

# REASONS TO LIVE



ERIC SHANFIELD

REASONS TO LIVE

Eric Shanfield | 2007/2013-15 | 12'

stories by Amy Hempel

Soprano

Piano

*Reasons to Live* is my tribute to Steven Sondheim.

## REASONS TO LIVE

by Amy Hempel

### 1. IN A TUB

My heart—I thought it stopped. So I got in my car and headed for God. I passed two churches with cars parked in front. Then I stopped at the third because no one else had.

It was early afternoon, the middle of the week. I chose a pew in the center of the rows. Episcopal or Methodist, it didn't make any difference. It was as quiet as a church.

I thought about the feeling of the long missed beat, and the tumble of the next ones as they rushed to fill the space. I sat there—in the high brace of quiet and stained glass—and I listened.

At the back of my house I can stand in the light from the sliding glass door and look out onto the deck. The deck is planted with marguerites and succulents in red clay pots. One of the pots is empty. It is shallow and broad, and filled with water like a birdbath.

My cat takes naps in the windowbox. Her gray chin is powdered with the iridescent dust from butterfly wings. If I tap on the glass, the cat will not look up.

The sound that I make is not food.

When I was a girl I sneaked out at night. I pressed myself to hedges and fitted the shadows of trees. I went to a construction site near the lake. I took a concrete-mixing tub, slid it to the shore, and sat down inside it like a saucer. I would push off from the sand with one stolen oar and float, hearing nothing, for hours.

The birdbath is shaped like that tub.

I look at my nails in the harsh bathroom light. The scare will appear as a ripple at the base. It will take a couple of weeks to see.

I lock the door and run a tub of water.

Most of the time you don't really hear it. A pulse is a thing that you feel. Even if you are somewhat quiet. Sometimes you hear it through the pillow at night. But I know that there is a place where you can hear it even better than that.

Here is what you do. You ease yourself into a tub of water, you ease yourself down. You lie back and wait for the ripples to smooth away. Then you take a deep breath, and slide your head under, and listen for the playfulness of your heart.

### 2. IN THE ANIMAL SHELTER

Every time you see a beautiful woman, *someone* is tired of her, so the men say. And I know where they go, these women, with their tired beauty that someone doesn't want—these women who must live like the high Sierra white pine, there since before the birth of Christ, fed somehow by the alpine wind.

They reach out to the animals, day after day smoothing fur inside a cage, saying, "How is Mama's baby? Is Mama's baby lonesome?"

The women leave at the end of the day, stopping to ask an attendant, “Will they go to good homes?” And come back in a day or so, stooping to examine a one-eyed cat, asking, as though they intend to adopt, “How would I introduce my new cat to my dog?”

But there is seldom an adoption; it matters that the women have someone to leave, leaving behind the lovable creatures who would never leave them, had they once given them their hearts.

### 3. MEMOIR

Just once in my life—oh, when have I ever wanted anything just once in my life?

### 4. WEEKEND (PART II)

Dinner was a simple picnic on the porch, paper plates in laps, the only conversation a debate as to which was the better grip for throwing shoes.

After dinner, the horseshoes were handed out, the post pounded in, the rules reviewed with a [new rule added due to falling-down shorts. The] new rule: Have attire.

The women smoked on the porch, the smoke repelling mosquitoes, and the men and children played on even after dusk when it got so dark that a candle was rigged to balance on top of the post, and was knocked off and blown out by every single almost-ringer.

Then the children went to bed, or at least went upstairs, and the men joined the women for a cigarette on the porch, absently picking ticks engorged like grapes off the sleeping dogs. And when the men kissed the women good night, and their weekend whiskers scratched the women’s cheeks, the women did not think *shave*, they thought: *stay*.

# REASONS TO LIVE

## 1. IN A TUB

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

*f*  $\text{♩} = 126$

Soprano

My heart - I thought it stopped. So I got in my car and head-ed for God. I

Piano

5

Sop.

passed two church-es\_ with cars parked in front. Then I stopped at the

Pno.

*Red.*

9

Sop.

*mf*

third be - cause no one else\_ had. It was ear - ly af - ter - noon, the

Pno.

*mf*

*Red. by measure*

13

Sop.

mid-dle of the week.---

Pno.

6/4

17

Sop.

I chose a

Pno.

*f*

*f*

21

Sop.

pew in the cen-ter of the rows. E - pis - co - pal or Me-tho-dist it di - dn't make a - ny

Pno.

3

3

25

Sop. *diff-erence. It was qui-et as a church.*

Pno.

*Red.*

29

Sop.

Pno.

34

Sop. *I thought a - bout.*

Pno.

*f*

39

Sop.

— the fee - - ling of the long - missed

Pno.

44

Sop.

beat, and the tum - ble of the

Pno.

(r.h.)

48

Sop.


next ones as they rushed to fill the space.

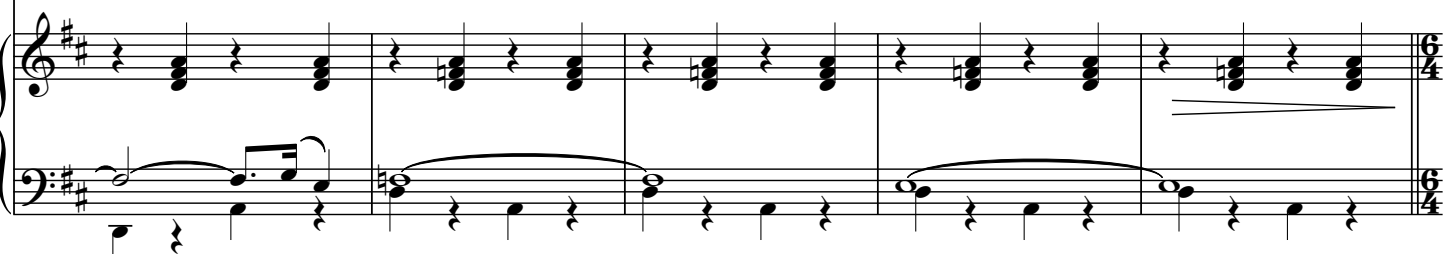
Pno.

(l.h.)

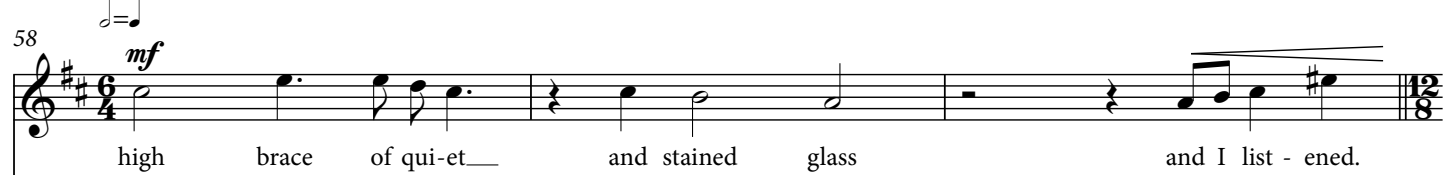



53


Sop. 

Pno. 


58 *mf*


Sop. 

Pno. *mf* 

*Ped.* 

61 *f*

Sop. 

Pno. *f* 


*very light pedaling*


63 *mp*

Sop.   
At the back of my house I can stand

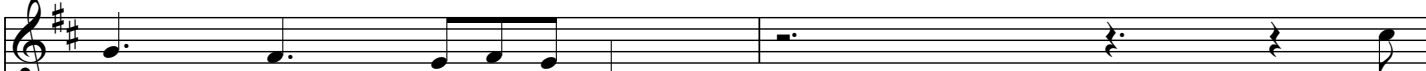
Pno. *mp* 

65

Sop.   
in the light from the sliding glass door and

Pno. 

67

Sop.   
look out on to the deck. The

Pno. 

69

Sop. deck is plant - ed with mar - gue - rites \_\_\_\_\_ and

Pno.

*Red.* \_\_\_\_\_ *sim.*

71

Sop. suc-cu - lents\_ in red clay pots.

Pno.

\_\_\_\_\_ *non Red.*

73

Sop. \_\_\_\_\_ One of the pots is emp - ty. \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

75

Sop. It is shal-low and broad, \_\_\_\_\_ and filled with wa - ter \_\_\_\_\_ like a

Pno.

77

Sop. bird - - bath.

Pno.

79

Sop.

Pno. *mf*

Ped. *sim.*

82 *mf*

Sop. My cat takes naps in the win - dow - box.

Pno.

85

Sop. Her gray chin is pow-dered with the ir - i - des - cent dust from but-ter-fly wings.

Pno.

88

Sop. If I tap on the glass the cat will not wake

Pno.

91

Sop. up. The sound I make is not food.

Pno.

93

Sop. *mp* When I was a girl I sneaked out at night.

Pno. *mp*

96

Sop. I pressed my-self\_ to hed - ges\_ and fit-ted the sha - dows\_ of

Pno.

99 *mf* *mf*

Sop. trees. I went to a con-struct-ion site

Pno. *mf*

102

Sop. near the lake. I took a concrete mixing-tub, slid it to the shore, and sat

Pno.

105 *f*

Sop. down inside it like a saucer. I would push off from the

Pno. *f*

*Red.*  $\wedge$  *sim.*

REASONS TO LIVE - 1. IN A TUB

107 

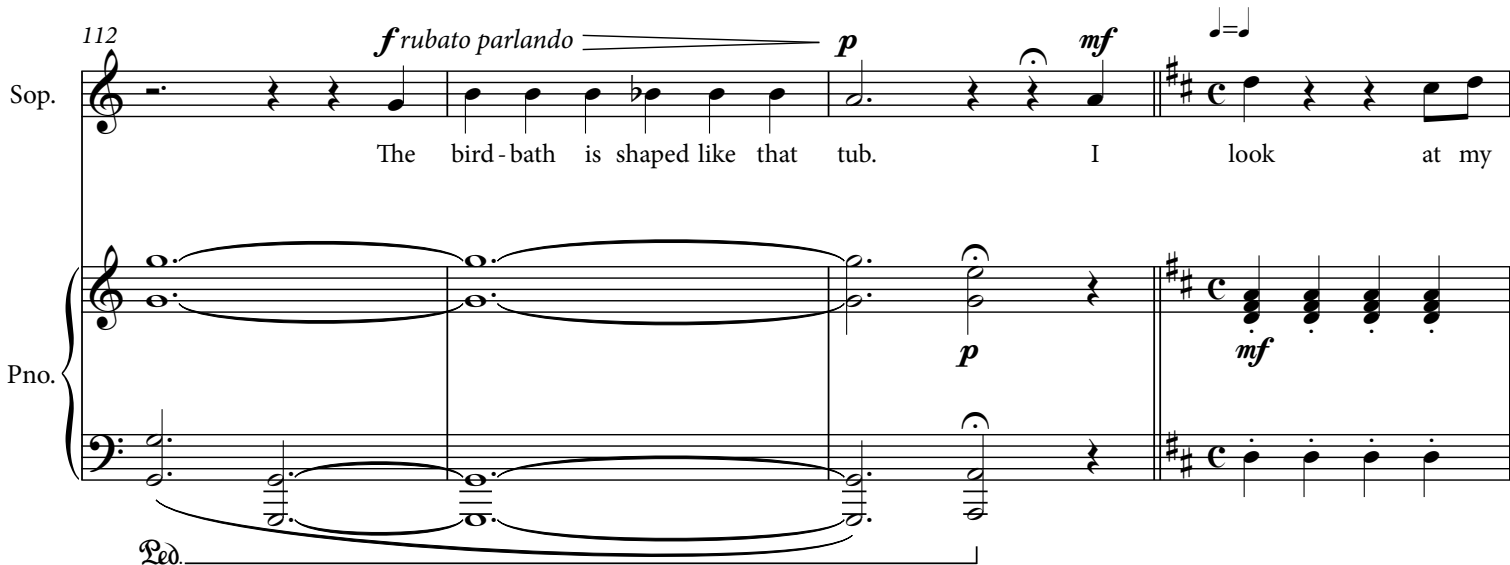
Sop. sand with one sto - len oar and

Pno.

109 

Sop. float, hear-ing no - thing, \_\_\_\_\_ for hours.

Pno.

112 *f rubato parlando* 

Sop. The bird-bath is shaped like that tub. I look at my

Pno. *p* *mf*

*Red.*





116

Sop.  Sop. nails in the harsh bath-room light. The scare will ap-pear as a rip-ple at the base.

Pno. 

120

Sop.  Sop. It will take a cou-ple of weeks to see.

Pno. 

*Red.*

124

Sop. 

Pno. 

129

Sop. *f*

I lock the door

Pno.

134

Sop.

— and run a tub of wa - ter.

Pno.

139

Sop.

Pno. (r.h.)

143

Sop.

Pno.

147

Sop.

Pno.

(l.h.)

151

Sop.

*mf*

Most of the time you don't real - ly hear it. A pulse is a thing that you feel.

Pno.

*mf*

155

Sop. *mf*

E - ven if you are some-what qui-et. Some-times you hear it

Pno. *ff* *mf sub.*

159

Sop. *f*

through the pil - low at night.

Pno. *f*

163

Sop.

Pno.

168

Sop.

But I know that there is a

Pno.

173

Sop.

place where you can hear it e - ven bet - ter than that.

Pno.

*r.h.*

178

(♩=♩)

Sop.

Pno.

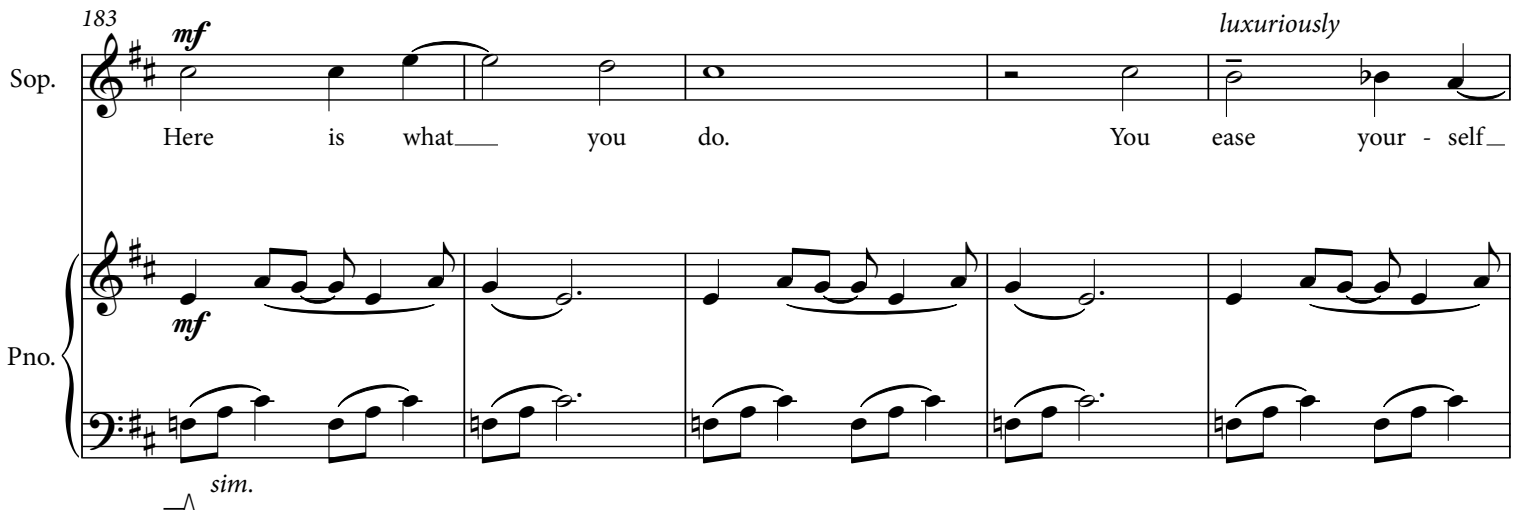
*Ped.*

183 *mf* *luxuriously*

Sop. Here is what — you do. You ease your - self —

Pno. *mf*

*sim.*



188

Sop. — in - to a tub of wa - ter, you

Pno.

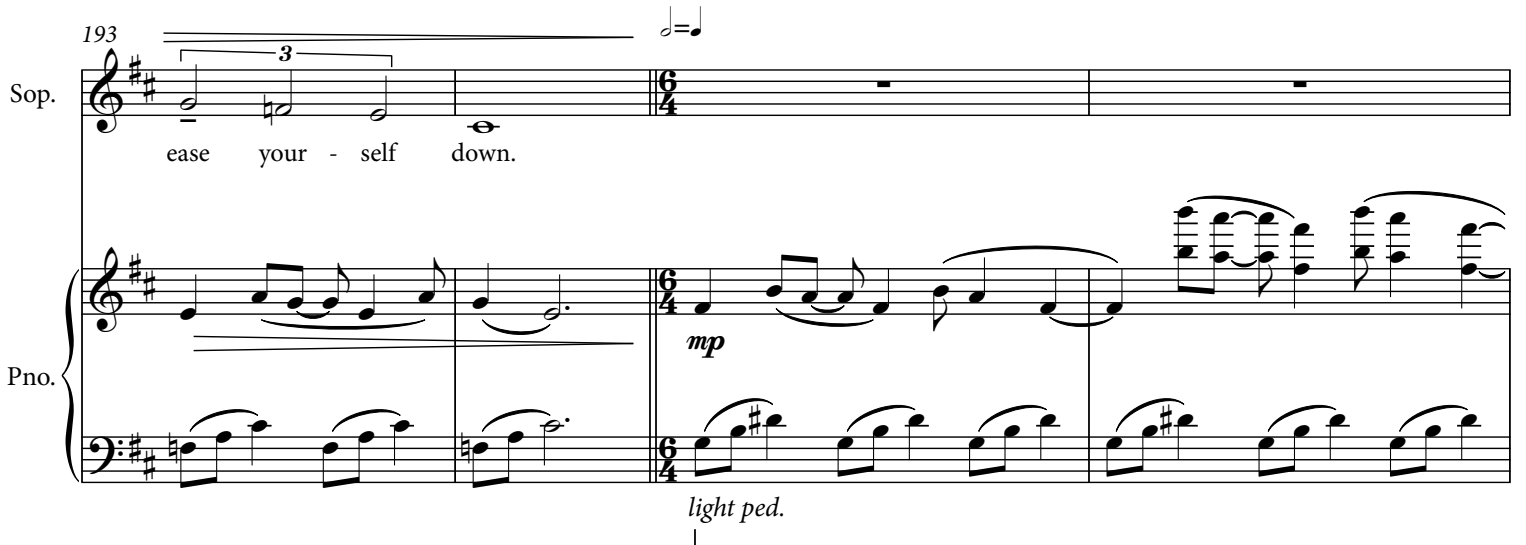


193

Sop. ease your - self down.

Pno. *mp*

*light ped.*



197 *mp*

Sop. You lie back and wait for the rip-ples\_\_\_\_\_ to smooth a - way.\_

Pno.

200 *mf*

Sop. Then you take\_ a deep breath, and slide your head un - der,

Pno. *mf*

205

Sop. and lis-ten for\_ the play-ful-ness\_\_\_\_\_ of your heart.

Pno.

# REASONS TO LIVE

## 2. IN THE ANIMAL SHELTER

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

**♩=144**  
*mf*

Soprano

Ev - ery time you see a beau - ti - ful wo - man, \_\_\_\_\_ some - one is

Piano

*mf*

*Red.*

6

Sop.

ti - red of her, so the men say.

Pno.

**♩=176**  
*f*

11

Sop.

And I know where they go, these

Pno.

*f*



17

Sop. *wo - men, \_\_\_\_\_ with their ti - red*

Pno.

23

Sop. *beau - ty that some-one doesn't want - -*

Pno.

*Red.*

29

Sop. *these wo - men who must live like the Si - er - ra white*

Pno.

*ff*

35

Sop. pine, there since be - fore the

Pno.

41

Sop. birth of Christ, fed some-how by the al - pine wind.

Pno.

46

Sop.

Pno.

51 *mp*

Sop. They reach out to the an - i - mals, day af - ter day smooth-ing

Pno. *mp*

55

Sop. fur in-side a cage, say-ing "How is Ma - ma's ba - by? Is Ma - ma's ba - by

Pno.

60

Sop. lone- some?"

Pno.

64  $\text{♩} = 144$  tempo one *mf*

Sop. *mf*  
The wo - men leave at the end of the day, stop - ping to ask an at -

Pno. *mf*  
*Ped.*

70  $\text{♩} = 176$  tempo two *f*

Sop. *f*  
ten-dant, "Will they go to good homes?"

Pno. *f*

76 *f*

Sop. *f*  
And come back in a day or so stoop ing to ex - a - mine a

Pno.

82

Sop.   
one - eyed cat,

Pno. 

88

Sop.   
ask - ing, as though they in - ten - ded\_ to\_ a - dopt,

Pno. 

94

Sop.   
"How would I in - tro - duce my new cat to my

Pno. 

100

Sop. *dog?"* *fff* But there is sel - dom

Pno. *fff*

106

Sop. an a - dop - tion;

Pno.

111

Sop.

Pno. *p sub.* *ff*

116  $\text{♩} = \text{♩}$

Sop. *mf*  
it mat-ters that the wo-men have some-one to leave, leav-ing be -

Pno. *mf*

120

Sop.  
hind the love - some crea - tures, who would ne - ver leave them, had

Pno.

124

Sop.  
they once gi - ven them their hearts.

Pno. *f*

# REASONS TO LIVE

## 3. MEMOIR

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

Soprano

$\text{♩} = 100$  *f*  $\text{♩} = 126$  *mp*

Just once in my life - - Oh,

Piano

4

Sop.

when have I e-ver want-ed a-ny-thing just once in my life?

*dolce*

*mp* *mf*

Pno.



# REASONS TO LIVE

## 4. WEEKEND (PART II)

Amy Hempel

Eric Shanfield

♩.=69

**rit.** . . . . .

Soprano

Piano

*ff*

*ped.*

**a tempo**

3

*mp*

Sop.

Din - ner was a sim - ple pic - nic on the porch,

Pno.

*mp*

*sim.*

5

Sop.

pa - per plates in laps, the on - ly con - ver - sa - tion a de -


Pno.

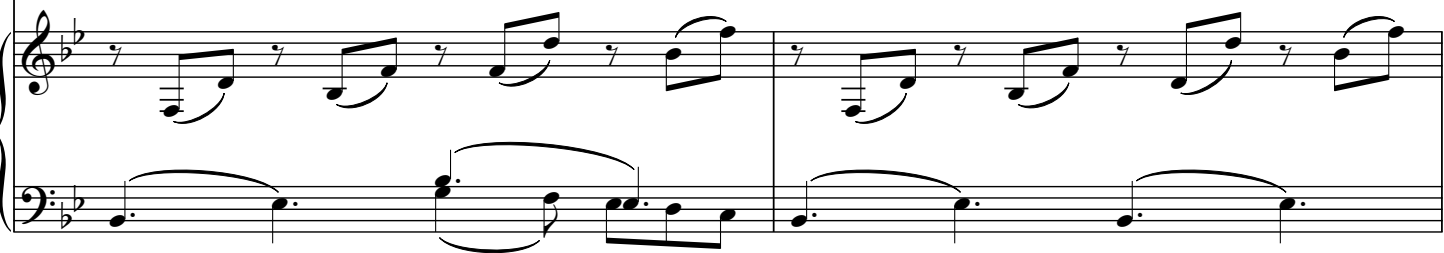
7

Sop.    
bate as to which was the bet - ter grip for throw - ing shoes.

Pno. 

10

Sop.    
Af - ter din - ner the horse - shoes were hand - ed out, the post pound - ed

Pno. 

12

Sop.    
in, the rules re-viewed, with a new rule: have at - tire. The

Pno. 

14

Sop. *mf*

wo - men smoked on the porch, the smoke re - pel - ling mos -

Pno.

16

Sop. *mf*

qui - toes, \_\_\_\_\_ and the men and child - ren played on

Pno. *mf*

18

Sop. *mf*

e - ven af - ter dusk, when it got so dark that a

Pno. *mf*

20

Sop.

can - dle was rigged to ba - lance on top of the post, and was knocked off and blown out by

Pno.

22

Sop.

ev - ery sin - gle al - most ring - er.

Pno.

*p*

25

Sop.

*p rubato espress.*

Then the child - ren went to bed, or at least went up - stairs, and the

Pno.

27

Sop.

men joined the wo - men for a ci - ga - rette on the porch,

Pno.

29

Sop.

*p*

ab - sent - ly pick - ing ticks en - gorged like grapes off the sleep - ing dogs. And

Pno.

31

Sop.

*mf*

when the men kissed the wo - men good - night, and their week - end whis - kers

Pno.

33

Sop. *mp*  
scratched the wo - men's cheeks, the wom - en did not think

Pno.

35

Sop. *p*  
shave, they thought: stay.

Pno. *p*

Ped.

37

Sop.

Pno. *ff* *p*