



# MUSIC THERAPY

*Vol. 1*

*A New Musical*

*“Don’t fall out of love at the same time.”*

*Book & score built from an original song catalog · Full script*

## A NOTE ON THIS DRAFT

This is the **book** — dialogue, stage directions, and the architecture of the evening. The songs themselves appear as **SONG SLOTS**: a boxed cue naming the song, who performs it, and what it must accomplish at that moment. Recorded/transcribed lyrics for the existing catalog live in `lyrics/`; the three new songs written for the show are in `manuscript/new-songs/new-song-drafts.md`. Where a song is reprised or reduced, the slot says so.

## THIS WORKS AS A SERIAL

The frame — a therapy group where each member writes a song and the others back them — is a **format, not a fixed text**. It can run like a serial: **swap out the songs, the stories, the styles, and the cast every night** and the structure still holds. The skeleton (check-in > homework songs > breakouts > one member's detonation > collective catharsis > hope) carries any material you pour into it.

That makes **guest appearances easy**: a visiting artist can drop into the circle as a one-night "new member" and play a popular song or a cover as their share — fully diegetic, because in this world *everyone* takes a turn. Different city, different guest, different setlist, same show. *Vol. 1 below is one fully-realized instance of the format.*

## THE MECHANISM (how the group makes the music)

The show is **the therapy session** — but not one night. It compresses an **eight-week cycle** (title cards mark the weeks). The rules of Sam's group:

1. **Your song is homework.** When you're ready, you don't just talk — you *write* your song and bring it in. You are the **LEAD** on your own song.
2. **Everyone else learns the supporting parts at home.** Each member is a **SUPPORTING PLAYER** on everyone else's song. You take the sheet music home, you come back having learned your part. By the time a song "premieres" in group, it's rehearsed — that's why it sounds like a real number and not a first read.
3. **Breakouts.** Mid-session, Sam pulls members aside one at a time for private check-ins. While he does, **the rest split into small clusters** — two or three around the piano, a pair in the corner with a guitar — running parts, marking harmonies, passing sheet music. The room is always quietly working. When Sam finishes a one-on-one, the breakout groups reconverge and someone hands the lead their finished chart: "*We worked it. It's ready when you are.*"

So the staging engine is: **lead + ensemble, homework + breakout, week over week**. Chairs become drums; a coat-rack becomes a mic stand; the room scores itself — but it scores itself because they've been *practicing*.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**DR. SAM HALE** — 50s. The facilitator. Dry, kind, unhurried. Runs the group with a clipboard he never really looks at. Has been doing this for years, for reasons he keeps off the table. *Act 2 reveal.*

**JUNE** — 30s/40s. The joyful survivor. Came out the far side of something that should have ended her and decided to be loud about being alive. The group's heart.

**MARCUS** — 30s/40s. The comedian. Will fill any silence with a bit. Would rather be a story than a person. The crack shows late.

**WALT & CAROL** — 60s/70s. Married thirty-odd years. Bicker as a love language. The two who already know the secret the others are looking for.

**TANYA** — 30s. Razor wit, zero patience for pity. Her jokes are armor bolted over something that taught her not to trust kindness.

**RAY** — 40s/50s. Quiet, gentle, one foot out the door. Self-medicates an old loss and calls it "fine."

**ELI** — 20s/30s. Watchful, evasive, flinching. Something in his perception has come loose. **Will not write his song.** (*The Act 1 engine.*)

**MAYA** — 30s/40s. Barely speaks in Act 1. Holds a coat in her lap the whole time like it's a child. (*The Act 2 floor — and then the climb.*)

*The eight non-facilitator members are also the band. They play, sing, and "perform" each other's songs.*

## THE BAND CHART — who leads, who supports

Each member **leads** their own song(s) and is a **supporting player** on the others'. Instruments are doubled and traded; this is a chart, not a cage.

Member	Instrument / role	LEADS	Notable support
<b>JUNE</b>	Lead vocals, tambourine, sheer drive	<i>Messy and Alive; King of the Asphalt</i>	Backing vocals + hype on everything; runs the Act 2 breakouts
<b>MARCUS</b>	Rhythm guitar, MC, kazoo (unfortunately)	<i>Who Let Rob Lowe Go?; Back When Everything Meant Something</i>	Comic emcee; counts in the up-tempo numbers
<b>WALT</b>	Upright bass, harmonica	<i>You're The Worst &amp; Don't Fall Out of Love</i> (w/ Carol)	The low end on every number
<b>CAROL</b>	Piano, harmony	<i>You're The Worst &amp; Don't Fall Out of Love</i> (w/ Walt)	House pianist; teaches the breakout parts
<b>TANYA</b>	Percussion (cajón/snare), attitude	<i>Hard No, Zero Stars; The View from the Top</i>	The backbeat; vocal edge in the cage-chorus
<b>RAY</b>	Lead guitar — <b>the group's quiet backbone</b>	<i>The Words I Swallowed</i>	Plays on nearly every song; the accompanist who hides in the support role until Act 2

Member	Instrument / role	LEADS	Notable support
<b>ELI</b>	Keys / synth textures, found-sound	<i>Call the Time Cops</i>	The strange colors; absent/erratic early, steadier after he's "located"
<b>MAYA</b>	<i>(none in Act 1 — deliberate)</i>	<i>If You Can Make It Thru the Day; One More Day; Two of Us (w/ Eli)</i>	<b>Never picks up an instrument until Act 2</b> — her joining the band IS her arc
<b>SAM</b>	<i>(facilitator — stays out of the band)</i>	<i>The Empty Chair</i>	Sits <i>out</i> of the music until he sits <i>in</i> the chair (Scene 12)

**Maya and Sam are the two who don't play** — and the show's turn is each of them finally picking up a part. Track it like a clock.

## SETTING

A **high school band room, after hours**. Tiered risers, a wall of instrument lockers, a forest of music stands. Everything's already here — a battered upright piano, a drum kit, guitars on hooks, a string bass in the corner, a glockenspiel nobody admits to loving. Folding chairs dragged down off the risers into a loose circle on the floor. Sam's old percolator gurgles on the band director's desk at dramatic moments. A row of **glass-windowed practice rooms** lines one wall — this is where the breakout groups go; we can see them working through the glass while the main scene plays. A clock above the whiteboard reads a little after eight. One window to the student parking lot.

There is always **one empty chair** in the circle. Nobody comments on it.

**Time:** The present. Tuesday nights, after the building's gone dark. *(Sam rents the room from the district for a song — the band teacher's an old friend.)*

## PRODUCTION SCALE (flexible — design to budget)

- **Set is dead simple by default.** The whole show can play on the **raw back wall of the stage** — work lights, the band-room chairs and instruments, nothing more. A black-box company can mount this. - **Or go elaborate: a two-story set** — the school band room on the deck, and a **second, ethereal plane above (or below)** where **dancers** embody what the songs are reaching toward — the memory, the ICU, the timeline Eli's lost in, the cage Tanya escaped. The realistic room below, the felt world above. Scale the dance/ensemble to budget. - **Costume changes flex with the calendar.** The "8-week cycle" is a dial, not a law — **compress or expand the number of weeks** to reduce costume changes and quick-change load. Fewer weeks = fewer looks; the arc survives either way.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

## ACT ONE — "Checking In"

1. **When Can We Start This Meeting?** — Company 2. **Messy and Alive** — June 3. **You're The Worst** — Walt & Carol 4. **Who Let Rob Lowe Go? / Lowe Expectations** — Marcus & Company 5. **Hard No, Zero Stars** — Tanya 6. **The Bourbon Brings Me Back** — Ray 7. **Call the Time Cops (This Is Not My Timeline)** — Eli & Company 8. **What If We All Feel This** — Company (*Act 1 Finale*)

## ACT TWO — "Breakthrough"

9. **If You Can Make It Thru the Day** — Maya 10. **The Words I Swallowed** — Ray 11. **The View from the Top** — Tanya & Company 12. **The Empty Chair** — Sam (*new*) 13. **Don't Fall Out of Love at the Same Time** — Walt & Carol 14. **Back When Everything Meant Something** — Marcus 15. **Two of Us at the Bottom** — Maya & Eli (*new*) 16. **King of the Asphalt / Open Road Anthem** — June & Company 17. **One More Day (The Vow)** — Maya & Company (*new reprise*) 18. **What If We All Feel This (Reprise) / Final Night of the Sisterhood** — Company (*Finale*) 19. **This Is My Friday / Messy and Alive (Reprise)** — Company (*Bows*)

# ACT ONE

## Scene 1 — "Checking In"

*Lights up on the empty room, the urn gurgling. The clock reads 8:04. SAM enters with the clipboard, flips the lights to full, and sets out the chairs — counting them under his breath. He sets out nine. He looks at the ninth a beat too long, then leaves it.*

*One by one, the members arrive — each with a private piece of business: JUNE bursts in mid-laugh at her own phone; MARCUS holds the door and announces each arrival like a boxing ring; TANYA takes the chair nearest the exit; RAY slips in last and quietest; WALT and CAROL arrive arguing about whether they're late (they are not); ELI lingers in the doorway as if checking the room is real; MAYA is already seated when the lights come up, coat in her lap — we did not see her come in.*

### ■ SONG SLOT 1 — "WHEN CAN WE START THIS MEETING?"

**Performed by:** THE COMPANY (led by MARCUS, anchored by SAM)

**Function:** Establish the frame and the eight strangers, each armored. A comic, propulsive ensemble opener — everyone insisting they're *fine*, the small-talk-as-avoidance number. Phones, fidgeting, the urn, the clipboard. By the button, we know the room and we know nobody wants to be the first to actually *say* anything.

**Lands on:** SAM's line that starts the session for real.

**SAM.** (*when the song settles*) Okay. We're here. Eight weeks, this group. Some of you are new, so — the rules. You can talk. You can pass. Or — when you're ready — you do the other thing.

**MARCUS.** The terrifying thing.

**SAM.** You write it down. You bring it in. It's homework. Your song, your words — and you're the lead on it. Nobody sings it for you.

**JUNE.** *(to a newcomer)* But you don't play it alone. The rest of us take the sheet music home and learn the parts. So when you finally stand up —

**CAROL.** — your band already knows the song. We've been practicing it in our kitchens all week.

**WALT.** She practices in the car. Drives the neighbors insane.

**SAM.** Each of you leads your own. Each of you backs everyone else's. And while I pull people aside — one at a time — the rest of you break off, small groups, run the parts. Don't wait for me. The room keeps working.

**TANYA.** It's exactly as insane as it sounds.

**SAM.** Who's bringing something in first?

*Silence. The urn gurgles. Everyone studies the floor.*

**JUNE.** *(standing)* Oh, for God's sake. I'll go. I always go.

## Scene 2 — June

**JUNE.** So. Eighteen months ago I was — let's call it "not here." Like, *medically* not-here-adjacent. And everybody kept telling me to take it slow, take it easy, be gentle with yourself — and I just thought, no. No. I didn't claw my way back to *gentle*. I came back to be **loud**.

*She picks up the guitar — or hands it to RAY, who plays better, and grabs the room instead.*

### ■ SONG SLOT 2 — "MESSY AND ALIVE"

**Performed by:** JUNE (Company joins on the last chorus)

**Function:** The first *real* song — and the thesis of how this group heals: joy as defiance. Burnt toast, wet hair, dancing in the hallway, "if I fall, I fall with style." It also teaches the audience the show's mechanic: mid-song, the others pick up instruments and fall in behind her, uninvited and welcome. By the end, the armor's off one person, and the room is warmer by exactly that much.

**Tone:** Joyful. Up-tempo. The permission-giver.

**MARCUS.** *(after, wiping a fake tear)* I hate how good that felt.

**CAROL.** *(to Walt)* See, *she* shares.

**WALT.** We share. We share constantly. I shared this morning about the gutters.

**CAROL.** That's not sharing, Walter, that's *complaining with a witness*.

## Scene 3 — Walt & Carol

**SAM.** You two want to take the floor while you're up there?

**WALT.** We don't have a *song*, we have a — what do we have, Carol —

**CAROL.** We have thirty-four years and a list.

**WALT.** She has a list.

*They're already bickering their way into it. RAY starts a soft shuffle on the cajón. They don't notice they've started performing until they're halfway in.*

### ■ SONG SLOT 3 — "YOU'RE THE WORST"

**Performed by:** WALT & CAROL (duet)

**Function:** The comic love-duet. An affectionate roast — socks on the floor, stolen fries, off-key humming, "you're my favorite wrong choice... you feel like home." Establishes the couple as the group's living proof that love is not the absence of friction. Plant the seed we'll pay off in Act 2: under every joke about each other is thirty-four years of *staying*.

**Tone:** Tender / funny.

**JUNE.** (*applauding*) Goals. Disgusting, beautiful goals.

**TANYA.** (*under her breath*) Or a cautionary tale. Jury's out.

*SAM clocks Tanya's deflection but lets it ride. He looks to MARCUS, who has been quiet for a dangerous eleven seconds.*

## Scene 4 — Marcus

**SAM.** Marcus. You've been almost silent.

**MARCUS.** I've been *pacing myself*.

**SAM.** You want to talk about the week?

**MARCUS.** I would rather — and I mean this with love — I would rather tell you about Rob Lowe.

**TANYA.** Here we go.

**MARCUS.** Not the actor. *Not the actor*. This is a guy I knew. A legend. A human disco ball. Showed up to my cousin's wedding *uninvited*, married the DJ by accident, did the worm in velvet slacks, and left before anyone could be mad about it. When Rob Lowe shows up — the party *appears*. And then one day, nobody could find him, and the question that haunts our entire friend group to this day is —

*The band is already vamping. MARCUS surfs it.*

## ■ SONG SLOT 4 — "WHO LET ROB LOWE GO? / LOWE EXPECTATIONS"

**Performed by:** MARCUS & THE COMPANY

**Function:** The big Act 1 comic set-piece — a mock-anthem to a beloved chaos-agent who crashes every celebration and then vanishes. Full ensemble fun: gossip-chorus, escalating tall tales, the worm, the velvet slacks. **But staged so the audience catches what the group can't yet:** Marcus is doing a forty-five-minute bit about a man who *disappeared and was only loved as a story* — because that is exactly what Marcus is doing to himself. The laugh has a hook in it.

**Tone:** Absurd / funny — with a cold draft underneath.

**SAM.** (*lightly, after*) You ever wonder why that one haunts you?

**MARCUS.** (*grin holding a half-second too long*) Nope. Next.

*He sits. Quick — too quick. SAM writes nothing on the clipboard, which somehow means more than if he had.*

## Scene 5 — Tanya

**TANYA.** I'll go, before he makes us do an encore.

**SAM.** The floor's yours.

**TANYA.** I'm not gonna *cry* about it, if that's what everybody's leaning forward for. I had a guy. He was a *project*. The kind of useless where you start keeping receipts for the comedy of it. And one day I added up the receipts and the total was: my entire twenties. So.

*She doesn't pick up an instrument. She just plants her feet. The band finds HER.*

## ■ SONG SLOT 5 — "HARD NO, ZERO STARS"

**Performed by:** TANYA (Company on the kiss-off tags)

**Function:** The funny, bitter break-up review — "keep your poems, keep your scars, keep crying in your broken car." The room eats it up; she's killing. **But on the final tag, leave one bar of silence where the joke should land** — and let us see, for exactly one second, that the comedy is load-bearing. Then she slams the door on that second and bows. Plants "The View from the Top" (Act 2): we don't yet know *why* she learned to armor up this hard.

**Tone:** Angry / funny — one crack of something real.

**JUNE.** Zero stars. Would not recommend.

**TANYA.** (*sitting, armor back on*) Do not recommend. (*beat*) Anyway.

## Scene 5½ — Breakout

*SAM stands, clipboard under his arm. This is the mechanism, made visible.*

**SAM.** Okay — fifteen minutes. Tanya, walk with me a sec. (*to the room*) Rest of you, you've got Marcus's chart and June's — go run 'em. Carol, you're on piano. Use the practice rooms if you want

the quiet.

*He takes TANYA into one of the glass-windowed practice rooms — door closed, we see them talking, hear nothing. **And the room comes alive without him.** This is the point: the work doesn't stop when the therapist steps out.*

*CAROL sits at the upright and starts teaching the others their parts for next week's numbers. WALT hauls the string bass over. JUNE hands out sheet music from a folder she clearly organizes herself. MARCUS and WALT cluster in a second practice room, audible faintly through the glass, working a harmony. The stage becomes three little bands at once — a band-room Saturday, scored.*

*Through it all, ELI hovers at the edge, holding a blank sheet of staff paper. Not playing. Not joining. JUNE drifts over.*

**JUNE.** You want in? Carol'll teach you the keys part, it's like four chords —

**ELI.** I'm — I haven't got mine yet. The song. I keep — I sit down to write it and the pen feels like it belongs to somebody else.

**JUNE.** *(easy, no pressure)* Then support somebody else's till yours shows up. That's the deal — you don't have to lead to belong. Here. *(she puts a tambourine in his hands)* Even a guy who can't find his own song can keep a beat for someone else's.

*ELI looks at the tambourine like it's a lifeline. He doesn't play it. But he doesn't put it down, either.*

*SAM and TANYA emerge from the practice room. The little bands fold back into the circle. JUNE crosses to RAY and — without a word — sets a music stand in front of him and lays a single handwritten page on it. His own song. The one he's been writing in the margins for six weeks and never brought in. The group worked up the parts behind his back.*

**RAY.** *(quietly, caught)* ...Where'd you get this.

**JUNE.** You left your notebook open. We've been practicing it in the parking lot. *(beat)* It's ready when you are.

## Scene 6 — Ray

**SAM.** Ray.

**RAY.** I'm okay tonight, Sam, I'm just — listening.

**SAM.** You've been "just listening" for six weeks.

**RAY.** I'm a good listener.

**SAM.** You are. *(beat)* That's not the same as being okay.

*A long pause. RAY looks at the page on the stand, then at the guitar in his own hands — he's been holding it the whole time, playing under everyone else's songs, the accompanist who never takes a verse. He plays a few bars. Doesn't stop this time.*

**RAY.** There's a — there's a kind of song that comes back. You think you put it down. And then it's just. *(he plays the figure)* It's in the glass before you even pour it.

### ■ SONG SLOT 6 — "THE BOURBON BRINGS ME BACK"

**Performed by:** RAY (sparse; Company stays very still)

**Function:** The first real darkness — the comedy curdles into the night's tonal pivot. A man who keeps insisting he's moved on, and a drink (a song, a date on the calendar) that drags him under. "Ghosts don't care for self-help crap — they hide in the glass." For the first time the room can't fix it with a laugh. They just *let it be true*, which is the harder thing. This is where the audience realizes what kind of show this is.

**Tone:** Melancholy / grief. The hinge of Act 1.

*No applause this time. JUNE reaches over and puts a hand on Ray's back. He lets her. The urn gurgles into the silence — and for once it isn't funny.*

## Scene 7 — Eli (the engine)

*SAM looks, last, to the one person who hasn't moved all night: ELI. And to MAYA — but MAYA meets his eyes and gives the smallest shake of the head: not yet. SAM nods, and turns to ELI.*

**SAM.** Eli. You came back. After last week, I wasn't sure you would.

**ELI.** I'm not — I'm not sure I'm here now. *(a strained almost-laugh)* That's — that's the thing, right? That's the whole —

**SAM.** Take your time.

**ELI.** You keep saying *write it down*. Make it a song. But you have to **be somewhere** to write it down. You have to be — in the timeline where the pen is the pen, and the — *(he's losing the thread)* — and the sky's the right color, and your own kitchen doesn't feel like a *set*, like somebody built it last night to fool you —

**MARCUS.** *(gently, the bit gone)* Hey. Eli. You're in a high school band room that smells like dried spit and broken dreams. That's about as real as it —

**ELI.** *(sharp)* Don't. Don't *manage* me. *(softening, scared)* I can't. I keep trying to find the words and they — they come out as —

*And here it comes. Not words. Sound. He opens his mouth and what falls out is the wordless, panicked vocal figure — the "ooh-ooh" — the only language he has left. The band, very quietly, catches the pitch he's drowning in and gives it a floor to stand on. And out of the sound, slowly, the words assemble.*

## ■ SONG SLOT 7 — "CALL THE TIME COPS (THIS IS NOT MY TIMELINE)"

**Performed by:** ELI, then THE COMPANY around him

**Function:** The Act 1 climax — and the payoff of the engine that's been running all night. Opens with the wordless "ooh-ooh" panic (the non-verbal version) and builds, as the group holds him, into the words: dissociation dressed as sci-fi — "the sky glowing green, coffee tasted like defeat and gasoline," "this is not my timeline," "erase the plot." It is terrifying *from the inside*. Staging: the group does not try to argue him out of it. They simply, one by one, pick up his rhythm and **stand in his timeline with him** until he is not alone in it. He doesn't get fixed. He gets *accompanied*. That's the whole show in one number.

**Tone:** Panic > held. Builds huge, then breaks small.

*The song collapses to silence. ELI is shaking, but he's still standing. He looks around the circle — really sees them — maybe for the first time all night.*

**ELI.** (barely) ...That came out.

**SAM.** It did.

**ELI.** I didn't think it was in there as words.

**JUNE.** It wasn't. We helped you carry it the last few feet.

## Scene 8 — Act One Finale

*And that line — "we helped you carry it" — is the thing that turns the key. WALT looks at CAROL. RAY looks up from the guitar. One at a time, without anyone announcing it, the group rises. SAM steps back to the edge — the host, watching, the clipboard at his side, forgotten. The members find each other's hands, each other's harmonies. This is the first time they sing as one body.*

## ■ SONG SLOT 8 — "WHAT IF WE ALL FEEL THIS" — ACT ONE FINALE

**Performed by:** THE COMPANY

**Function:** The Act 1 button and the first taste of catharsis. The anthem: ordinary morning, strangers secretly synced — buskers playing "our song," a girl dancing like she owns the crowd, grandpa winking from his porch — "different lives, but the rhythm's strong... we all feel this." Each member adds a vignette from their own song so far (June's defiance, Walt & Carol's bickering, Eli's green sky reframed as just a sky). The thesis arrives: **private feeling is universal**. End on a full, ringing chord — the group, for one moment, a single thing.

**BUT:** in the final tableau, hold the light one beat on MAYA, who has risen with them, singing — and then sits back down, alone, the coat still in her lap. She is not healed. She has not even started. *Curtain.*

**Tone:** Anthemic / uplifting — with a single thread of dread left hanging.

**END OF ACT ONE**

# ACT TWO

## Scene 9 — Maya (the floor)

*House lights flicker. Act Two begins not with a bang but with the urn — gurgling in a dark, empty room. Lights rise slow. The circle is as it was. But the energy of the finale is gone, spent, like the morning after. People file back to their chairs quieter. And MAYA is already there. Coat in lap. She has not moved since the curtain.*

*SAM sits. Waits. Doesn't prompt. The silence stretches past comfortable, past awkward, into something sacred. Finally —*

**MAYA.** I clapped last week. When the new person — when somebody made a joke. I clapped, and I went home, and I sat in the car in the garage for an hour because I couldn't remember how to go inside a house.

*Nobody moves.*

**MAYA.** Her name is Lily. She's six. She's been in the ICU for nineteen days. *(beat)* They use a word. "Stable." Like it's good news. Stable means the machines are doing what her body forgot how to do. *(beat)* I'm not supposed to leave. I left. I'm here because my sister made me, because she said if I didn't have one hour that wasn't that room I'd — *(she can't finish it)*. So this is my hour. And I don't have a song. I have a — I have a thing I say to her. At the bedside. When the nurse leaves.

*She doesn't pick up an instrument. The piano, by itself — RAY, very soft — finds her.*

### ■ SONG SLOT 9 — "IF YOU CAN MAKE IT THRU THE DAY" — ACT TWO OPENER

**Performed by:** MAYA (alone — the group does NOT join)

**Function:** **The emotional floor of the entire show.** A mother at her child's bedside, addressing the unconscious girl directly: "you sleepin' deep," "they say children heal," "I'll be right here, come what may," coffee gone cold, counting each of the day's small mercies, "one more day" as the only goal she can survive at a time. **Crucially — for the first and only time, the group does not pick up instruments and join.** Some grief you cannot harmonize on. They sit in it with her, helpless, which is its own kind of accompaniment. The contrast with every other number in the show is the point.

**Tone:** Grief / tender. The nadir.

*The song ends. No one claps. No one would dare. CAROL is openly weeping. MARCUS — the comedian — has his hand over his mouth. The silence holds for a long, long time.*

## Scene 10 — Ray steps up

*It is RAY who finally moves. The accompanist. He sets the guitar down — deliberately, the man who hides behind it choosing not to — and he speaks, to Maya, but really to the room.*

**RAY.** I never said goodbye to mine. *(beat)* Different — different kind of gone. But I — there was a morning, and a seat on a train, and I knew her name and I never — *(he shakes his head)* — every word I didn't say is still in here. You said yours, Maya. Every day, at the bedside, you say yours. I just want you to know that's — that's the brave version. I'm the coward version. And I've been the coward version for nine years.

### ■ SONG SLOT 10 — "THE WORDS I SWALLOWED"

**Performed by:** RAY (Company hums underneath — wordless, present)

**Function:** Ray's confession, set beside Maya's so the two losses rhyme — hers unbearable and present, his small and ancient and never-spoken. "I knew your name but bit my tongue... you were the song, and I lost you. Never said goodbye." The lesson lands without anyone stating it: *don't be the coward version. Say it while there's someone to say it to.* This is the first instrument-pickup of Act 2 — the group beginning, gently, to play again. The climb has started.

**Tone:** Melancholy — the first inch back up.

## Scene 11 — Tanya, armor off

*Something about Ray's honesty cracks TANYA. She's been white-knuckling her chair since Maya started.*

**TANYA.** Okay. *(stands too fast)* Okay, I'm gonna — because if Ray can do it then I don't get to keep hiding behind being the funny one. *(beat)* The guy. My "project." I told you he was useless. I didn't tell you the rest. He wasn't useless. He was *good at it.* He made the leash feel like a hug. Told me what to wear, who to text, what I was worth — and he made every single bar of the cage look like it was *for me.* Painted it gold and called it taking care of me. And the worst part — the part I do the jokes about so I never have to say — is that for a while? I *thanked him* for it.

### ■ SONG SLOT 11 — "THE VIEW FROM THE TOP"

**Performed by:** TANYA, with THE COMPANY as the seductive "chorus of the cage"

**Function:** Tanya's real reveal — and a tonal swerve into something genuinely sinister. The song is sung in the *voice of the controller* — the smooth, seductive promise that surrender is safety: "sign this line and you'll be safe inside my guild... we'll dress you in illusions and call it your own... I'll paint your chains in colours bright and call it dignified... smile for the cameras, say the pledge, just don't forget to thank me when you bow." **Staging:** the Company embodies the cage — beautiful, smiling, closing in — and Tanya has to physically fight her way out of the harmony to reclaim her own voice on the last line. Her comedy, retroactively, becomes heroic: it was the crowbar she used to pry the gold bars apart.

**Tone:** Sinister / confessional. The dark turn before the dawn.

**TANYA.** *(in the silence after, almost surprised)* ...Huh. Didn't make a single joke.

**JUNE.** We noticed.

**TANYA.** Felt terrible.

**SAM.** It usually does. *(beat)* That's how you know.

## Scene 12 — Sam breaks his own rule

*And on that line — "that's how you know" — something shifts in SAM. He's said it a thousand times. Tonight, with Maya's grief and Ray's confession and Tanya's cage all still hanging in the air, he hears himself say it, and he can't hide behind it anymore.*

**SAM.** I, uh. I'm gonna do something I don't do.

**WALT.** Sam?

**SAM.** Thirty years I've run rooms like this. And I have a rule — *you* know the rule — when you're ready, you don't just talk, you sit *in* it. And I have never. Once. Sat in it. *(he looks at the ninth chair — the empty one, the one he set out in Scene 1)* I set out that chair every week. Eight of you. And one for her. And I tell myself it's for whoever's not here yet. *(beat)* It's not. It's hers. It's been hers for eleven years.

*He crosses — for the first time in the entire show — and sits in the empty chair. SAM, the host, sits down in the circle.*

### ■ SONG SLOT 12 — "THE EMPTY CHAIR" (NEW SONG — original lyrics in ``new-songs/``)

**Performed by:** SAM (the Company joins, hushed, at the very end)

**Function:** The facilitator's reveal. He built this room around the wife he never grieved — "I learned how to listen so I'd never have to say the one thing I came here to say." The man who taught everyone else to fall apart has never once done it himself. He hosts grief so he never has to host his own. The group, at the end, does for him what he's done for them for years: they gather him in. *(Full draft lyrics: ``manuscript/new-songs/new-song-drafts.md`` #12.)*

**Tone:** Reflective / aching.

## Scene 13 — Walt & Carol, the secret

*The room is wrecked in the best way — cracked all the way open. And it's WALT and CAROL, the old marrieds, who know what to do with a cracked-open room. They've buried friends. They've sat in ICUs. They've been Sam. They've been Maya. They've been all of it.*

**CAROL.** Can I — Walt, help me up. *(he does, automatically, thirty-four years of automatically)* When you've been married as long as we have, people ask for the secret. Like there's a secret.

**WALT.** There's a secret.

**CAROL.** There's one secret. And it's not romance, and it's not — God knows it's not agreeing about the gutters.

**WALT.** It's this. A man told me this at *my* wedding — old guy, I barely knew him —

**CAROL.** Tell them, Walt.

### ■ SONG SLOT 13 — "DON'T FALL OUT OF LOVE AT THE SAME TIME"

**Performed by:** WALT & CAROL (the Company gathers in — this is where the whole group learns the rule)

**Function:** The thematic keystone of the show. An old man's passed-down secret: love isn't always a spark — "sometimes it's just showing up at the same time." The rule that keeps a marriage (and a therapy group, and a family) alive: *you take turns being the strong one*. "When she's tired, I'm the steady one; when I break, she reads the signs... one stays near when one declines. Don't fall out of love at the same time."

**Staging:** as Walt & Carol sing it to each other, the camera of the staging widens — and we see the whole group arranging themselves into the same truth: when one falls, another holds; they have been doing this, unnamed, all night. Maya is held up by June. Eli is steadied by Ray. The *song names the thing the group has been doing the whole show*. This is the engine of the finale: they will all make it because they never collapse at once.

**Tone:** Tender / wise. The climb gathers force.

## Scene 14 — Marcus drops the bit

*MARCUS has been uncharacteristically silent since Maya's song. The comedian with nothing funny left in him. He stands, and for once he doesn't have an opening line.*

**MARCUS.** I do the Rob Lowe thing because — (*false start, a reflexive grin, he kills it*) — no. Here's the real one. I do the Rob Lowe thing because I'm scared that's all I am. A guy who shows up, makes the party appear, and leaves before anybody finds out there's nothing underneath the velvet slacks. I keep everybody laughing so nobody asks me the Maya question. The Lily question. (*beat*) I used to have a thing that meant something. We all did. And somewhere I traded it for being *fun*. And I want it back.

### ■ SONG SLOT 14 — "BACK WHEN EVERYTHING MEANT SOMETHING"

**Performed by:** MARCUS (Company joins on the aching chorus)

**Function:** The comedian's real song — the bit finally dropped. Nostalgia for a time before the armor: mixtapes "like confessional secrets," folded notes, "everything felt epic, even silly teenage dreams... we swore we'd never change." Marcus mourns the earnest kid he buried under the jokes. The group, who only ever knew the jokes, meets the kid for the first time. Callback: the Rob Lowe number was a man loved only as a story — and here Marcus chooses to be a *person* instead.

**Tone:** Melancholy > honest. Warm.

## Scene 15 — Maya & Eli at the bottom

*Through all of this, MAYA and ELI have ended up in adjacent chairs — the two who hit bottom hardest. MAYA, who can't be fixed. ELI, who came untethered from reality itself. They've been watching each other across the circle all night. Now MAYA — who has barely engaged with anyone — turns to ELI.*

**MAYA.** Last week. The green sky. You said it felt like somebody built your kitchen overnight to fool you.

**ELI.** ... Yeah.

**MAYA.** That's the most accurate thing anyone's said to me in nineteen days. *(beat)* That's what the ICU is. A set. Built to fool me. I keep waiting for someone to say "cut."

**ELI.** *(quietly stunned to be understood)* ... Nobody says cut.

**MAYA.** No. *(beat)* So we're in the same wrong room, you and me.

**ELI.** *(the smallest thing — almost a smile)* Two of us.

*RAY's guitar finds them. June joins on a high, fragile harmony. This is a duet between the two most broken people in the room — and somehow, together, the least alone.*

■ **SONG SLOT 15 — "TWO OF US AT THE BOTTOM" (NEW SONG — original lyrics in `new-songs/`)**

**Performed by:** MAYA & ELI (duet; June & Ray underneath)

**Function:** The healing two-hander — **and the resolution of Eli's Act 1 arc.** Two people who hit bottom discover that a shared bottom is still company: "two of us at the bottom — that's still two. You count my breaths, I'll count yours too... the floor feels different with you near." And Eli, held by someone who *gets it*, finally lets go of the wrong-timeline story: "Maybe the green sky was only rain. Maybe the clock was always mine... I found the room. I'll stay this time." He doesn't get cured. He gets *located* — by another person. *(Full draft: `new-songs/new-song-drafts.md` #15.)*

**Tone:** Tender, healing. The deepest two notes in the show, sounded together.

## Scene 16 — June lifts the room

*ELI is still here. Still in his timeline. And JUNE — the joyful survivor, who's been holding her own fire all of Act 2 so the others could have the floor — feels the room ready to be lifted. She stands. She's grinning, but it's earned now, not armor.*

**JUNE.** Okay. Okay. I love you all and we are NOT ending the night at the bottom of a well. *(to Eli)* You found the room? Good. Now we're gonna go somewhere in it. Everybody up. *Up.* Sam — out of the chair — no, you don't get to grieve and then sit down, that's not how it works, we drag you the rest of the way, that's the *deal* —

## ■ SONG SLOT 16 — "KING OF THE ASPHALT / OPEN ROAD ANTHEM"

**Performed by:** JUNE & THE COMPANY

**Function:** The momentum number — the road-to-recovery anthem that gets the whole room on its feet. "Born to change... every mile's a line in the song I write, where I learn what freedom means." Reinvention, motion, the open road as the opposite of the cage Tanya escaped and the ICU Maya's trapped in. The group physically moves the furniture, opens the circle outward. Pure forward propulsion. The climb hits the summit.

**Tone:** Anthemic / uplifting. Joy with scar tissue.

## Scene 17 — Maya chooses

*The number rings out. The group is breathless, alive, laughing. And in the middle of it, MAYA — who has been carried by all of them — does the thing the whole show has been building to. She steps forward on her own. The room quiets for her, instantly, the way a group does when one of them is about to do something that matters.*

**MAYA.** I have to go back. In an hour. To the room. To the machines, and "stable," and the chair beside the bed. *(beat)* Nineteen days I've been saying a thing to her like a prayer I didn't believe. Whispering it through my teeth. "Just make it through the day." Like begging. *(beat)* I don't want to beg it anymore.

## ■ SONG SLOT 17 — "ONE MORE DAY (THE VOW)" (NEW — reprise of "If You Can Make It Thru the Day," original bridge in `new-songs/`)

**Performed by:** MAYA, solo > handed to THE COMPANY

**Function: The turn.** The same vow from the Act 2 opener — but flipped from despair into *choice*. "I used to say it through my teeth, like a prayer I didn't believe. Now I say it like a hand I get to keep: **I will make it thru the day.**" She looks around the circle — "And so will you." — and hands the line to the group, who pick it up and build. Where the opener was a woman alone with a machine, this is a woman who learned, tonight, that she doesn't carry it alone. Bridges directly into the finale. *(Full draft: `new-songs/new-song-drafts.md` #17.)*

**Tone:** Quiet resolve > rising. The hope, chosen rather than hoped for.

## Scene 18 — Finale

*MAYA's handed line — "and so will you" — passes around the circle, person to person, each one taking it and giving it on, until all eight members and SAM are singing it together. The thematic engine pays off: nobody is the strong one alone; they take turns; they don't fall out of love at the same time. The full company, one body again — but this time nobody sits back down. This time Maya stays standing, held, ready to go back to the room and survive it.*

■ **SONG SLOT 18 — "WHAT IF WE ALL FEEL THIS" (REPRISE) / "FINAL NIGHT OF THE SISTERHOOD" — FINALE**

**Performed by:** THE COMPANY

**Function:** The cathartic finale. The Act 1 anthem returns — but where its first outing was a *discovery* ("what if we all feel this?"), the reprise is a *vow* ("we all feel this — and we hold the line for each other"). Braid in every thread: June's defiance, Marcus's earnest kid, Tanya's reclaimed voice, Ray's spoken goodbye, Eli's found room, Sam's filled chair, Walt & Carol's secret, and Maya — held — choosing one more day. Let "Moments Like These" (Walt & Carol's melody) and the "take turns" motif from "Don't Fall Out of Love" weave underneath. End on the group as a single, ringing chord — and the empty chair, finally, no longer empty: Sam is in it.

**Tone:** Cathartic. The full arc — happy, funny, sad — resolved into *hope*.

**Scene 19 — Bows**

*The lights come down to the clock — now reading well past nine. The hour Maya promised her sister is long over, and nobody left. SAM rises from the chair, picks up the forgotten clipboard, and — for the first time — reads what's on it: nothing. It was always blank. He smiles. Flips the lights toward the house.*

■ **SONG SLOT 19 — "THIS IS MY FRIDAY" / "MESSY AND ALIVE" (REPRISE) — BOWS**

**Performed by:** THE COMPANY

**Function:** The joyful sendoff / curtain call. Reprise the show's two most alive songs as the company takes bows — June's "Messy and Alive" thesis returning, now sung by everyone, because the whole group earned its way back to *loud*. Send the audience out the way June came in: loud, scarred, and gloriously here.

**Tone:** Joyful. The exhale.

**END OF MUSIC THERAPY, VOL. 1**

**APPENDIX — Song Sourcing**

#	Song	Source	In book as
1	When Can We Start This Meeting?	catalog (^lyrics/)	placeholder
2	Messy and Alive	catalog	placeholder
3	You're The Worst	catalog	placeholder
4	Who Let Rob Lowe Go? / Lowe Expectations	catalog	placeholder

#	Song	Source	In book as
5	Hard No, Zero Stars	catalog	placeholder
6	The Bourbon Brings Me Back	catalog	placeholder
7	Call the Time Cops (This Is Not My Timeline)	catalog	placeholder
8	What If We All Feel This	catalog	placeholder
9	If You Can Make It Thru the Day	catalog (Drive)	placeholder
10	The Words I Swallowed	catalog (Drive `.wav`)	placeholder
11	The View from the Top	catalog (Drive `.wav`)	placeholder
12	<b>The Empty Chair</b>	<b>NEW</b>	full draft lyrics
13	Don't Fall Out of Love at the Same Time	user channel (sourced)	placeholder
14	Back When Everything Meant Something	catalog	placeholder
15	<b>Two of Us at the Bottom</b>	<b>NEW</b>	full draft lyrics
16	King of the Asphalt / Open Road Anthem	catalog	placeholder
17	<b>One More Day (The Vow)</b>	<b>NEW</b> (reprise)	full draft lyrics
18	What If We All Feel This (Reprise) / Final Night of the Sisterhood	catalog	placeholder
19	This Is My Friday / Messy and Alive (Reprise)	catalog	placeholder

Full recorded/transcribed lyrics for all catalog songs: `lyrics/`. New-song full drafts: `manuscript/new-songs/new-song-drafts.md`. Design rationale: `BLUEPRINT.md`.