# RED

ERIC SHANFIELD

**RED**

Eric Shanfield | 2015 | 15’

poem by Anne Carson

for Rebecca Morgan

Soprano

Piano

Geryon was a monster. Everything about him was red.

So begins Anne Carson’s retelling in verse of the story of the monster Geryon, killed by Herakles for his magical red cattle as part of his labors. This composition sets *Red Meat: Fragments of Stesichoros* from *Autobiography of Red*, the first of two novels in verse Carson has dedicated to reimagining Geryon’s saga, originally told in a lost poem known as the *Geryoneis* (“The Geryon Matter”) by the Greek poet Stesichoros in the seventh century, B.C.

All that remains of Stesichoros are some fragments and a story that he was struck blind by Helen of Troy for slandering or abusing her in print. An enconium then came to him in a dream and, having written it, his sight was restored. The palinode reads simply: No it is not the true story./No you never went on the benched ships./No you never came to the towers of Troy.

*Red* was written in the summer of 2015 and is dedicated to Rebecca Morgan, without whom it would not exist.

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Cover ©2015 Rebecca Morgan “Geryon”

# RED MEAT: FRAGMENTS OF STESICHOROS
translated by Anne Carson

## I. GERYON

Geryon was a monster everything about him was red
Put his snout out of the covers in the morning it was red
How stiff the red landscape where his cattle scraped against
Their hobbles in the red wind
Burrowed himself down in the red dawn jelly of Geryon's
Dream

Geryon's dream began red then slipped out of the vat and ran
Upsail broke silver shot up through his roots like a pup

Secret pup At the front end of another red day

## II. MEANWHILE HE CAME

Across the salt knobs it was Him
Knew about the homegold
Had sighted red smoke above the red spires

## III. GERYON'S PARENTS

If you persist in wearing your mask at the supper table
Well Goodnight Then they said and drove him up
Those hemorrhaging stairs to the hot dry Arms
To the ticking red taxi of the incubus
Don't want to go want to stay Downstairs and read

## IV. GERYON'S DEATH BEGINS

Geryon walked the red length of his mind and answered No
It was murder And torn to see the cattle lay
All these darlings said Geryon And now me

## V. GERYON'S REVERSIBLE DESTINY

His mother saw it mothers are like that
Trust me she said Engineer of his softness
You don't have to make up your mind right away
Behind her red right cheek Geryon could see
Coil of the hot plate starting to glow

## VI. MEANWHILE IN HEAVEN

Athena was looking down through the floor
Of the glass-bottomed boat Athena pointed
Zeus looked *Him*

## VII. GERYON'S WEEKEND

Later well later they left the bar went back to the centaur's
Place the centaur had a cup made out of a skull Holding three
Measures of wine Holding it he drank Come over here you can
Bring your drink if you're afraid to come alone The centaur
Patted the sofa beside him Reddish yellow small alive animal
Not a bee moved up Geryon's spine on the inside

## VIII. GERYON'S FATHER

A quiet root may know how to holler He liked to
Suck words Here is an almighty one he would say
After days of standing in the doorway
NIGHTBOLLSNORTED

## IX. GERYON'S WAR RECORD

Geryon lay on the ground covering his ears The sound
Of the horses like roses being burned alive

## X. SCHOOLING

In those days the police were weak Family was strong
Hand in hand the first day Geryon's mother took him to
School She neatened his little red wings and pushed him
In through the door

## XI. RIGHT

Are there many little boys who think they are a
Monster? But in my case I am right said Geryon to the
Dog they were sitting on the bluffs The dog regarded him
Joyfully

## XII. WINGS

Steps off a scraped March sky and sinks
Up into the blind Atlantic morning One small
Red dog jumping across the beach miles below
Like a freed shadow

## XIII. HERAKLES' KILLING CLUB

Little red dog did not see it he felt it All
Events carry but one

## XIV. HERAKLES' ARROW

Arrow means kill It parted Geryon's skull like a comb Made
The boy neck lean At an odd slow angle sideways as when a
Poppy shames itself in a whip of Nude breeze

## XV. TOTAL THINGS KNOWN ABOUT GERYON

He loved lightning He lived on an island His mother was a
Nymph of a river that ran to the sea His father was a gold
Cutting tool Old scholia say that Stesichorus says that
Geryon had six hands and six feet and wings He was red and
His strange red cattle excited envy Herakles came and
Killed him for his cattle

The dog too

## XVI. GERYON'S END

The red world And corresponding red breezes
Went on Geryon did not

## PALINODE

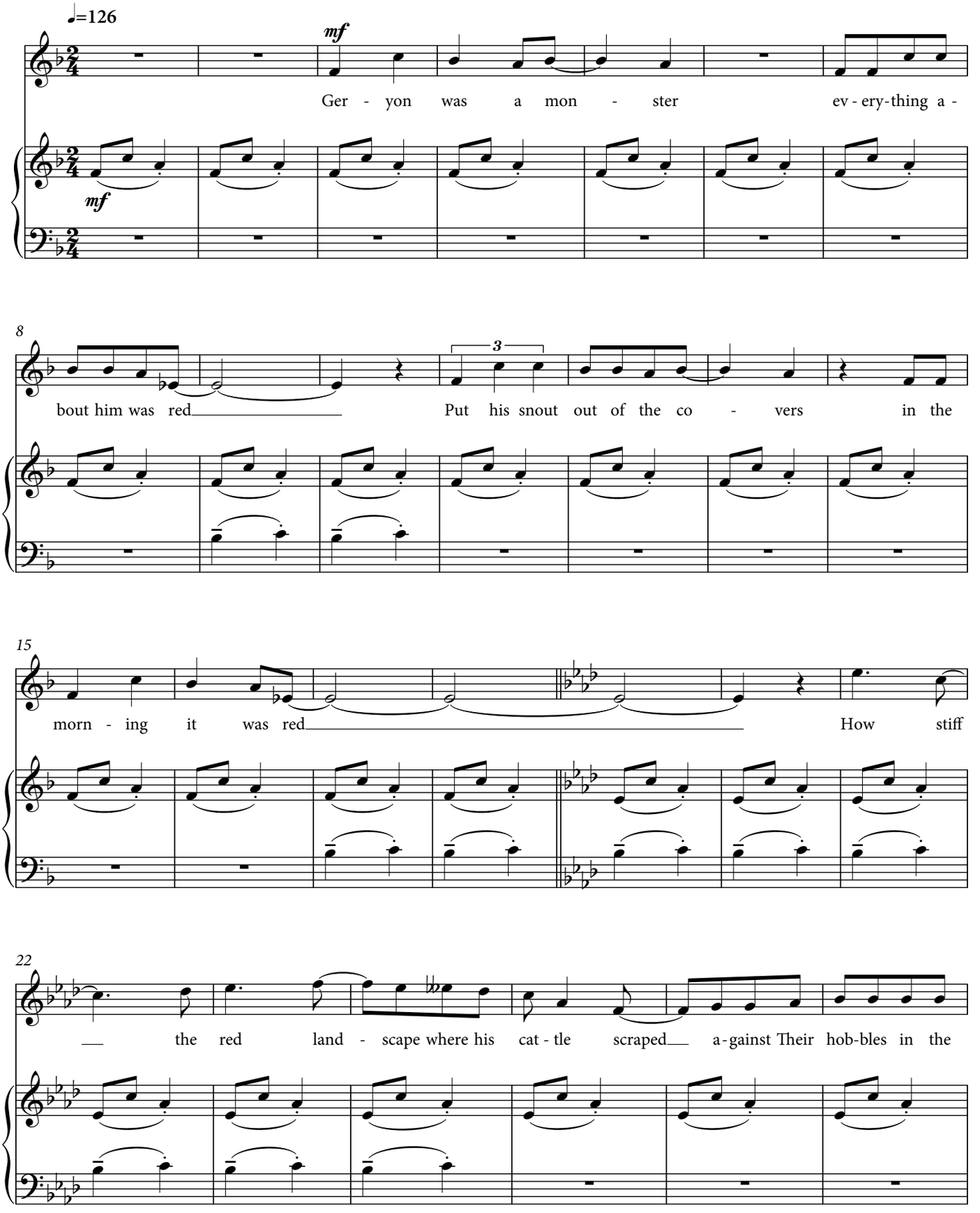
No it is not the true story.
No you never went on the benched ships.
No you never came to the towers of Troy.

# RED

## I. GERYON

Anne Carson

Eric Shanfield

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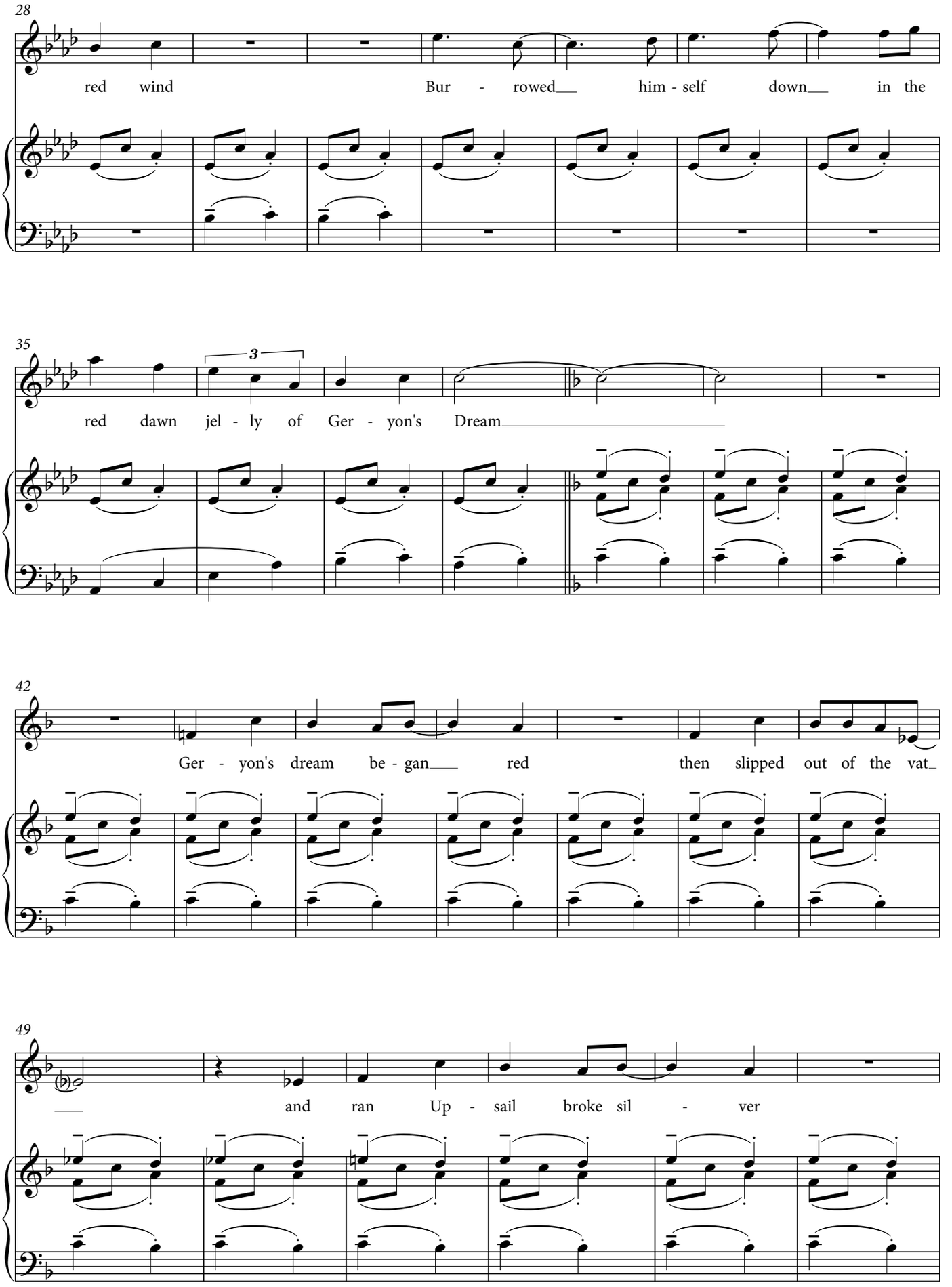
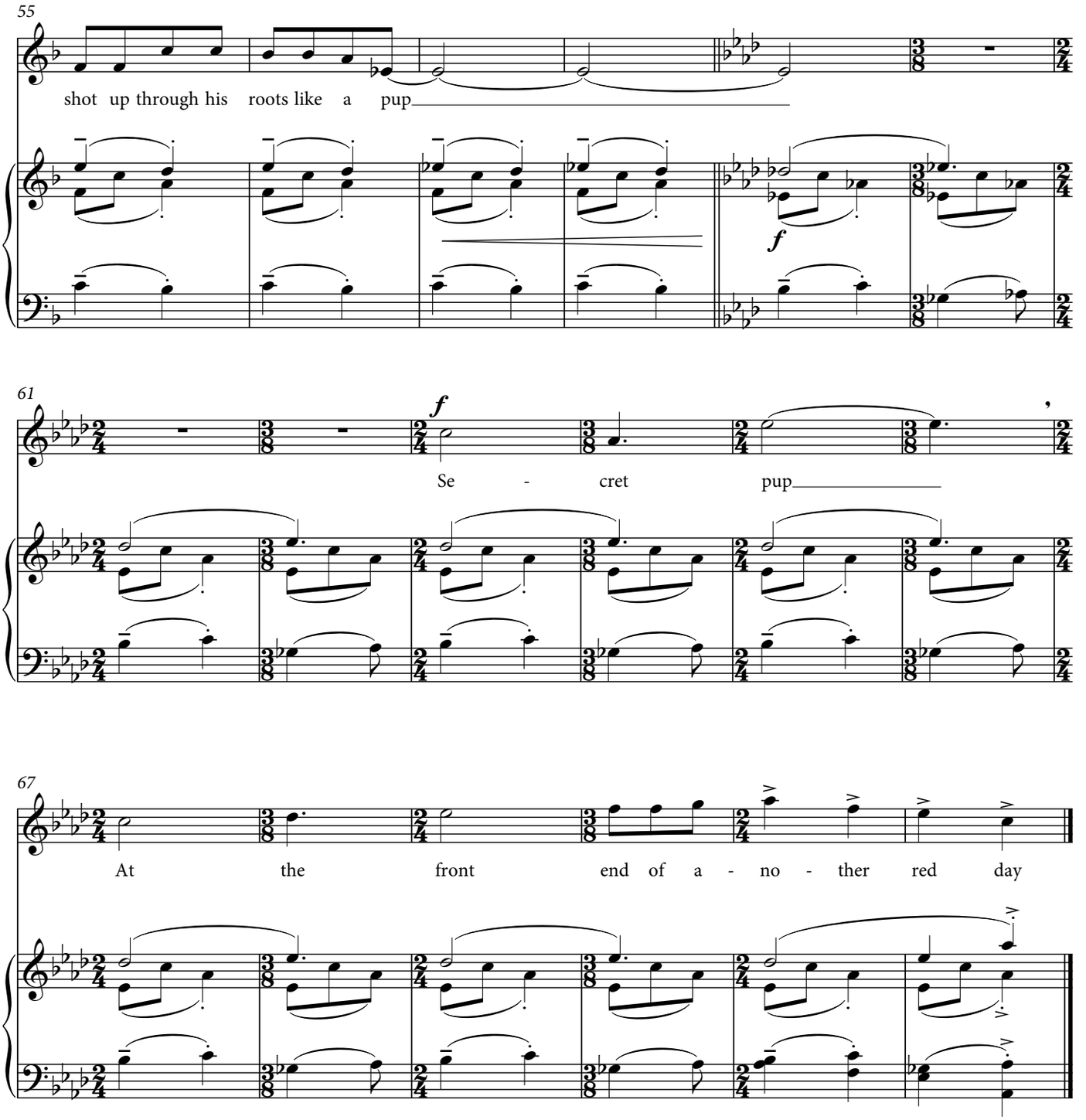

28
red wind Bur - rowed him - self down in the
35
3
red dawn jel - ly of Ger - yon's Dream
42
Ger - yon's dream be - gan red then slipped out of the vat
49
and ran Up - sail broke sil - ver


55
shot up through his roots like a pup
f
61
f
Se - cret pup
67
At the front end of a - no - ther red day

# RED

## II. MEANWHILE HE CAME

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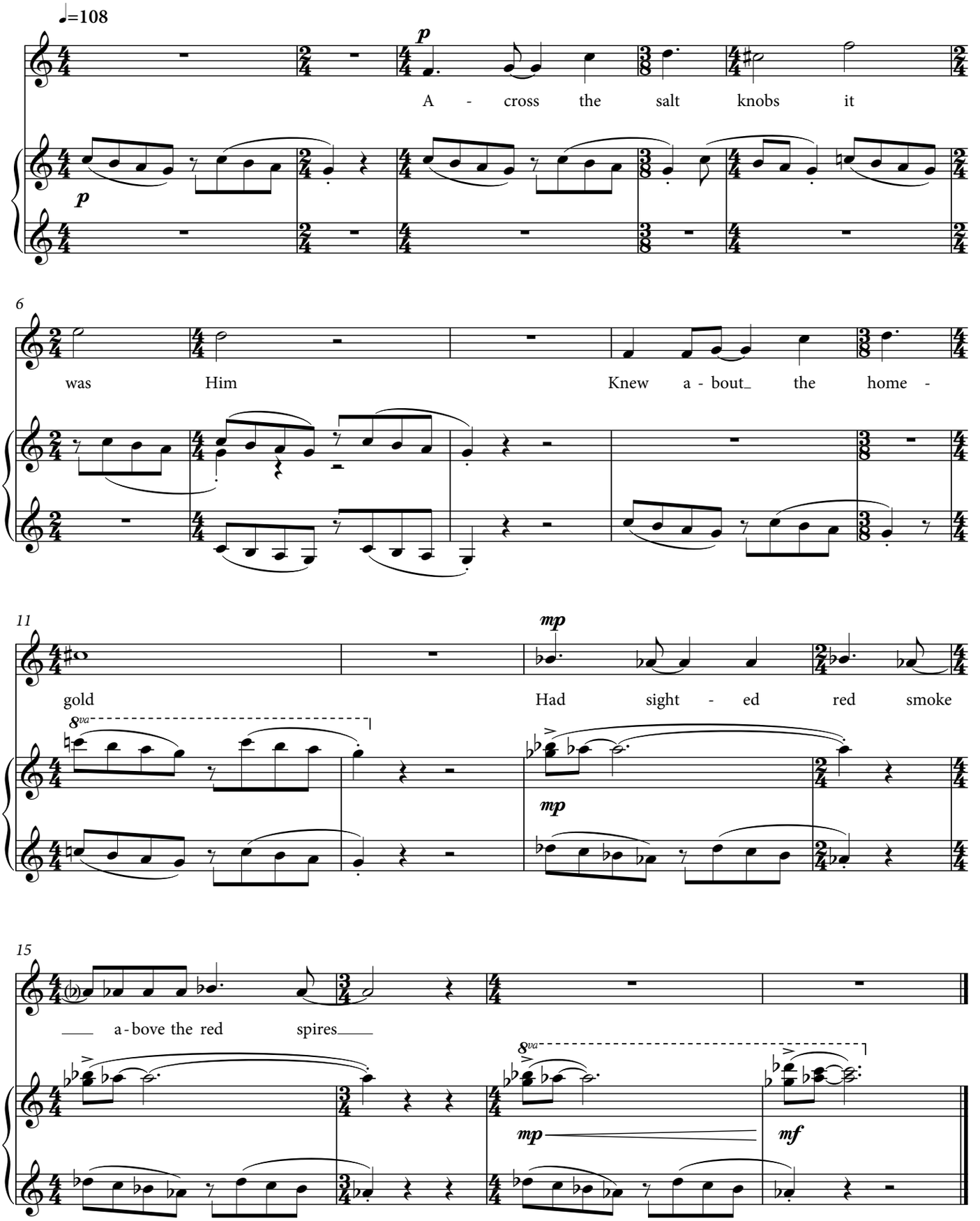


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## III. GERYON'S PARENTS

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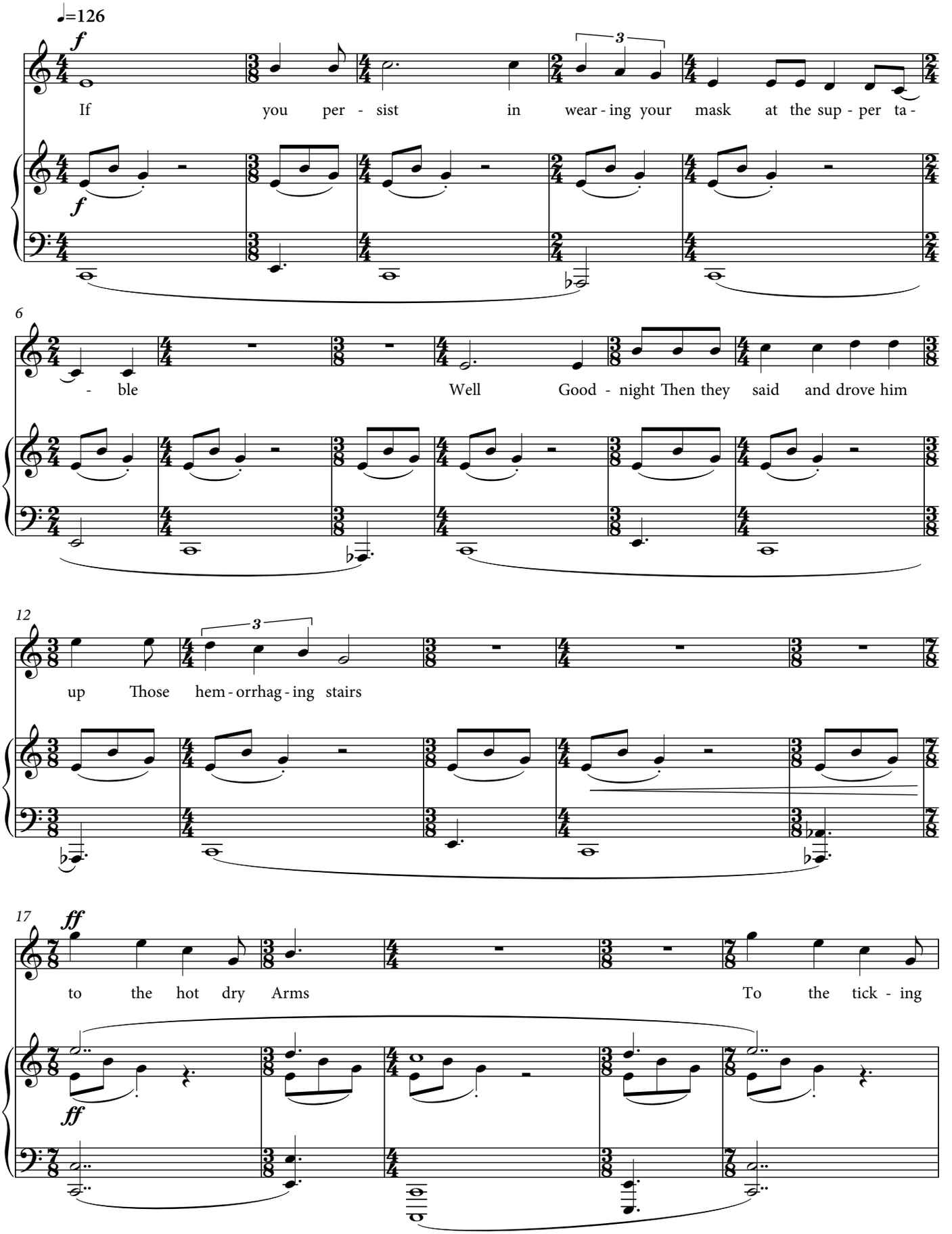


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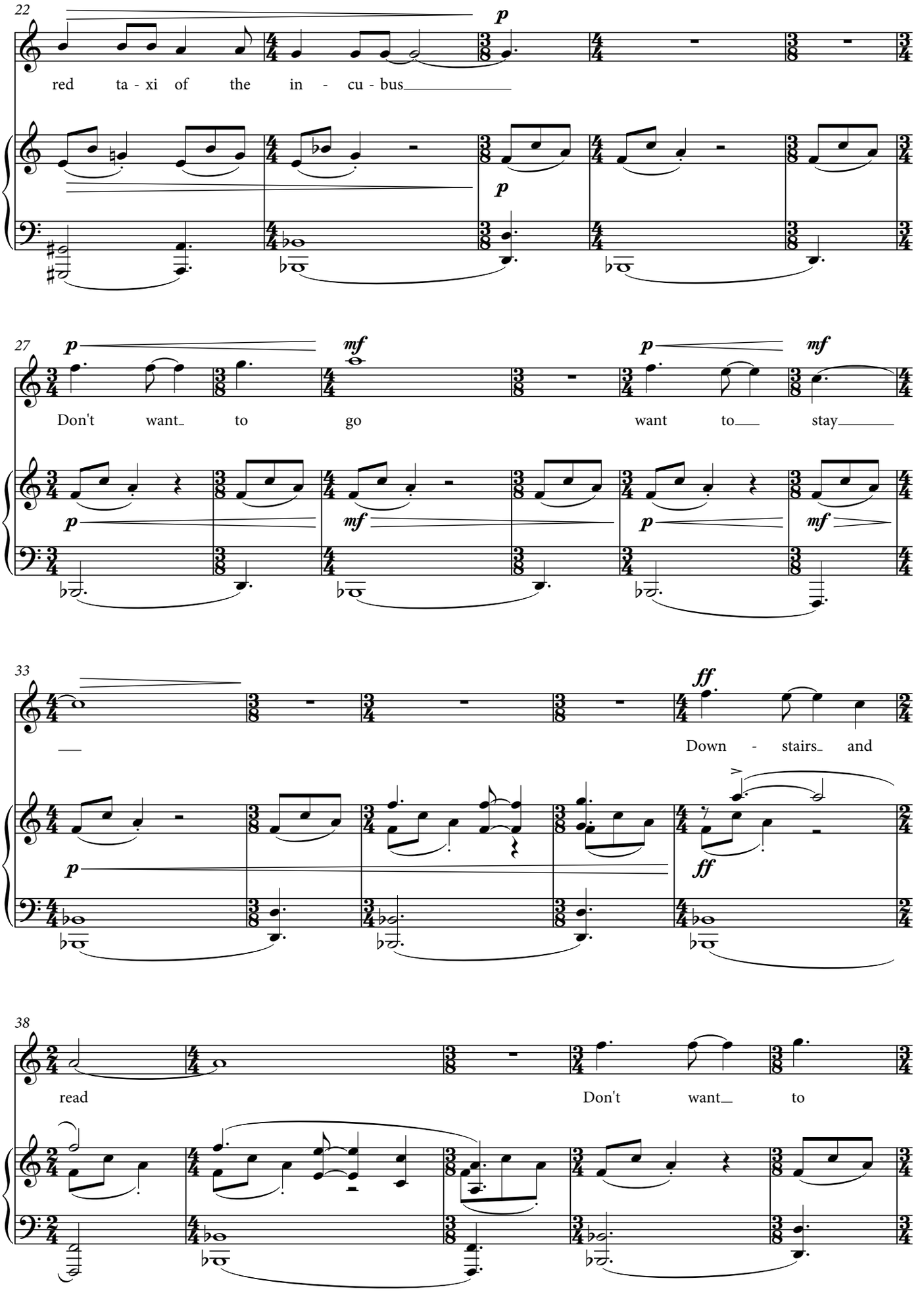
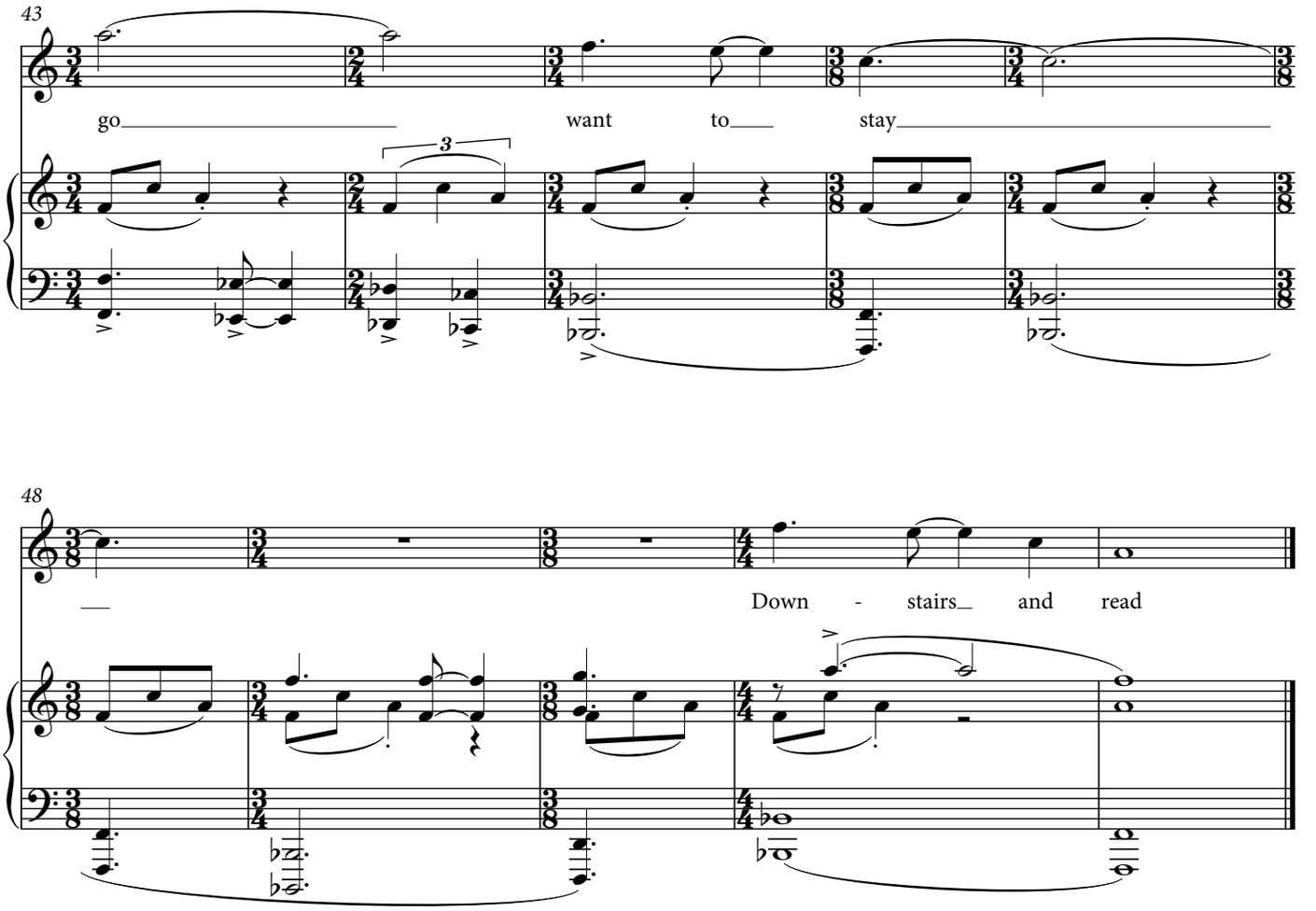

22
p
red ta - xi of the in - cu - bus
p
27
p
mf
p
mf
Don't want to go want to stay
p
mf
p
mf
33
ff
Down - stairs and
p
ff
38
read
Don't want to


43
go
want to
stay
3
48
Down - stairs and read

# RED

## IV. GERYON'S DEATH BEGINS

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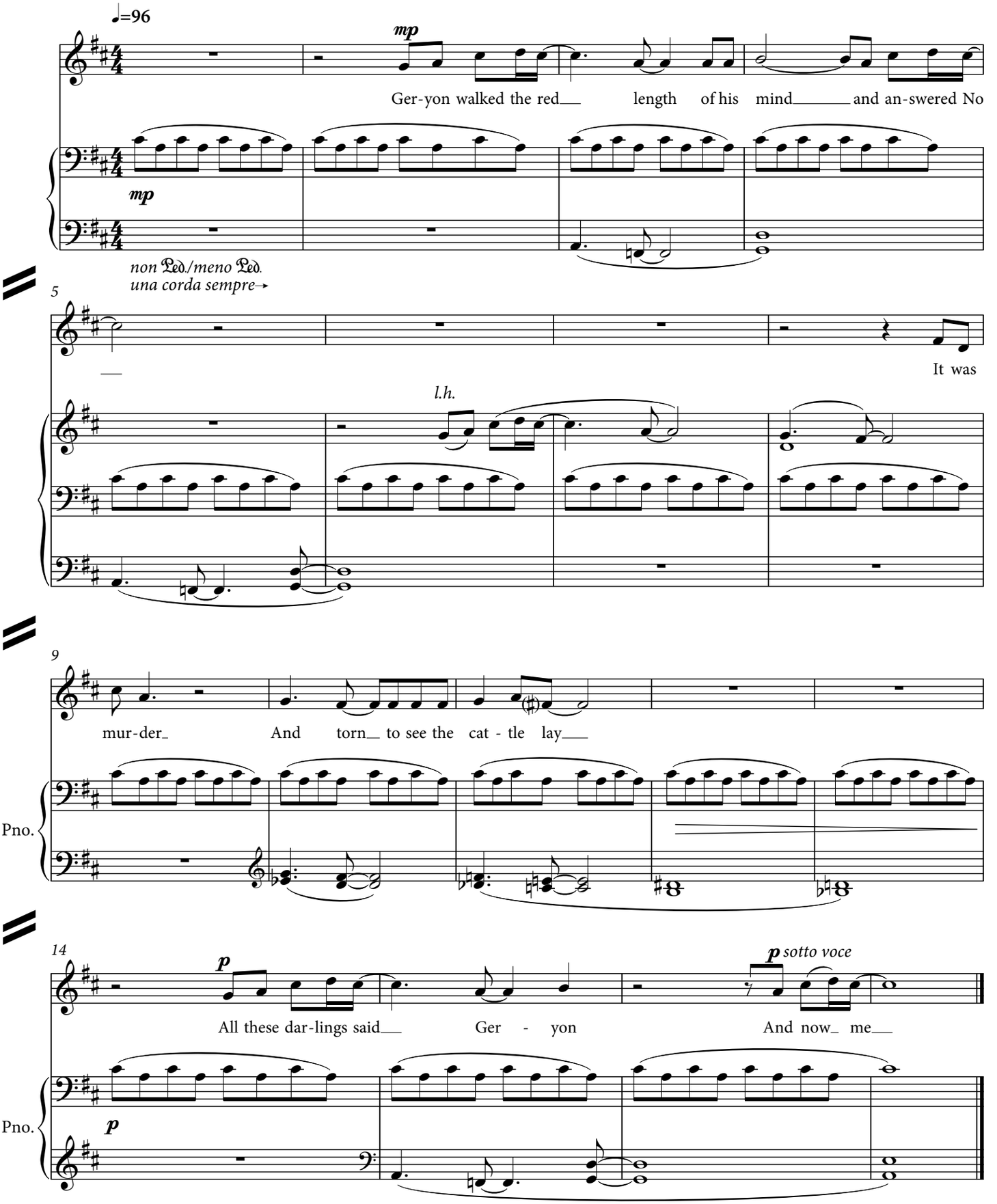


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## V. GERYON'S REVERSIBLE DESTINY

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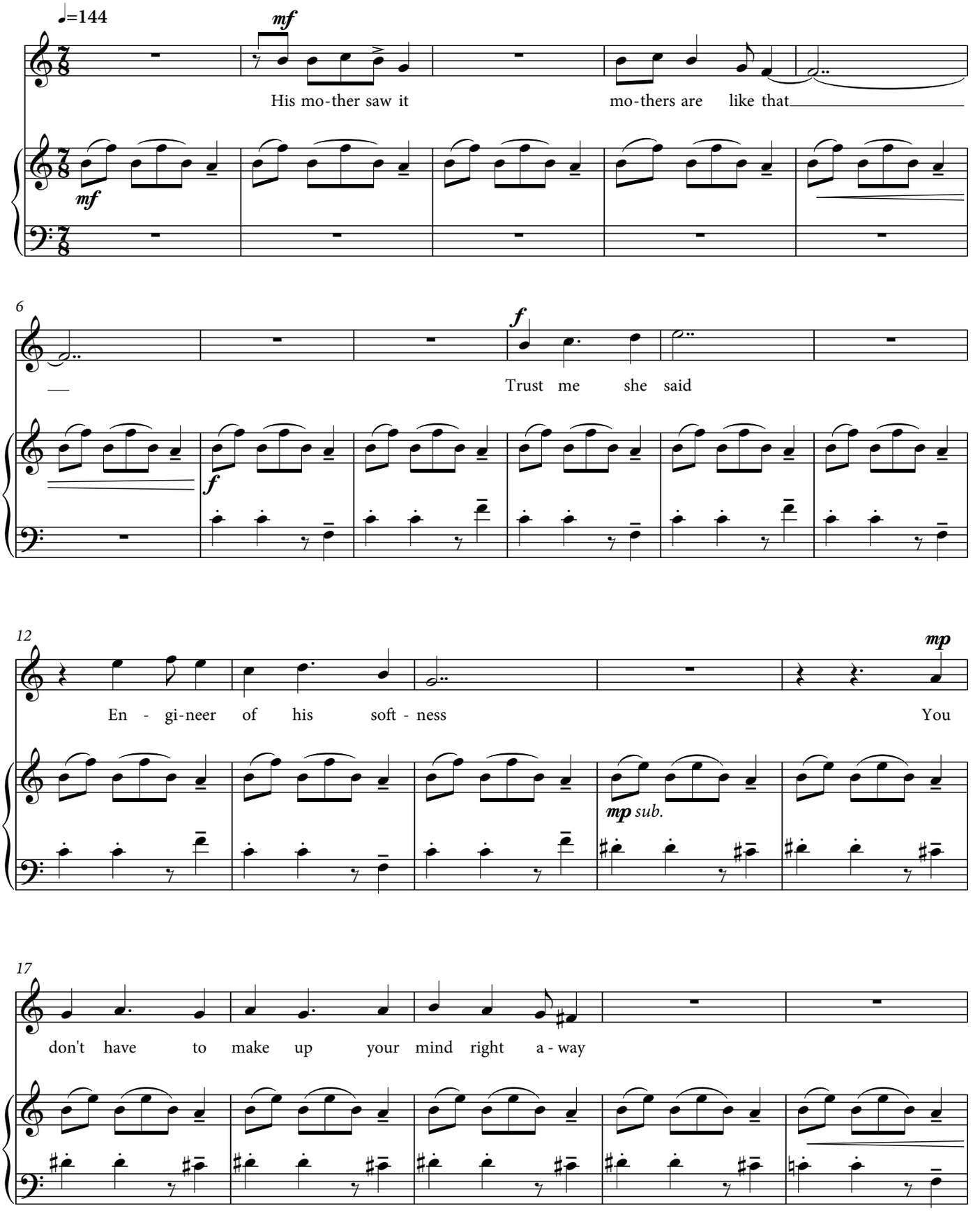


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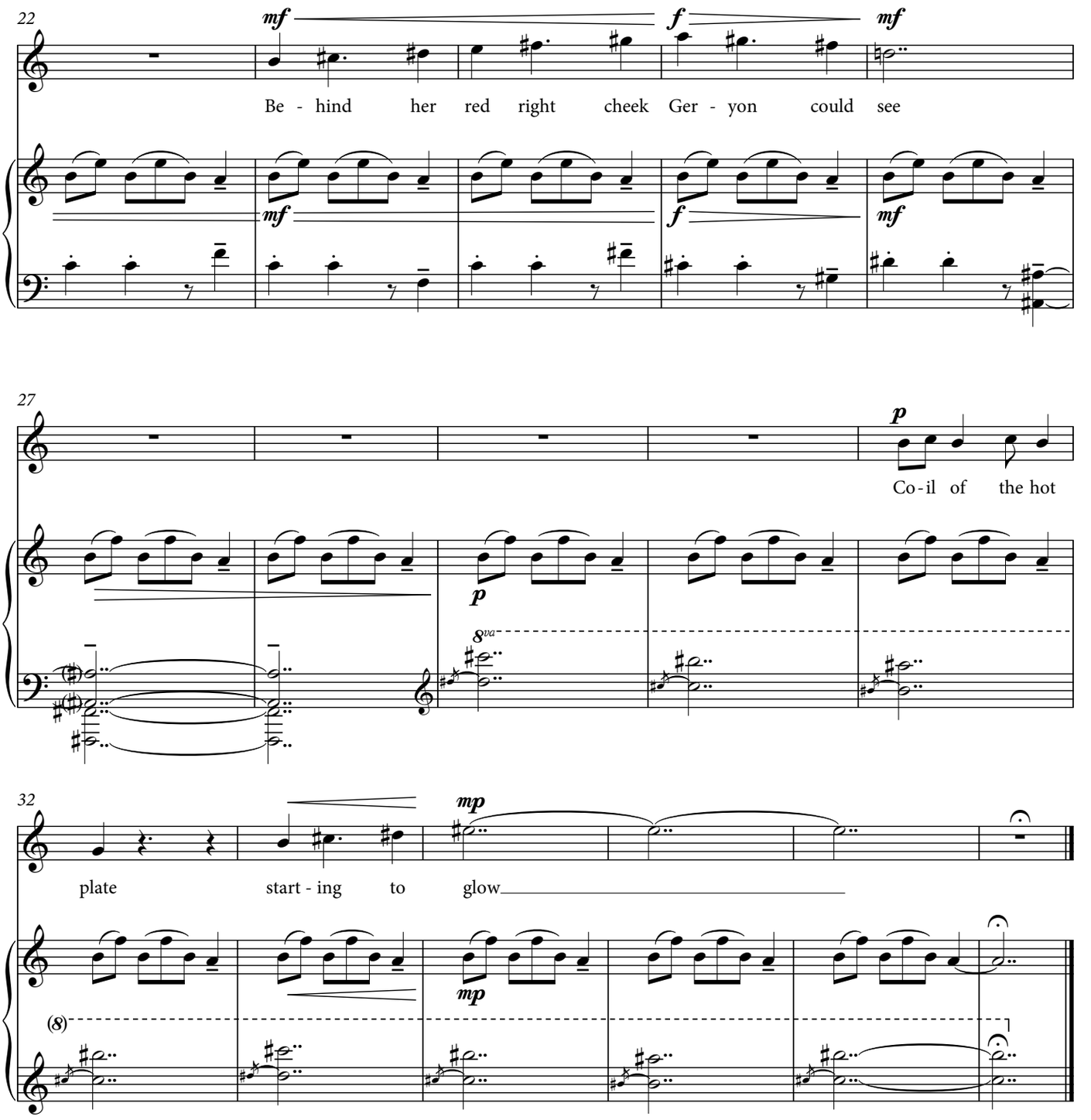
22
mf
f
mf
Be - hind her red right cheek Ger - yon could see
mf
f
mf
27
p
Co - il of the hot
p
8va
32
mp
plate start - ing to glow
mp
(8)

# RED

## VI. MEANWHILE IN HEAVEN

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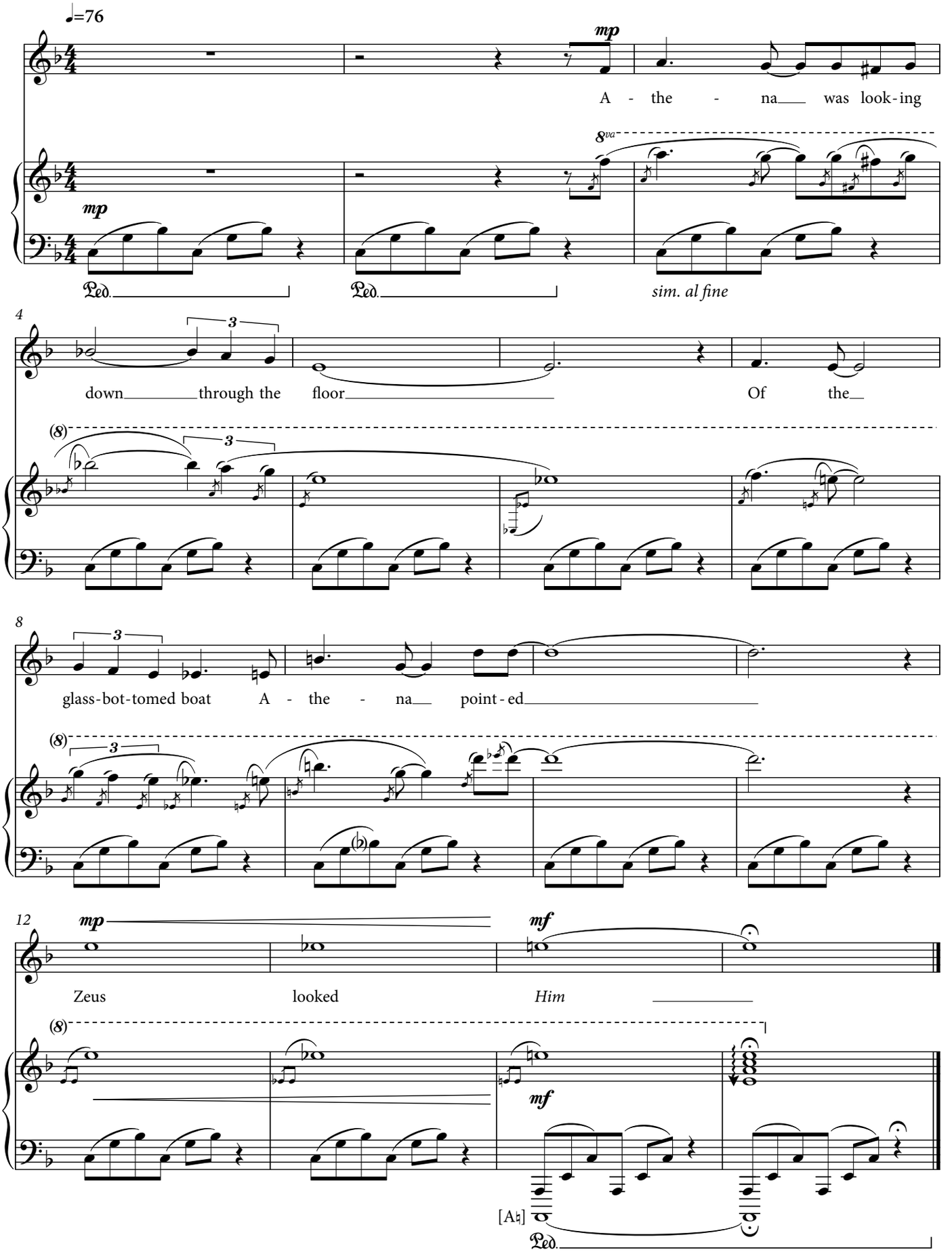


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## VII. GERYON'S WEEKEND

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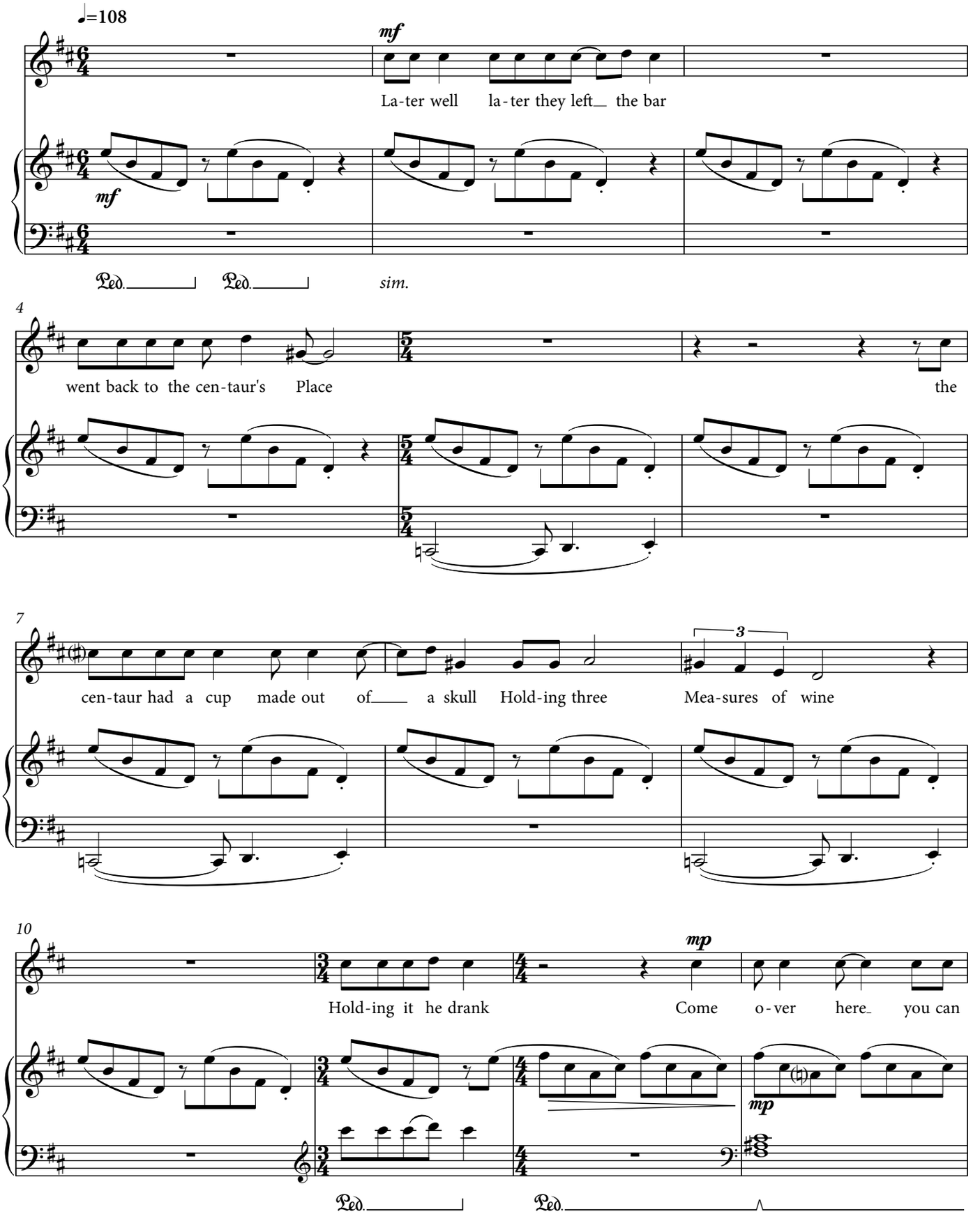


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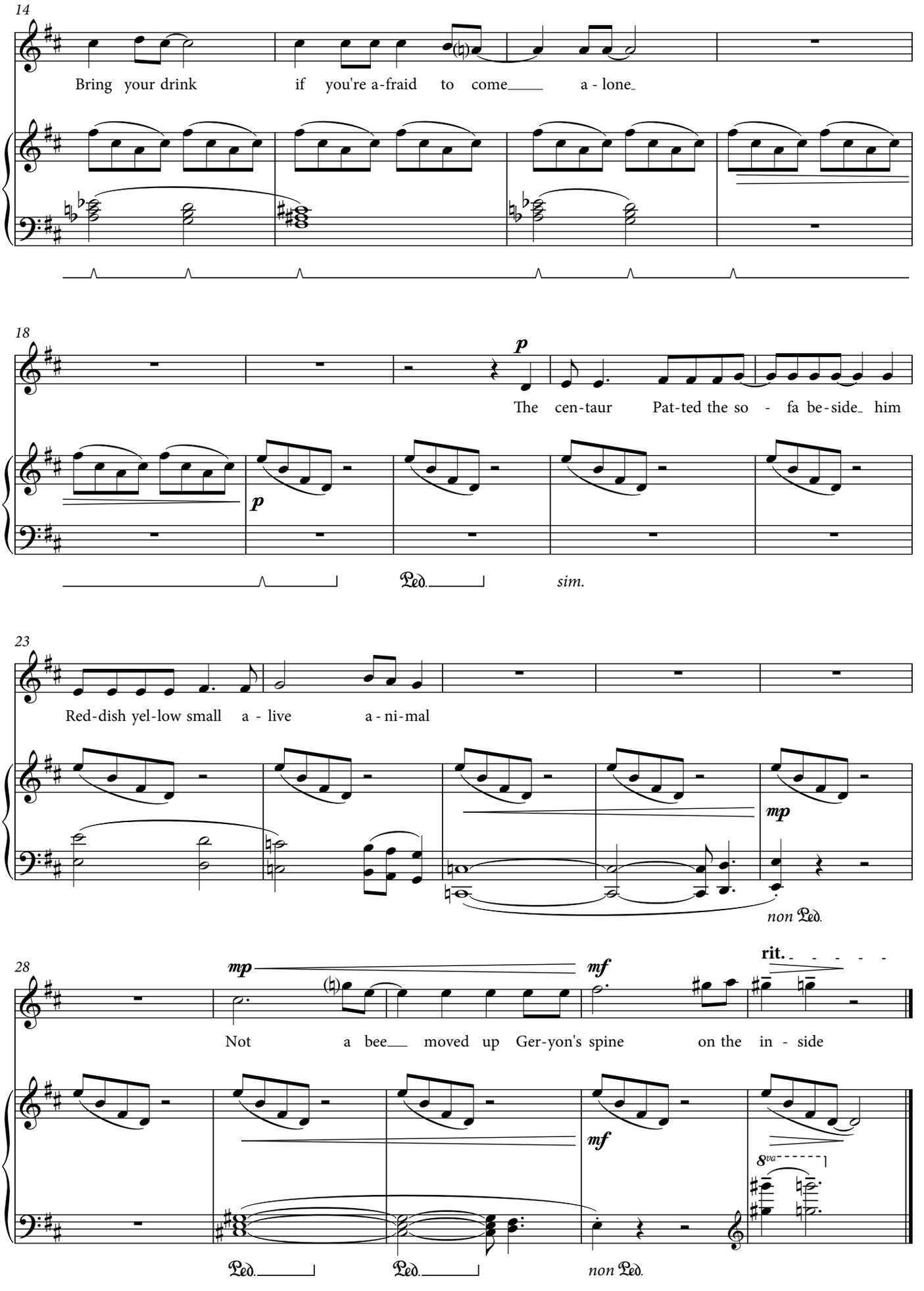
14
Bring your drink if you're a-fraid to come a - lone
18
p
The cen-taur Pat-ted the so - fa be-side him
p
Ped. sim.
23
Red-dish yel-low small a - live a - ni-mal
mp
non Ped.
28
mp
mf
rit.
Not a bee moved up Ger-yon's spine on the in - side
mf
8va
Ped. Ped. non Ped.

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## VIII. GERYON'S FATHER

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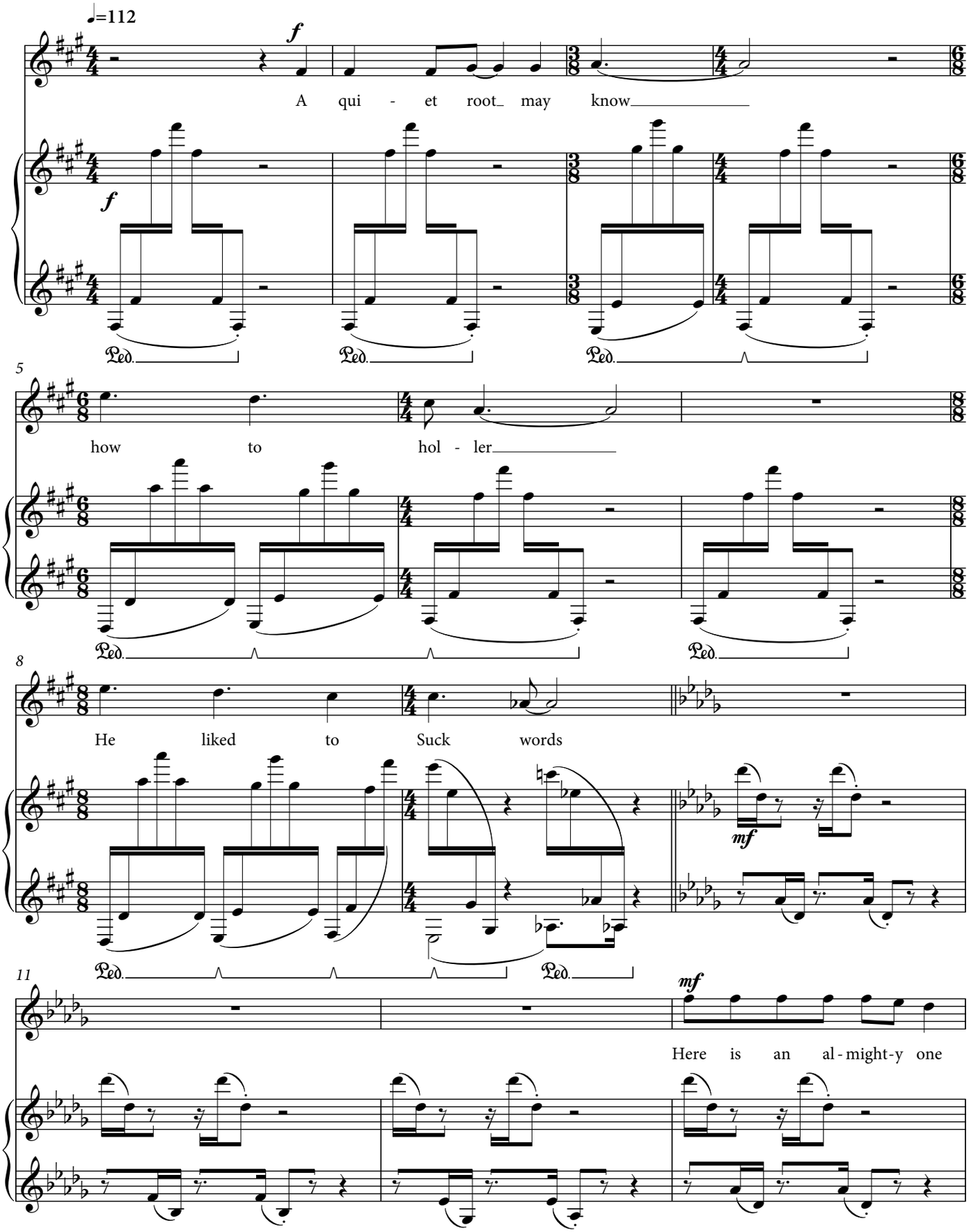


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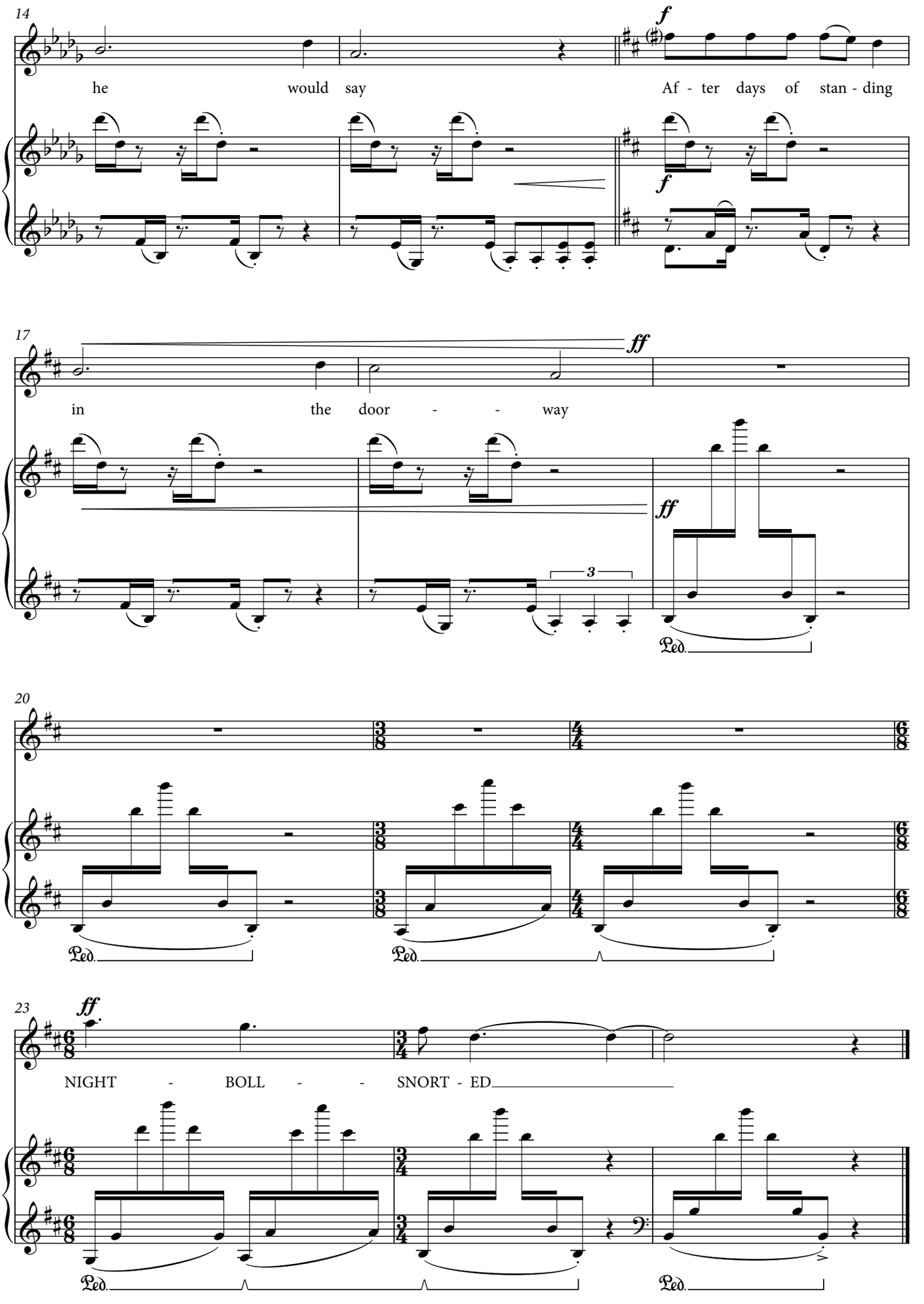
14
he would say
f
Af - ter days of stan - ding
f
17
ff
in the door - - way
ff
3
Ped.
20
Ped.
Ped.
23
ff
NIGHT - BOLL - - SNORT - ED
Ped.
Ped.

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## IX. GERYON'S WAR RECORD

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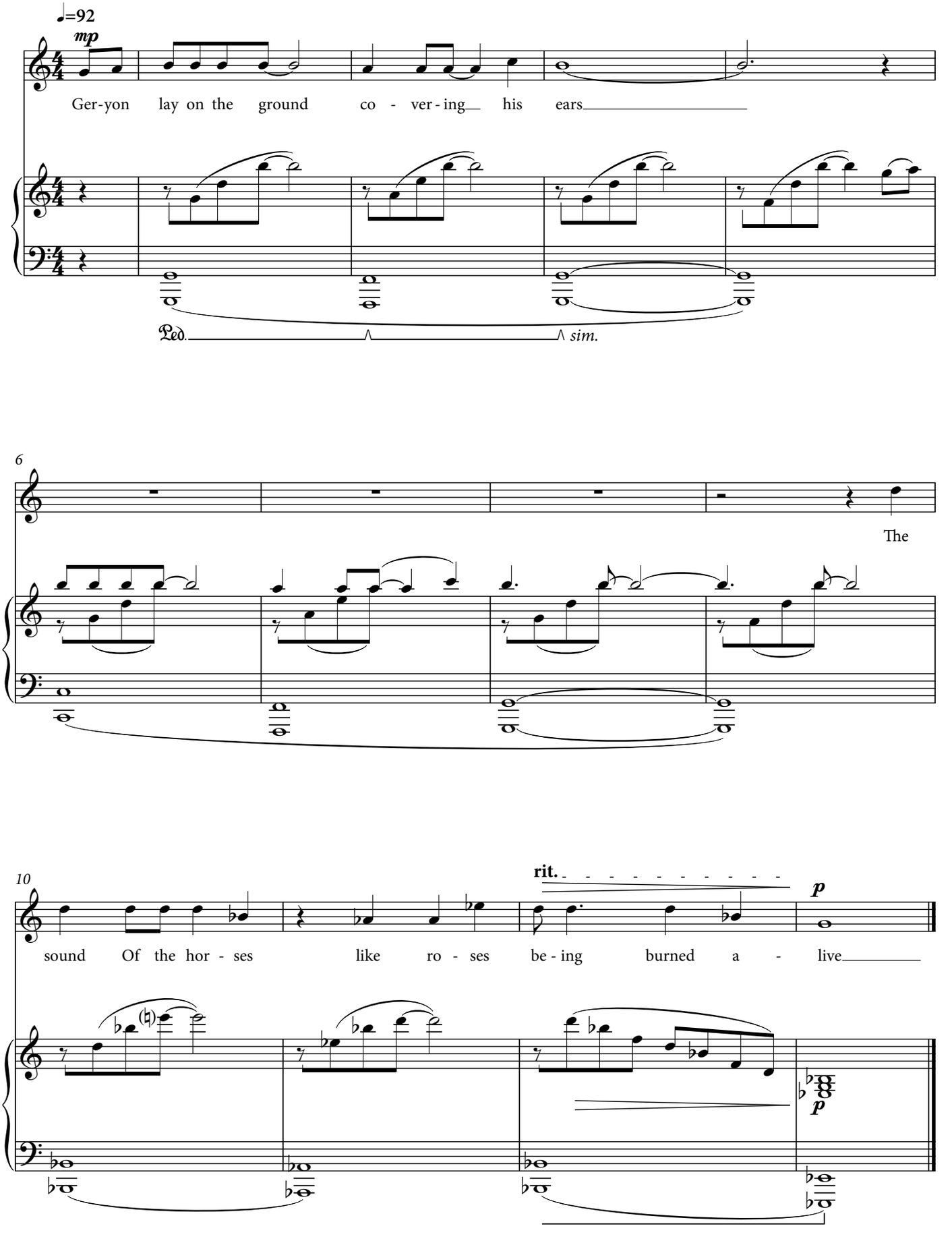


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## X. SCHOOLING

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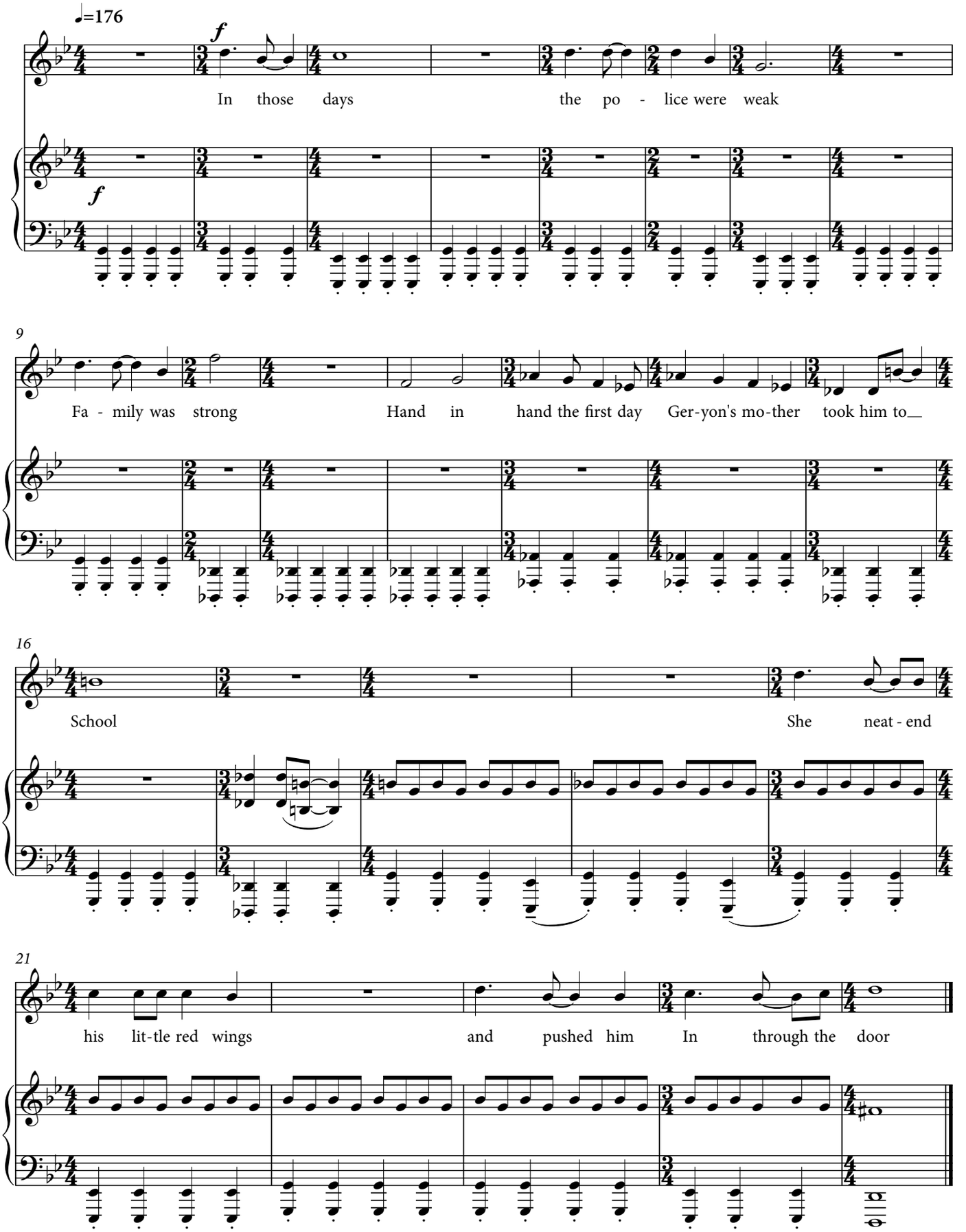


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## XI. RIGHT

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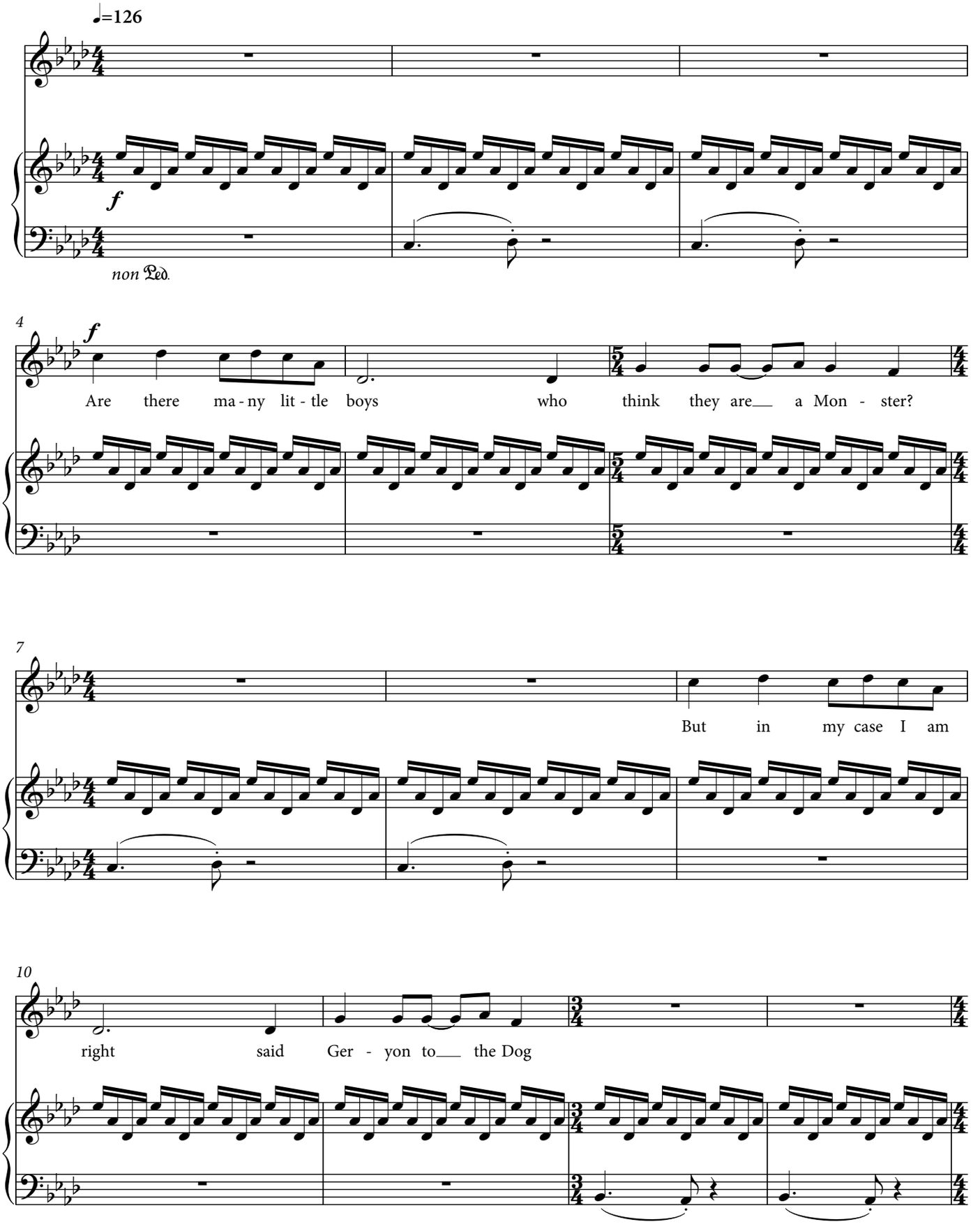


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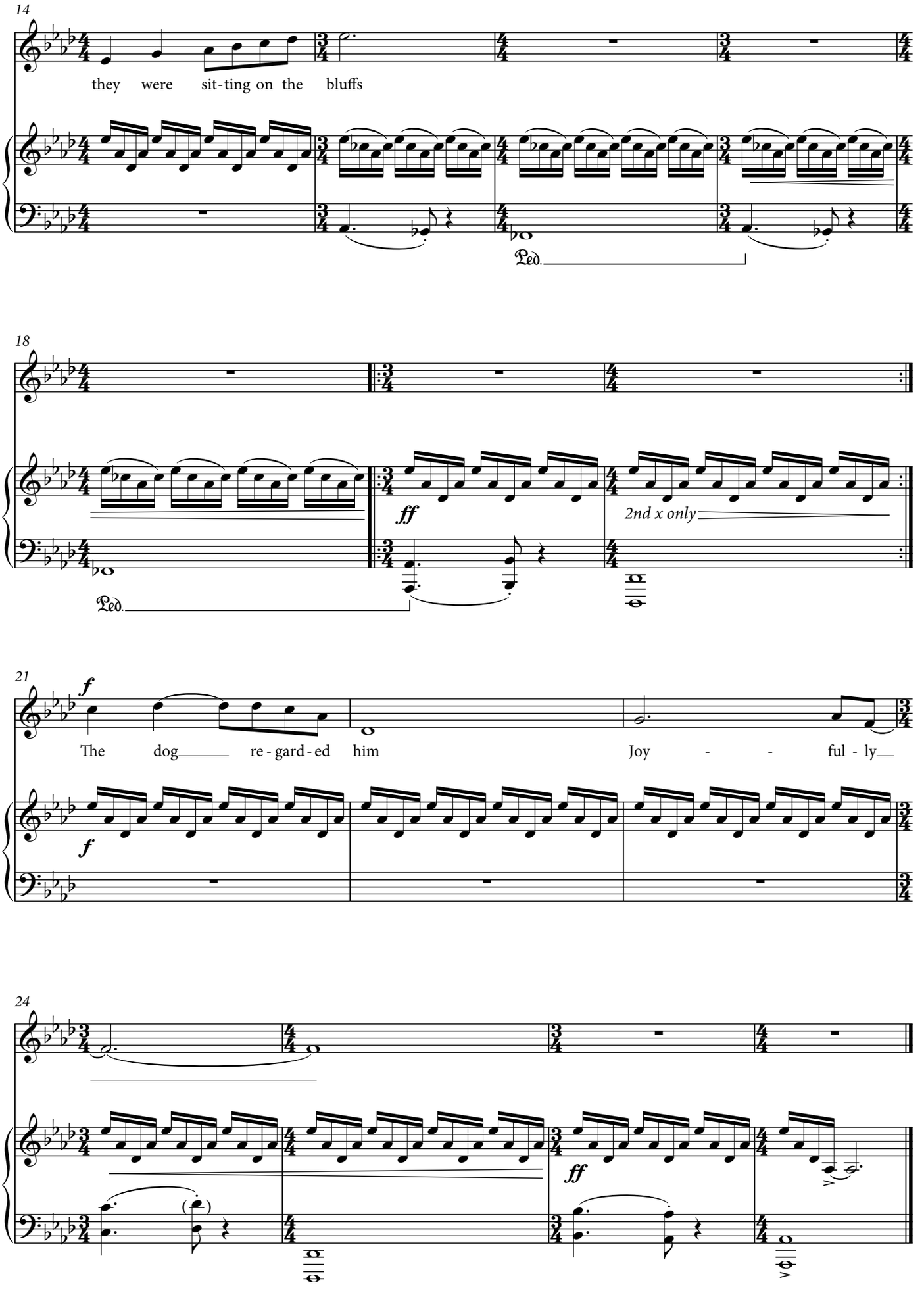
14
they were sit-ting on the bluffs
Ped.
18
ff
2nd x only
Ped.
21
f
The dog re-gard-ed him
Joy - - ful-ly
f
24
ff

# RED

## XII. WINGS

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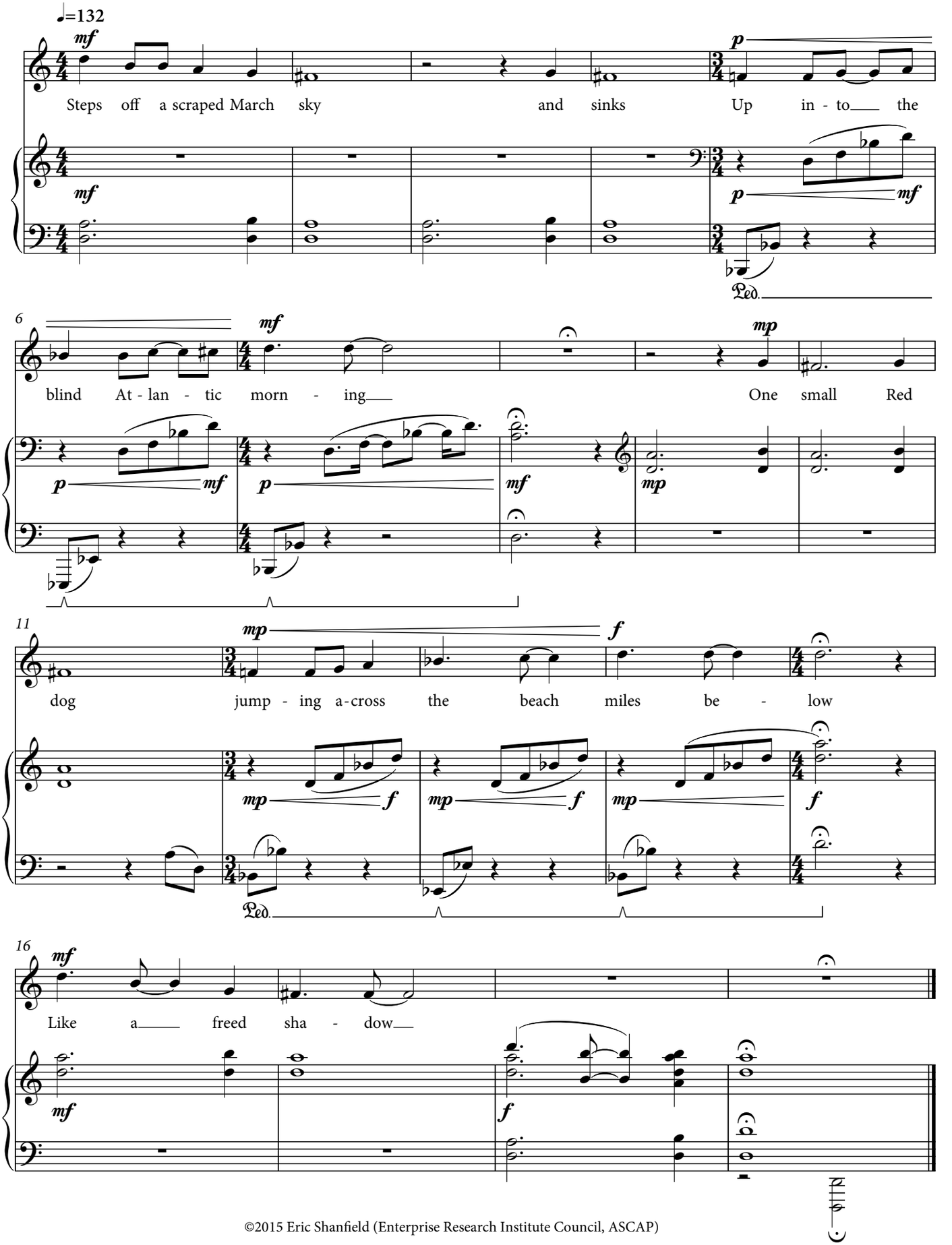


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## XIII. HERAKLES' KILLING CLUB

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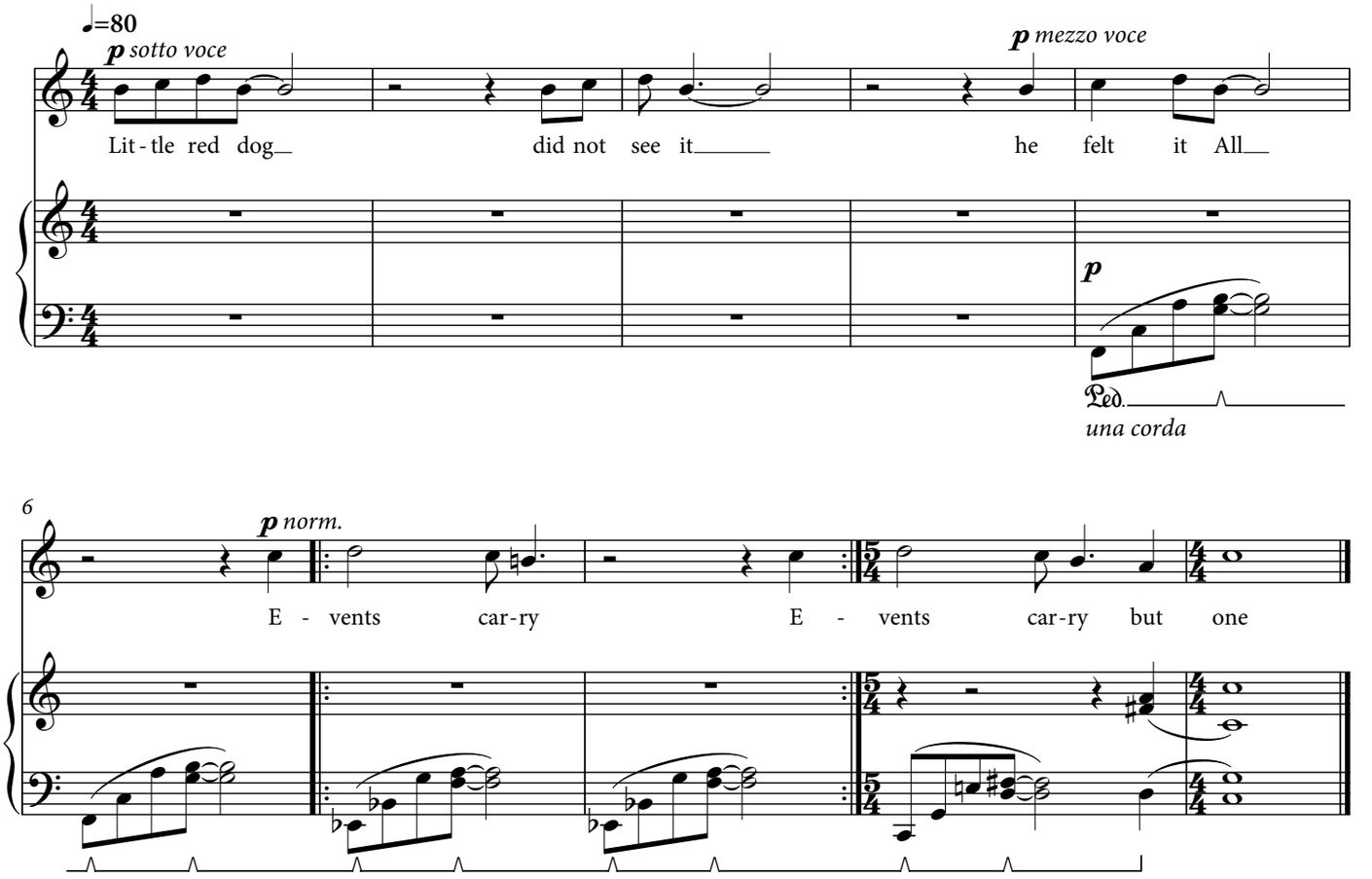


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## XIV. HERAKLES' ARROW

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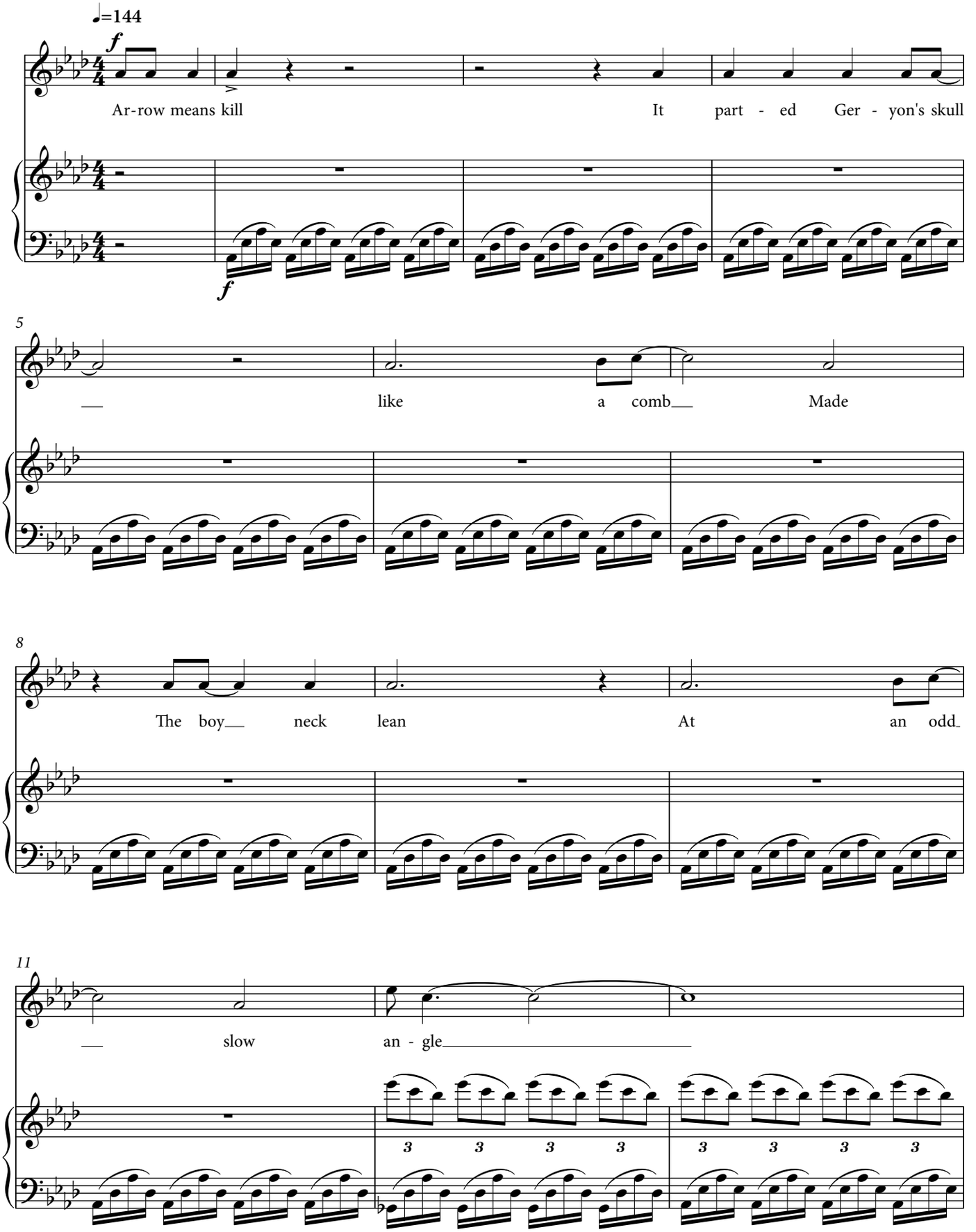


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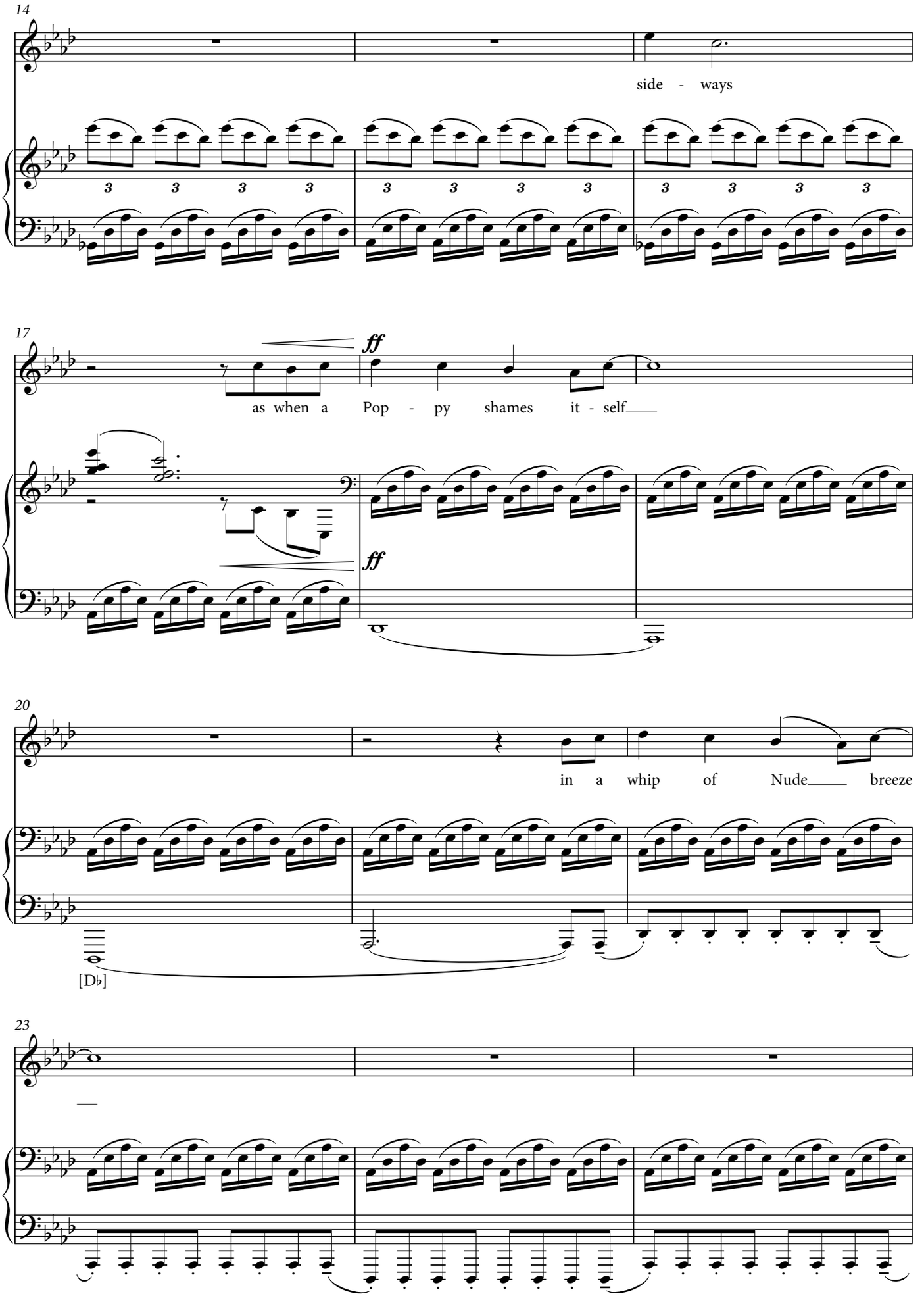
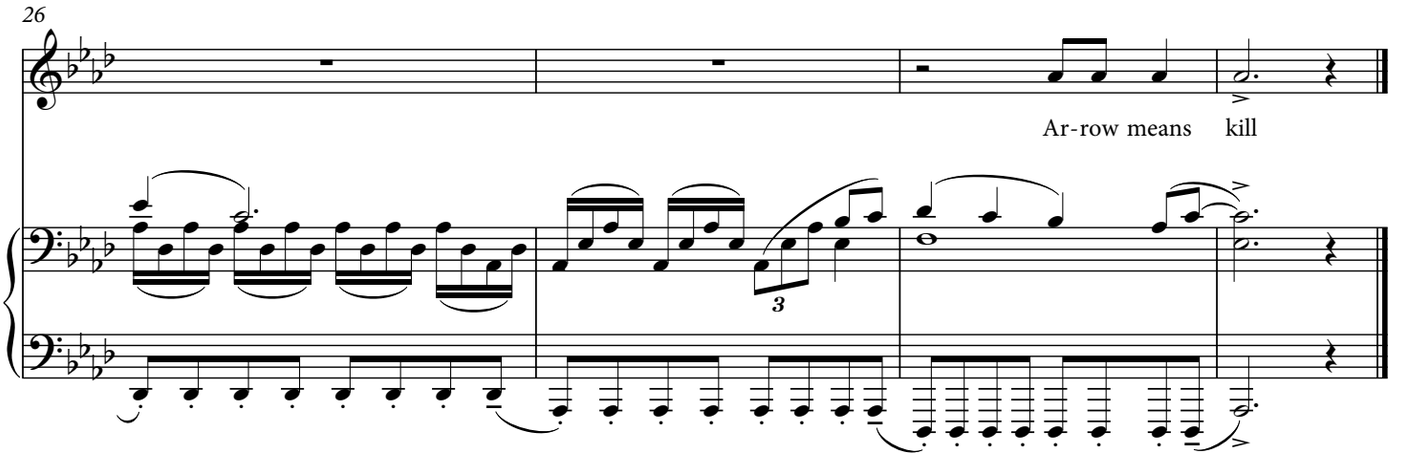

14
side - ways
17
ff
as when a Pop - py shames it - self
ff
20
in a whip of Nude breeze
[D♭]
23


26
Ar-row means kill
3

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## XV. TOTAL THINGS KNOWN ABOUT GERYON

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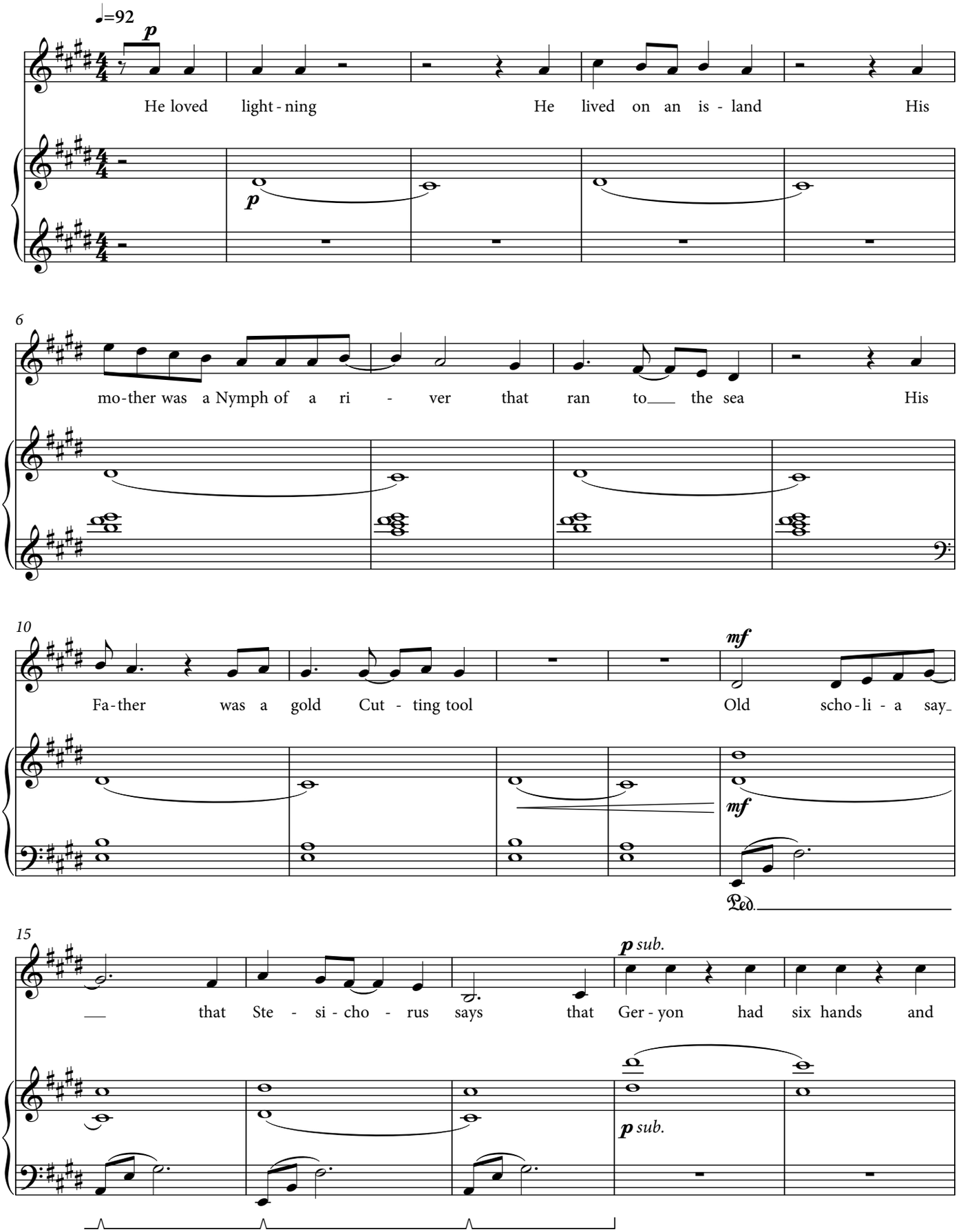


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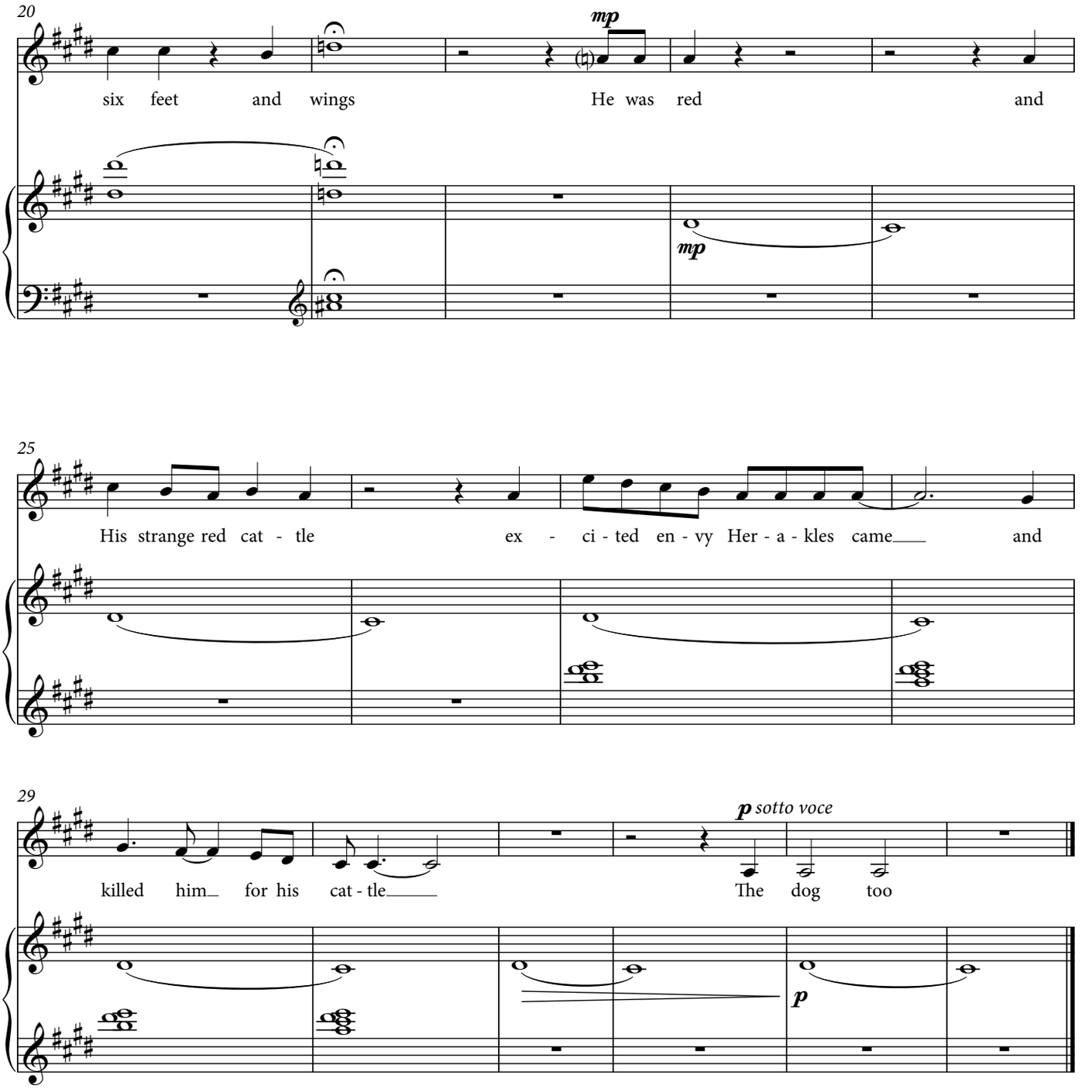
20
mp
six feet and wings He was red and
mp
25
His strange red cat - tle ex - ci - ted en - vy Her - a - kles came and
29
p sotto voce
killed him for his cat - tle The dog too
p

# RED

## XVI. GERYON'S END

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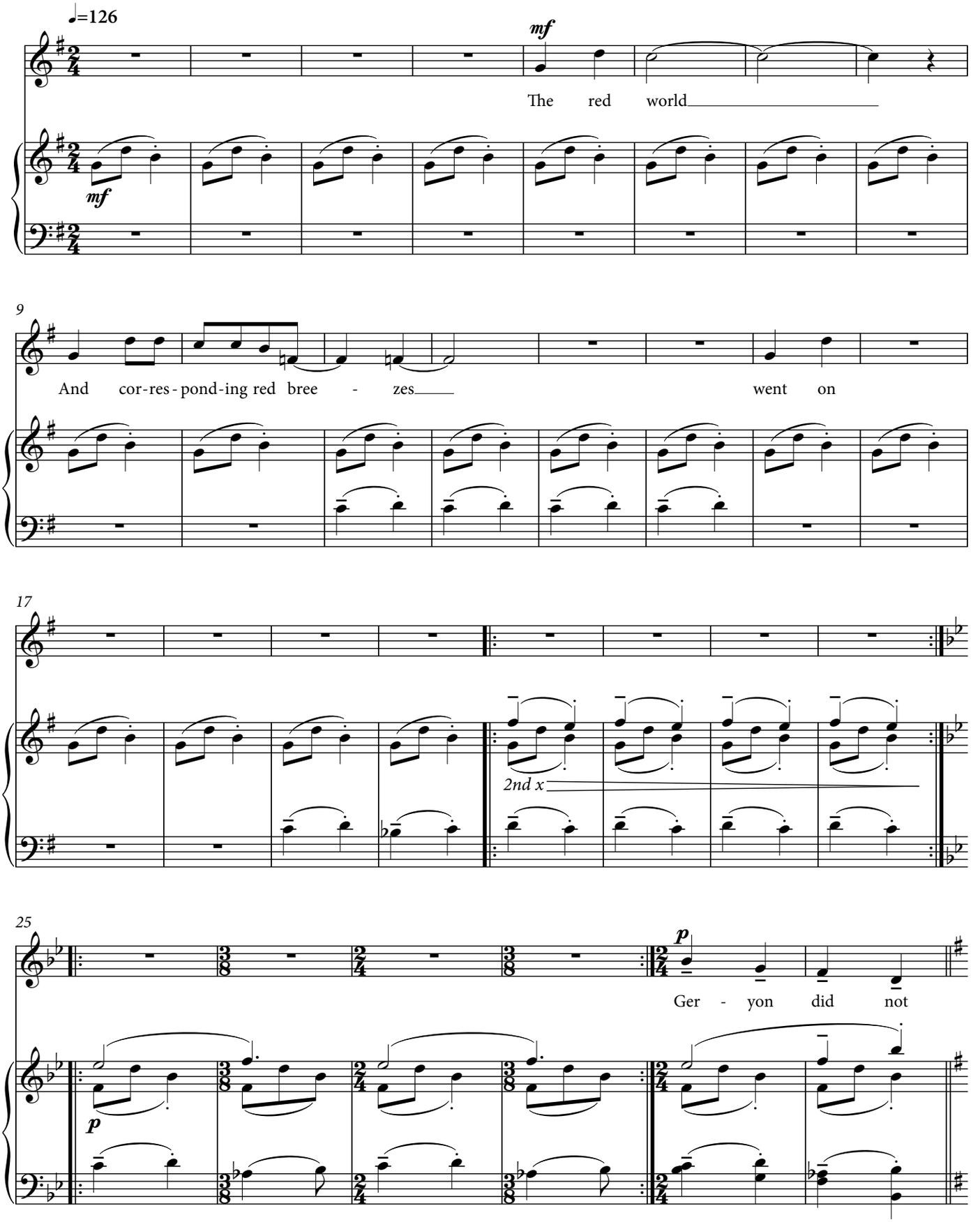


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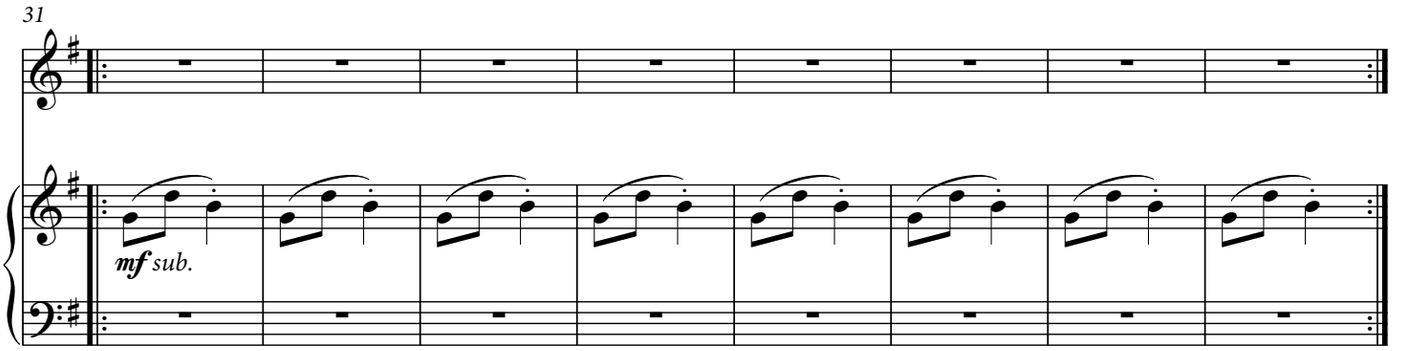


*attacca senza pausa*

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## XVII. PALINODE

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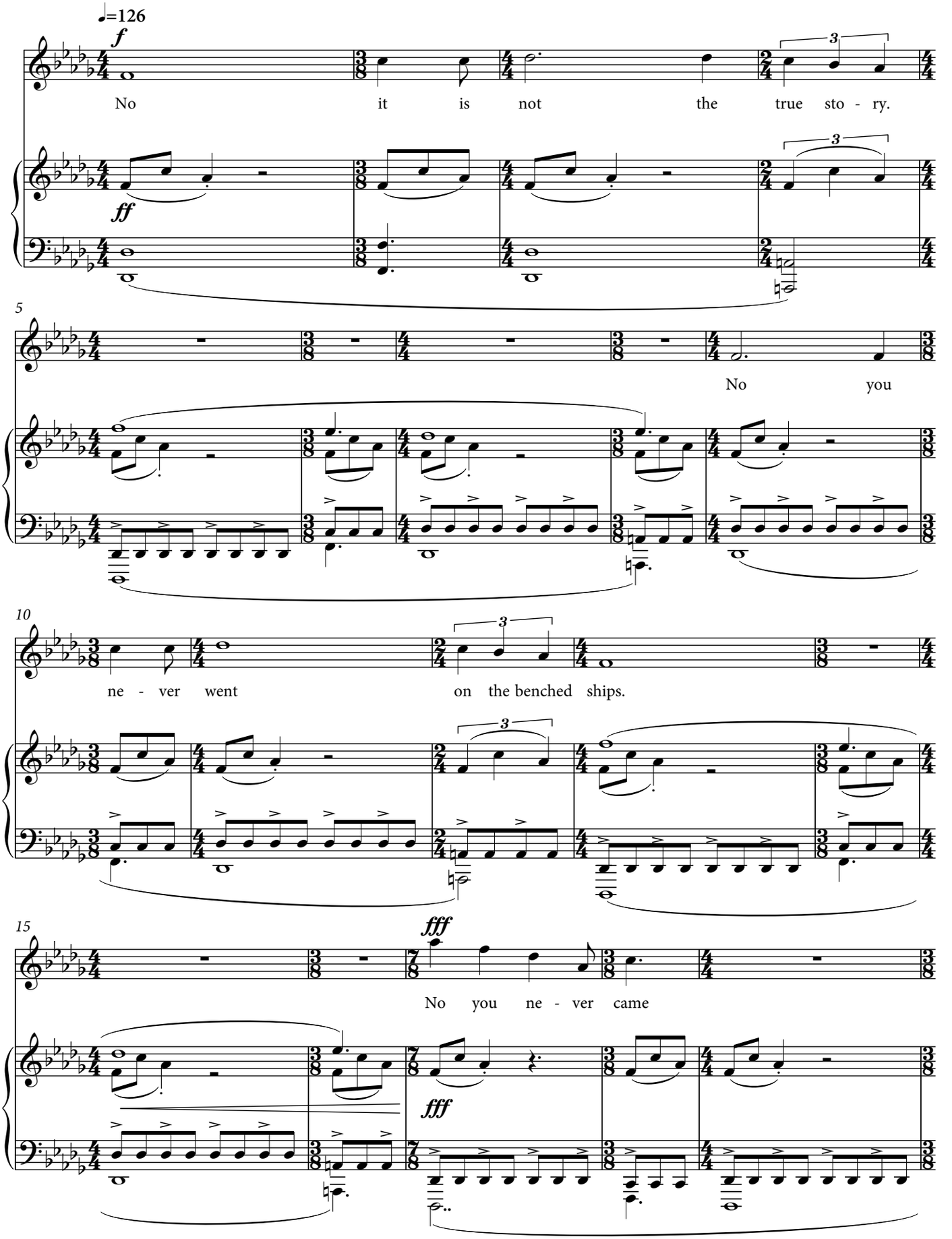


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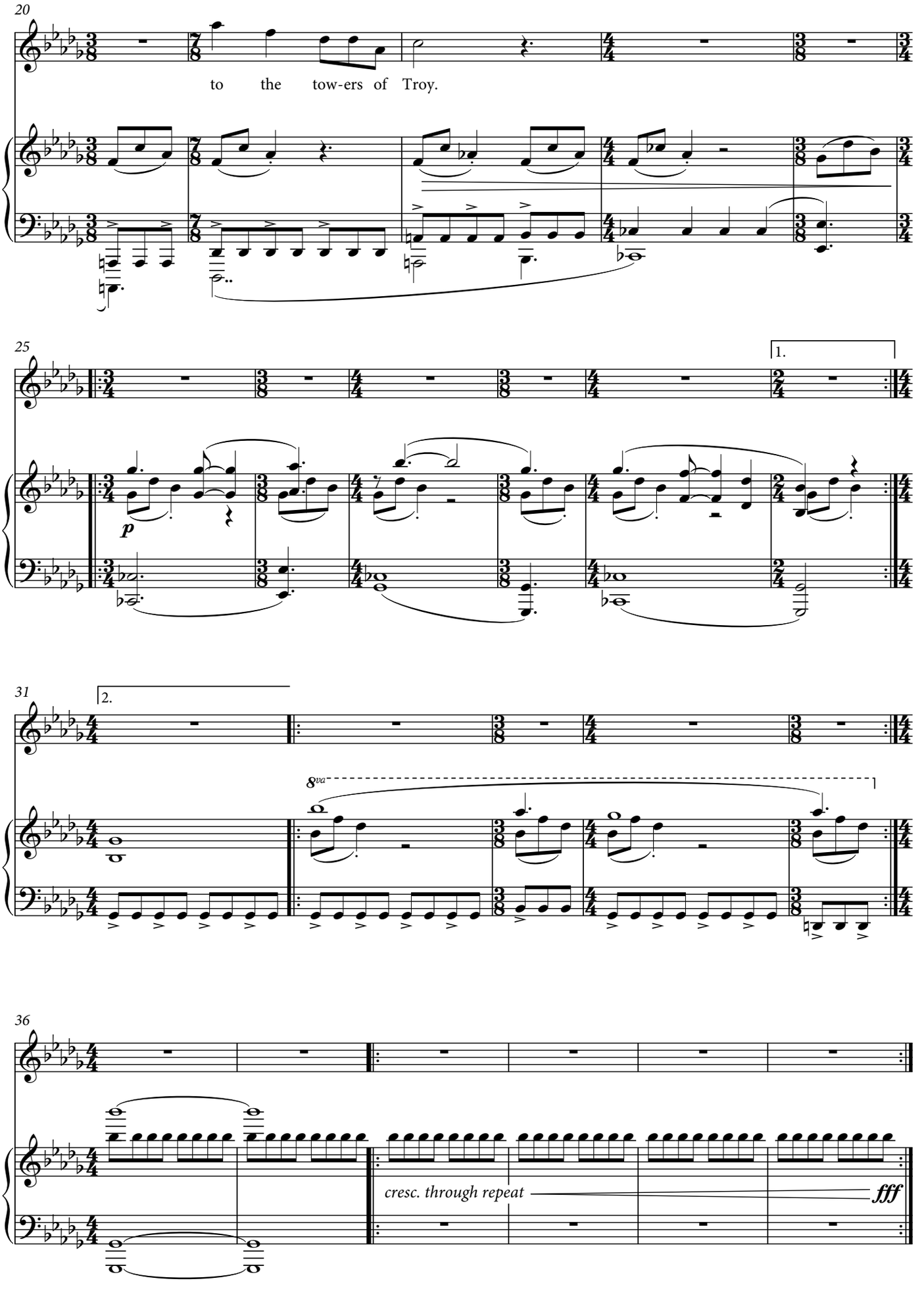
20
to the tow-ers of Troy.
25
1.
p
31
2.
8va
36
cresc. through repeat
fff