworth, who then has to tell his wife Carla. Carla remembers the hardships of Angie's youth.

SCENE 4: "Chaos"
Cook. Virginia Shelter.

Cook, on the trail in Virginia's Shenandoah Mountains, is told that two hikers were murdered in Pennsylvania and confirms that it was Colton and Angie. He laments on the situation, saying that he never thought violence would bring itself upon him or anyone he knew, and that Colton and Angie should have been the last people to be taken because of their outdoors skills and gracious hearts. He falls asleep alone and scared.

SCENE 5: "There in Harpers Ferry (Reprise)"
Singer-Smith **Log Traci**,

The manhunt of "Casey Horn" is underway. Singer-Smith is careless, wearing Colton 's bright green pack and adopting their story. Leaving behind a distinct trail that gets turned into comprehensive tips, authorities catch and arrest Drew Singer-Smith a week later on a bridge crossing the Potomac River into Harpers Ferry, where Colton and Angie were supposed to meet up with their parents.

SCENE 6: Parent's Breakfast
Carla, **Sandy**, **Elanor**. Diner.

Carla LaRue and Elanor Creger begin to fall back into their daily routines as nurses. They stay in close contact and help each other through the grieving process. Sandy suggests that every sunset is Angie adding her touch to the world.

SCENE 7: *Singer-Smith in Custody*

Singer-Smith, **Log**, **Lawyer**. Pennsylvania Police Station.

After some investigation, "Connor Hart" is identified as Drew Singer-Smith by FBI Agents in Texas, which is verified in Pennsylvania by the "Hart" tattoo on his back. His defense lawyer visits him and tells him he is going to be facing the death penalty. Singer-Smith seems unphased and recounts his actions on the night he murdered a hairdresser in Texas and in the days after when he escaped authorities. The lawyer asks why Singer-Smith is sharing this, and Singer-Smith says that he is not afraid.

SCENE 8: *God's Cathedral*

Sandy, **Carla**, **Elanor**, **Journalist**. Elanor 's Home.

A reporter approaches Sandy one day and asks him if he thinks the trail is too dangerous to use, suggesting that it could be shut down. Knowing how much Angie loved the trail, Sandy surprises the reporter and defends the trail, which he found to be a nice way to help cope.

Elanor Creger takes it upon herself to travel to Duncannon and hike to Thunder Mount. She expects it to be a dark and depressed place, but is greeted with the beautiful nature of the clearing outside the shelter. She likens it to "God's Cathedral", and rationalizes that if murder could happen here it could happen anywhere.

SCENE 9: *"Commonwealth vs. Singer-Smith"*

Cook, **Colton**, **Sandy**, **Carla**, **Elanor**, **Animal**, **Traci**, **Singer-Smith**, **Log**, **Casey**, **Lawyer**, **Prosecutor**. Pennsylvania Courthouse.

In March 1991, Singer-Smith goes on trial. He is easily convicted since there is a significant amount of evidence condemning him but Cook finds little solace in the lack of explanation. Singer-Smith's defense says that he was inebriated with two quarts of whiskey and some cocaine, but his ex-wife shows up and testifies that she didn't believe that drugs or whiskey affected him, claiming that "he could drink two quarts of Georgia moonshine and still shoot pool straight."

Several of Colton and Angie's logbook entries are read in the trial, including a reprise of *"Bring On The Slugs"*. Cook becomes emotional when he finds out that Colton and Angie had been replying to the notes he left for them in the books.

SCENE 10: *Jostlin Returns and the Verdict*

Cook, Sandy, Carla, Elanor, Animal, Traci, Singer-Smith,
Log, Casey, Jostlin, Lawyer, Prosecutor, Jury Foreman.
Pennsylvania Courthouse.

Cook recognizes a teenager in the courtroom as Jostlin. During a recess, he reconnects with him and introduces him to Colton and Angie's parents. Jostlin tells them that he's sorry Colton and Angie never got to get married, surprising the parents who did not know that they were engaged. Sandy says that this must've been the news Colton and Angie said they would tell them in Harpers Ferry.

Back in the courtroom, the jury is ready to deliver the verdict. They sentence Singer-Smith to death.

After the sentencing, Animal, Frank and Kim, Brian Log, and Traci Marks were all present at the trial to testify. Frank and Kim specifically developed a strong relationship with the families, and the group shares warm memories of Colton and Angie before parting ways.

SCENE 11: *"Destruction of Thunder Mount"*

Cook, Traci. Thunder Mount Shelter.

In 2000, Traci Marks approves a project to demolish Thunder Mount and build a new shelter in its place. Cook makes his way to the shelter on the day of demolition, joining Traci as the new shelter is finished and a crew disassembles and burns the wood from Thunder Mount.

SCENE 12: *"Goodbye, Carla"*

Carla, Angie, Elanor. Hospice Care.

Six years later, Carla Barnsworth is diagnosed with cancer and quickly falls ill, staying in the hospice care where

she had previously volunteered. In a dream, Angie visits her and says that she's excited to see her again. Carla awakens to find that Elanor Creger has come to visit her, and Carla spends her final moments holding Elanor's hand.

SCENE 13: *"Peace Be With You"*

Sandy, Elanor, Singer-Smith. Pennsylvania Courthouse.

Later that year, due to an appeal over discrepancies before his original trial, Drew Singer-Smith is granted a retrial. Elanor and Sandy are both invited to make statements at the trial. Elanor calmly but sadly laments on the family that she never had because of Singer-Smith. Sandy takes the stand and addresses Singer-Smith directly. For the first time, they make eye contact. Sandy forgives Singer-Smith before talking about Angie's passion for helping troubled youth. He urges Singer-Smith to pick up where Angie left off and help his fellow inmates and the "Angie's of this world" learn who he is.

SCENE 14: *"Animal's Salvation"*

Cook, Animal. Animal's Porch / Thunder Mount Shelter

After reflecting on all of this in 2015, Cook decides to contact Animal again. The two haven't seen each other since Animal's wedding in the mid 90's. Animal, who hasn't used that name since his time on the trail, is now a Baptist minister with two teenage boys. They read their trail journals with each other and laugh at their accounts of Goldbond's worship before the conversation turns to Colton and Angie, with Animal revealing that he transcribed some of Angie's poems - including "Bring On The Slugs". Animal then describes his night in Thunder Mount, a week before Colton and Angie got there.

Animal says that he reconciled with God during his night in Thunder Mount. He prayed for forgiveness and shortly after, a terrible storm swept in. Howling winds and sharp cracks of thunder didn't distract Animal as he continued to pray. Even though he feared for his life, he remained faithful. The wind picked up more and a tree cracked outside of the shelter, revealing the tree that crashed right outside, mere feet from where Animal was praying. The storm died down.

The next morning, Animal emerged from Thunder Mount to a sunny day, with birds singing and the grass and leaves restored with new life. It was a beautiful place, he said, calling it God's Cathedral.

Standing in the clearing, Mitchell Cook shares his closing thoughts on the suddenness with which life can be taken, and the love between people that gives it back. He reckons that Colton and Angie died doing what they loved with who they loved, and that there can be worse things than that.

THE END

Song, Scene Cluster and Analysis Intro

The following portion of the paper will contain a song, three scenes, and an analysis of each as well. It will read as the following: Scene 3, Scene 3 analysis, Scene 4, Scene 4 Analysis, and Scene 6, Scene 6 Analysis. The Scenes were written in a script software, so I wanted to give prior explanation on how to read them. The left-hand side of the paper will contain song lyrics (All-caps), the middle (centered) is where we see the character dialogue. (Side note: When we see the character name Mitchell Cook, it is narrating Mitchell cook, when it reads just Cook, it is past Cook acting on stage), and the right-hand side of the script is the action log.

Song: *The Longest Day* from Act 2 Scene 3: “*The Longest Day*”

Score

The Longest Day

from *Murder on The Appalachian Trail*

Matthew Mellusi
Jacob Stalnaker

$\text{♩} = 72$

mp

5 I re - call — the days when you were young. The

with pedal

7 pat - ter of your foot - steps — on the floor. When

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2 The Longest Day

9

9 you a - rrived our lives had just be - gun. Ma - king

11

11 words like love and joy mean so much more. Then

13

13 times grew hard and fa - ther was let go I

cresc.

The image displays a musical score for a song titled "The Longest Day". The score is written for voice and piano. It is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (9, 11, and 13). The key signature has four flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 9-10) shows the vocal line entering with the lyrics "you a - rrived our lives had just be - gun. Ma - king". The piano accompaniment consists of a simple bass line. The second system (measures 11-12) continues the vocal line with "words like love and joy mean so much more. Then". The piano accompaniment features a more active bass line, with a "cresc." (crescendo) marking in measure 12. The third system (measures 13-14) shows the vocal line with "times grew hard and fa - ther was let go I". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady bass line. Each system has a small lock icon in the top right corner.

The Longest Day

3

15

15 thought you'd come to know an emp-ty plate. The on-ly thing that got me through

18

18 — that day Was know-ing that I'd see you here to - mor - row. — The

21

21 glisten-ing of — the sun up-on your face — out - weighed the grip of a - ny fear or

4 The Longest Day

24

sor - row My pre - cious child, my pre - cious child, The

27

pro - mise of your smile would ne - ver fade When I need - ed you _____ to

30

get me through. The long - est day.

The image displays a musical score for the song "The Longest Day". It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system starts at measure 24 with the lyrics "sor - row My pre - cious child, my pre - cious child, The". The second system starts at measure 27 with the lyrics "pro - mise of your smile would ne - ver fade When I need - ed you _____ to". The third system starts at measure 30 with the lyrics "get me through. The long - est day." The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines in both hands, with some measures containing triplets. There are three small lock icons on the right side of the page, one for each system of music.

The Longest Day

5

34

I re - call — the day — you left the nest To

34

mf moving along

37

vent - ure in — a world all on your own Sha - ker Heights knew you at your

37

40

best But a boy you met — made Kan - sas feel like

40

The image displays a musical score for the song 'The Longest Day'. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first system starts at measure 34 with the lyrics 'I re - call — the day — you left the nest To'. The piano part features a sustained chord in the right hand and a moving bass line in the left hand, marked *mf* moving along. The second system starts at measure 37 with the lyrics 'vent - ure in — a world all on your own Sha - ker Heights knew you at your'. The piano part continues with similar textures. The third system starts at measure 40 with the lyrics 'best But a boy you met — made Kan - sas feel like'. The piano part shows a change in the right hand texture, with some notes highlighted in red. Each system is marked with its starting measure number (34, 37, 40) and includes a small lock icon in the top right corner.

6 The Longest Day

42

home _____ You called to tell _____ us of the friend you'd

42

made and the dream you shared to hike _____ through-out the

46

states. The on - ly thing that got me through _____ that day Was

42

44

46

The Longest Day

7

49

know-ing you'd be safe with him to - mor-row. The glisten-ing of — the sun up-on your

52

face — out - weighed the grip of a - ny fear or sor - row My

55

pre-cious child, — my pre-cious child. The pro - mise of your smile would ne - ver

8 The Longest Day

58

fade When I need-ed you _____ to get me through. The long - est

61

day. _____ Thoughts are

63

ra - cing through my head a mile a mi - nute _____ and a

accel.

f

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The first system begins at measure 58 with the vocal line starting on a whole note, followed by a series of eighth and quarter notes. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The second system starts at measure 61, with the vocal line continuing the melody. The piano accompaniment includes a section marked 'accel.' with a more active bass line. The third system starts at measure 63, with the vocal line and piano accompaniment continuing. The piano part includes a section marked 'f' (forte) with a more active bass line. The score is enclosed in a black border with a lock icon in the top right corner of each system.

The Longest Day

9

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 65-67) features a vocal melody with lyrics 'grow-ing si - lence drowns me in this — place. Not know ing means there's hope with-in the my -'. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand. The second system (measures 68-70) continues the vocal melody with lyrics '- stery but how do I wait? How do I — wait? The'. The piano accompaniment includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line. The third system (measures 71-73) shows the vocal melody with lyrics 'on - ly thing get-ting me through — to day — is be - liev-ing that I'll see you here tom-'. The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line. The score is marked with 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and 'rit.' (ritardando).

65 grow-ing si - lence drowns me in this — place. Not know ing means there's hope with-in the my -

68 - stery but how do I wait? How do I — wait? The

71 on - ly thing get-ting me through — to day — is be - liev-ing that I'll see you here tom-

mp *rit.*

10 The Longest Day

74

or - row. — You've grown up to be beau - ti - ful — and brave but

77

right now fear has made my heart feel hol - low. My pre - cious child, — my

80

pre - cious child. pro - mise me your smile will ne - ver fade.

80

The image displays a musical score for the song 'The Longest Day'. It is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system (measures 74-76) features a vocal melody starting on a half note, followed by eighth and quarter notes. The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords. The second system (measures 77-79) continues the vocal melody with a mix of eighth and quarter notes, including a half note. The piano accompaniment includes a treble line with chords and a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. The third system (measures 80-82) shows the vocal melody concluding with a half note. The piano accompaniment features a treble line with chords and a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes. Lyrics are written below the vocal line, with some words underlined. Measure numbers 74, 77, and 80 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. There are three lock icons on the right side of the page.

The Longest Day

11

83

Here I pray ——— Oh Lord I pray ——— to feel the warmth of your em -

83

f

86

brace

Now I-need you — to get me through. The long-est

86

subito p

89

day.

89

rit.

The musical score is for a piece titled "The Longest Day". It is written for voice and piano. The key signature has four flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number in red: 83, 86, and 89. The first system (measures 83-85) features a vocal line with lyrics "Here I pray ——— Oh Lord I pray ——— to feel the warmth of your em -" and a piano accompaniment starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system (measures 86-88) includes a vocal line with lyrics "brace Now I-need you — to get me through. The long-est" and a piano accompaniment that includes a rapid sixteenth-note arpeggiated figure in the left hand, followed by a *subito p* (suddenly piano) marking. The third system (measures 89-91) shows the vocal line concluding with "day." and the piano accompaniment ending with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking and sustained chords. There are three lock icons on the right side of the page, one for each system.

Analysis of the song *The Longest Day*

The Longest Day is sung by Carla Barnsworth early in the Second Act. The last time Carla heard from her daughter Angie and Angie's boyfriend Colton Creger, they were headed south inside of Pennsylvania. On the morning two days after Carla spoke to Angie, she received a phone call from Colton's mother Elanor. Elanor stated that while driving to work, she heard a news report on the radio that two young adults were found dead in the Thunder Hill shelter in Pennsylvania, and just like Carla she had heard from the couple two nights prior and feared the worse. This song tries to encompass the emotion that comes alongside a mother awaiting news about her child. There are conflicting trains of thought, the mother is anxious to hear that her child is safe, but afraid to hear any news, because knowing eliminates the potential for hope.

As one could imagine, this song should be relatable to anybody who has raised a child. Hoping for the best while fearing the worst. There are certain lyrical devices that elevate the quality of any song, here are some things that makes this song more powerful. One lyrical device that often goes unnoticed by the general population but is a contributor to what makes a song great and so popular is melodic tone painting. Melodic tone painting is when the melodic line takes on the lyric in a way that aligns the words that are being sung. For example, on the first page and third stanza of this song, Carla sings a lyric that says, "*I recall the days when you were young, the patter of your footsteps on the floor.*" The melody of the line descends as it says *footsteps on the floor*. Landing on floor at the bottom aligns with the idea that the floor is below us, beneath our feet as a base. The lightness of the piano introduction is reflective of a lullaby or nurse's rhyme.

This is supposed to create a nostalgic feeling for the listener before he or she has been even given any lyrical content. The use of the minor sixth chord throughout the song allows for a negative connotation to arise musically and is placed in parts where we want the listener to feel fearful or saddened. The lyrics to the bridge start off by saying “*Thoughts are racing through my head a mile a minute.*” This moment of the song and the measure or two before of accompaniment contain an accelerando. “The Italian musical command accelerando (often abbreviated accel.) is an indication to gradually increase the tempo of a song until otherwise noted.”⁶ This is intentional because the lyrics say *Thoughts are racing through my head*. Again, we see the same idea of what’s happening musically tie into the lyrics, as thoughts race; the music speeds up. The other reason the accelerando is important is because this is the moment in the song where the lyrical content switches from being past tense to present tense. The first two verses and the first two choruses of the song are Carla remembering times that fear crept in throughout Angie’s Childhood, and it would all come back to this hook: “*The promise of your smile would never fade. When I needed you, to get me through..... The longest day.*” In the bridge the song brings the audience to real time. The audience will begin to feel that fear Carla is currently feeling, as she tries to cope with the suffocating reality that she may have lost her baby girl. The final Chorus of the song is what makes the song have weight. There is symmetry between the first two choruses and the last chorus in that they line up lyrically but are written in two different tenses. That feeling she was remembering

⁶ Brady Kraemer, “The Definition of the Italian Music Command Accelerando,” *Thoughtco.*, June 1, 2017, <https://www.thoughtco.com/accelerando-2702129>

becomes the reality she is currently facing. Intention is seen in the first line from the Chorus when compared to what is seen in the last Chorus.

*“The only thing that got me through that day
Was knowing that I’d see you here tomorrow”*

In the last Chorus the same line sings like this:

*“The only thing getting me through today
Is believing that I’ll see you here tomorrow”*

The listener is able to see the symmetry between the two lyrics, and should find that each line of those Choruses lines up fairly well. The symmetry created is another literary element that makes this song more emotional to an audience member.

Act 1 Scene 3 "*Bring on the Slugs*"

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

1.

ACT 1

SCENE 3 "BRING ON THE SLUGS"

EXT. AT. MAINE.

Colton and Angie are hiking, eager but tired. Their gear appears to be new. Jeff's backpack is a standout shade of green. They stop at the bottom of a steep climb next to running water from a small, gurgling waterfall.

MITCHELL COOK

(offstage narrating)

Colton and Angie have been at this about a couple days now.

Colton takes an exasperated seat.

MITCHELL COOK (CONT'D)

Only a couple months to go. Myself, at this time, I was just about to start my hike from the same spot as they did two days ago, at Katahdin.

Colton takes a drink of water.

COLTON

(to Angie)

I'm guessing your water isn't ice cold either?

ANGIE

(sarcasm)

Maybe there's an ice chest at the top of this hill.

She reaches towards him.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Here.

She takes his canteen and dips it into the water.

COLTON

You've seen the last two shelters, I don't think there's any way the next will have five stars.

He sits up and takes it back once she has filled it, looking at the stream.

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

2.

COLTON (CONT'D)

Crystal clear.

Angie dips her own canteen and takes a sip, spitting it out instantly.

ANGIE

Doesn't taste crystal clear.

COLTON

Hopefully there's a spring at the next shelter up there. Anything would taste better than this.

He takes her hand as he gets up. Colton and Angie exit stage right as the lights dim to twilight.

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. SMALL SHELTER. TWILIGHT.

The forest thickens and the sound of the waterfall slowly quiets down. Colton and Angie enter stage left, walking, as the SMALL SHELTER rolls on from stage right.

The shelter has three walls and a roof, with a floor raised a foot off the ground.

ANGIE

Home sweet home.

Colton and Angie step up into the shelter and take off their backpacks. Colton begins to set up his sleeping bag. Angie picks up the trail log book and begins to flip through the pages. She reads aloud:

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Long hike today, Very hot and muggy, July 1986. Signed, Croce.

She flips forward a few more pages and begins to read aloud again.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

Saw two deer today. One more than the day before. September 1988, signed Marmalade.
(puts the book down)
These are so boring!

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

3.

COLTON

They're trail logs, what do you expect?

ANGIE

A touch of... creative flare.

COLTON

What do you want them to do, write a song?

ANGIE

Perhaps.

COLTON

Perhaps we should get some rest.

Angie puts down the book curls up
into her sleeping bag next to
Colton.

COLTON (CONT'D)

And perhaps, we should sleep in tomorrow

ANGIE

Perhaps.

COLTON

And perhaps I love you.

Angie kisses Colton on the cheek
and lays her head down. After a
moment of rest she brings her head
back up and looks around.

ANGIE

I think there's less bugs tonight.

COLTON

(groggy)

Perhaps.

LIGHTS FADE.

Instrumental guitar starts finger
picking.

FADE UP:

INT. SMALL SHELTER. DAWN.

Angie is back in the corner with
the trail book in her left hand
and a pencil in her right. The
floor, walls and the exterior are
covered in slugs. Angie sings as
she writes:

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

4.

ANGIE

"BRING ON THE SLUGS"

LAST EVENING I WHISPERED,
"I THINK THERE'S LESS BUGS".

Colton wakes up, disgruntled, and
mumbles:

COLTON

What happened to sleeping in?

ANGIE (CONT'D)

THIS MORNING I BECKONED;
"BRING ON THE SLUGS"!

Colton looks around and notices
the slugs. He quickly scurries out
of his sleeping back and begins to
frantically brush himself off.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

THROUGH THE ROOF OF OUR TENT
I SEE FAMILIAR SLUDGE.
THE STUFF THAT RESEMBLES
BUTTERSCOTCH FUDGE.
SQUISHED BETWEEN MY TOES,
AND ALL IN MY SANDALS
YUCK! THIS IS SOMETHING THAT I
JUST CAN'T HANDLE.
BRING ON THE SLUGS.
BRING ON THE SLUGS.
BRING ON THE SLUGS.

Colton gets on his knees and
begins to closely examine a slug.

ANGIE (CONT'D)

BRING ON THE SLUGS.

COLTON
(bluntly)

I think they're already here.

Act 1 Scene 3 “*Bring on the Slugs*” Analysis

Bring on the Slugs may be the most important scene in the entire musical. It is the first time anybody is seen hiking on the trail. The scene shows Colton and Angie in the early stages of their hike. As the writer I have tried to give them dialogue that embodies their personalities. The audience is only given one Act to fall in love with these characters, sadly their lives are taken at the end of the first Act, the more I as a writer am able to attach the audience to them, the more powerful this whole story can be.

Angie is spunky and energetic, this is really seen once they arrive at the shelter for the night. She reads aloud some of the trail logs (This is where I give homage to my favorite musical artist, Jim Croce) and we see that she isn't easily amused. That tells you that not only is she very animated, but that Colton, who's more reserved, truly has her heart. The two have playful banter, usually because of Colton's kind-hearted yet sarcastic remarks. The audience sees the first instance of their love for each other when they are winding down to sleep, the kiss on the cheek is important because it shows that they really are happy.

The following morning, Colton wakes up to Angie singing aloud and logging her song in the trail book (irony). The audience gets to see how both of them react in an unexpected situation which plays into their character development. Angie is in control and making fun of the situation, where Colton has a more difficult time processing. The song she is singing, *Bring on the Slugs*, is crucial to the arc of the story, we will get to see that in the scenes to come.

Act 1 Scene 4 "Cook Meets Animal"

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

5.

ACT 1

SCENE 4 "COOK MEETS ANIMAL"

EXT. - AT THE SAME TIME.

MITCHELL COOK

(narrating offstage)

As Colton and Angie were dealing with the slugs, I was a day into my own journey, less than 50 miles away. I remember, that's when I heard a strange noise...

The brush along the trail here is quite thick. Past Cook enters, dressed well for the hike.

MITCHELL COOK (CONT'D)

(narrating offstage)

Something was rustling deep in the bushes. Maybe a bear?

COOK

Who's there?

Cook holds his walking stick defensively in front of him. He begins to side step parallel to edge of the trail. Keeping his eye's glued in the direction the noise is coming from.

COOK (CONT'D)

Anyone?

A head abruptly pops through the thick brush. Male, early twenties, with long, dark hair that looks like it hadn't seen a shower in quite a while.

ANIMAL

Hello!

COOK

My God mate, you were ten seconds away from a bruised head. I thought you were an animal.

Cook gestures to the end of his walking stick.

ANIMAL

Sorry about that, I had a mouthful of berries!

Animal holds out his hand, it is full of bright red berries.

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

6.

ANIMAL (CONT'D)

They're Partridgeberries, try one!

COOK

Don't even know your name and you want me to eat from your hand?

ANIMAL

Josh Hannel.

COOK

Mitchell Cook. Here.

Cook tentatively reaches out and takes a few berries. After brief but close examination, he raises them to his mouth. Before he eats-

COOK (CONT'D)

Not poisonous?

ANIMAL

I'm still here. I'll find out within the day.

Cook, putting that to the back of his mind, eats the berries. And smiles.

COOK

We'll find out.

They shake hands.

ANIMAL

Hiking alone?

COOK

Well I was with a group when I started out. But they ate some bad berries a couple days back.

They laugh.

COOK (CONT'D)

Just me. You?

ANIMAL

See anyone else digging in that bush? How far are you hiking?

COOK

Georgia.

ANIMAL

That we have in common. I must've started a day before you.

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

7.

COOK

Aye. You trying to make it to the next shelter
by sundown?

ANIMAL

I imagine. Probably looks like I'm not making
the best time.

COOK

Maybe sticking together will help us keep up
the pace.

ANIMAL
(imitating)

"Aye".

EXT. SMALL SHELTER - LATER

The same small shelter where
Colton and Angie dealt with the
slugs mere night's before.

The nearby waterfall still sounds
faintly as Cook and Animal begin
to settle in. Cook sees the open
Log Book.

COOK

You written in one of these yet?

ANIMAL

No, I didn't know what to say.

COOK

Neither did these people-

He stops reading at the bottom of
the page.

COOK (CONT'D)

Listen to this. "Last evening I whispered, I
think there's less bugs... bring on slugs..."

Cook looks up.

COOK (CONT'D)

I think this is a song.

He sings, questionably;

COOK (CONT'D)

"BRING ON THE SLUGS (REPRISE)"

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

8.

LAST EVENING... I WHISPERED...
"I THINK THERE'S LESS BUGS".

ANIMAL
Sure hope so.

COOK
THIS MORNING I BECKONED;
"BRING ON THE SLUGS"!

He looks up from the book.

COOK (CONT'D)
This is great!

ANIMAL
Slugs aren't. Think that's trustworthy?

COOK
Let's see who signed... Nalgene. Interesting
trail name.

ANIMAL
What's yours?

COOK
Don't have one. Don't want one. You?

ANIMAL
No. I want one now. Something brave,
triumphant, decedent-

COOK
Animal.

ANIMAL
Pardon?

COOK
That's what I thought you were. Back in the
bush. You were eating berries like an Animal.

ANIMAL
Nah, I think of something else. Not Animal.

COOK
(playfully)
Like Josh sounds any better.

ANIMAL
Hey there Cook, you don't wanna sleep under the
stars do you?

COOK
I yield.

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

9.

They unroll and get into their
sleeping bags. After a bit of
silence-

COOK (CONT'D)

How can anyone be so obnoxiously happy?

ANIMAL

Sorry?

COOK

So happy on this trail that they'd write a
song.

ANIMAL

Must be a special person.

COOK

Must be.

MITCHELL COOK

(offstage narrating)

I had no idea how right he was.

Act 1 Scene 4 “Cook meets Animal” Analysis

This scene is the first time the audience will see past Mitchell Cook on stage. It also isn't one of the rare instances we see his narration in a fourth wall break, as the narration happens offstage (previously recorded). Cook is bit of an introvert, but he also enjoys helping others and feeling in control of a situation, the audience see's that here. This scene is similar to the first in that it is the path Colton and Angie were just on a couple days before and Cook and Animal have a different experience in the same shelter. Cook gains a companion early in his hike, Josh Hannel, the two characters meet. In this scene characters are meeting for the first time, so there is a bit more freedom and less expectation in their development. It is however made clear that a friendship is beginning to blossom. Both seem to be full of wit, Cook more educated than Animal (Josh Hannel), but the two complement each other well. One could infer that they both concluded that it might be nice not to be alone on the trail for a while. Once learning they are headed to the same area, they agree to accompany one another.

Later on, Cook and Animal, Josh Hannel, approach the same shelter where Angie and Colton stayed a couple nights before. Cook reads the trail log book and stumbles upon Angie's entry, at first, we see he's confused, but once he realizes it is a song, he becomes elated. It sticks with him, and he can't get over it. He ends up giving Josh his trail name, Animal. This is essential for their relationship, it shows animals compliance and Cook's desire to take charge. Cook later brings up the song, it is stuck with him, and he wants to find the hand that penned it, little did he know he would soon.

Act 1 Scene 6 “Cook and Animal Catch Up”

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

10.

ACT 1

SCENE 6 "COOK AND ANIMAL CATCH UP"

EXT - AT - NEW HAMPSHIRE - A WEEK LATER

Colton and Angie enter stage left, into a high clearing. They are moving slow, exploring. Angie squats to examine a bush, searching for berries.

COLTON
What are you looking for?

ANGIE
Nature's candy.
(surprised)
Colton! Guess what it is.

She gestures to him. He joins her.

COLTON
Oh, man. Am I gonna have to wash my sandals again?

He examines his feet.

MOLLY
It's just a slug. Nothing to fret over.

She begins to sing "Bring on the Slugs" as she skips off stage right, Colton carefully following her.

EXT. THE SAME CLEARING - A COUPLE OF MINUTES LATER.

COOK
(offstage narrating)
And look who was right behind them.

Mitchell and Animal enter stage left, at a quicker pace.

MITCHELL COOK
There's some of your berries, Animal.

He gestures to the same bush.

ANIMAL
Don't mind if I do.

Animal walks to the bush. Out of tune, and slightly to himself;

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

11.

ANIMAL (CONT'D)

"I think there's less bugs, bring on the slugs."

MITCHELL COOK

What's that?

ANIMAL

The slug song from the trail log last week.

MITCHELL COOK

I know that, why?

ANIMAL

A couple slugs on the bush. Little boogers, nothing to fret over.

MITCHELL COOK

Heh. "Bring on the slugs..."

They too exit stage left singing strains of Angie's song.

EXT. ANOTHER CLEARING - MINUTES LATER.

Colton and Angie enter stage left, still singing, making their way across the stage slowly.

COLTON AND ANGIE

YUCK! THIS IS SOMETHING
THAT I JUST CAN'T HANDLE.
BRING ON THE SLUGS.

Mitchell and Animal enter stage left, joyfully, also singing;

MITCHELL AND ANIMAL
Bring on the slugs!

COLTON AND ANGIE (CONT'D)
Bring on the slugs!

They all stop dead in their tracks as they notice each other.

ANGIE

What were you just singing?

MITCHELL COOK

A song someone left in a trail log a couple nights back.

ANGIE

Who left it.

MITCHELL COOK

"Nalgene".

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

12.

Angie giggles and gives him a playful smirk. Mitchell has an epiphany.

MITCHELL COOK (CONT'D)

Nalgene?

ANGIE

That's me! I'm Angie.

MITCHELL COOK

Mitchell.

COLTON

Colton.

Animal doesn't speak up.

MITCHELL COOK

This is Animal. We love your song.

ANIMAL

Not true.

MITCHELL COOK

You don't like her song?

ANIMAL

My name's not Animal.

MITCHELL COOK

Some battles aren't worth fighting, Animal.
That's some nice gear, Colton.

He points to Colton's bright green bag.

COLTON CREGER

Thanks, it was a present from my dad, finally getting a chance to use it.

ANGIE

Are you guys headed to the next shelter? It's just supposed to be a a half hour down the trail

Mitchell looks at animal questionably and shrugs

MITCHELL COOK

We are now!

The four begin to walk off stage right as "Bring on the Slugs" instrumental plays.

"MURDER ON THE APPALACHIAN TRAIL"

13.

Seconds later they enter stage left as a SHELTER, a little bigger than the last rolls on from stage right.

This shelter has four walls and a roof, and the hikers enter through a heavy door.

INT. FOUR WALLED SHELTER - CONTINUOUS

Once through the door, the shelter rotates 180 degrees so we can see into it. The hikers begin to unpack and settle in, there are three loud knocks on the door.

Act 1 Scene 6 “*Cook and Animal Catch Up*” Analysis

This is the scene that unites our two pairs of hikers. Mitchell and Animal are able to recognize Colton and Angie because of the song Angie wrote a few scenes back. Cook is overjoyed, he had wanted to meet the spunky soul who wrote something so animated on a trail so taxing. Placing the slug on the trail for Colton and Angie to stumble across was key because it gives our character reason to sing her whimsical song, it also gives Animal reason to attempt to sing it making it fresh in both his and Mitchell’s mind. Colton and Angie appear back on stage finishing the song out, while they are still on stage, Mitchell and Animal enter as all four sing the same lyrics simultaneously. This adds even more weight and importance to this piece because it is responsible for finally bringing these four together.

This begins playful dialogue for the four of them. These four are the most important characters in the show, and this is the only scene that only contains just the four of them. We can see that the time these four will spend together will include a lot of laughter, Mitchell still seems to be in control of him and Animal’s relationship. The end of the scene in the action column sets us up for the next scene very nicely with a seamless transition of the rolling shelter. We see the importance of the words Angie wrote in how they united our main characters together. They will hold even more weight towards the end of the musical. The lyrics truthfully embody who Angie is as a person. Life is messy and sticky sometimes, people can be uncomfortable and thrown into predicaments that we aren’t too fond of. Angie’s attitude, her challenge for the slugs to bring it on, is symbolic of how she approaches life, in a playful, positive, and sincere manner.

Purpose and Conclusion

Standing in the clearing, Mitchell Cook shares his closing thoughts on the suddenness with which life can be taken, and the love between people that gives it back. He reckons that Colton and Angie died doing what they loved with who they loved, and that there can be worse things than that.

Throughout the process of writing this musical, I have had to do some searching. Yes, this is based off of a true story, and if I was to one day gain the permission of the remaining family members of those who were lost, it would hold more weight being presented as true, rather than just loosely based. But a story can't ride on its validity if it isn't fact. What is even more special about the truth is when you deliver a message that sticks the landing, you tell a story that becomes unforgettable.

This story teaches how to forgive. Watching Angie's father, forgive the man who took his daughters life in a public court room, shows love in his heart. That doesn't mean Sandy didn't grieve his daughter's death, but he wasn't going to be another victim of evil breeding hatred, or in a more literal sense, evil causing evil. This musical shows us to not hold back when meeting new people, Angie did not hold back, and she made a mark that will last a lifetime in the lives of those she crossed on the Appalachian trail. Don't be afraid to be weird, fun, or corky. So often today, everybody has more than one version of themselves. I'm not trying to point fingers, I'm guilty as well. The Matthew Mellusi who is meeting people for the first time is most likely going to be more reserved than the Matthew Mellusi surrounded by his friends and family. We are all guilty of it, but who we really are is more impactful than who we aren't.

Colton and Angie showed us to give life everything you've got. They were fired from their jobs, and instead of sulking, instead of feeling defeated, they took on a

different kind of challenge. One may try to argue that they were trying to escape reality, but I don't think that was the case. I think Colton and Angie were searching to feel challenged, looking to fulfill a dream, and saw a window of opportunity. I think the way they approached life, always positive, never looking down or back, was admirable.

In Mitchell Cook's closing thoughts, he shared that Colton and Angie died doing what they loved, and that there can be worst things than that. The true message of this musical lies within those closing thoughts and it lies within Colton and Angie's spirit. As cliché as this sounds, the message is to live everyday like it's your last. That doesn't mean to throw caution to the wind, or for lack of a better phrase don't be boring. It means to smile, to be genuine, to share love, and instill joy in others. Life can be gone in an instant, yes Colton and Angie died doing what they love, but they weren't doing what they loved because they expected it to be their final day. They did it because they found joy in spreading joy and that's something the world we live in today needs a lot more of.

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