

An illustration of a young boy with brown hair, wearing a white tunic with a dark vest and a red sash, standing in a sun-dappled forest. He is holding a small, glowing yellow bird in his hands. The background features large trees and falling leaves, with a warm, golden light filtering through the canopy.

# Songs from Verania

Music by Evan L. Snyder  
Words by TJ Klune





Evan L.  
Snyder

# Songs from Verania

Song Cycle for tenor, baritone, violin, and piano

with words by TJ Klune

adapted from his fantasy series, *Tales from Verania*

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(approx. duration — 55')

Commissioned by **Eric Ferring** — who found two worlds, TJ's and mine, and heard that they ought to be combined. This work has been such a delight to create and I can't thank him enough for making that happen.

Cover Art by **Alessia Trunfio** — commissioned by Eric for the cycle's recording.

# Texts and Contexts

## Prologue — Sam, piano

I was seventeen years old when I brought a bird back to life.

I had felt particularly sorry for myself that day. There was a knight in the castle I'd been harboring a crush on, but he didn't even know I existed. So there I was — sad and despondent and alone — when I saw it.

I didn't know why I cared so much. I didn't know why it struck me as poignantly as it did. One moment I was sulking over something that would never be mine, and the next I was on my knees, hunched over this little bird.

I held it in my hand and thought to myself — *It isn't fair*. The thought of a seventeen-year-old who believed his heart to be broken — *It isn't fair. It isn't fair. This isn't fair*.

I cupped my hands together, hiding the little bird away.

There was this pulse. There was green and gold, the colors of the forest whirled around me — a spinning corona of light pooled between my cupped hands. It began to cascade downward, like a waterfall, the drops of light spreading along the ground, pulsating slowly. The forest faded around me. The sky above darkened. Everything else melted away.

*It isn't fair.*

There was a flutter of wings against my palm, the barest of touches.

I was seventeen years old when I brought a bird back to life. And I never breathed a word of it to anyone.

Until now.

[Adapted from the prologue to *A Destiny of Dragons*]

# Part I

## I. Moments — Sam, Violin, Piano

There are moments in your life so profound, so extraordinarily crystal clear that even the remembrance of them is enough to make you feel like you're consumed by fire. Moments that might not mean much to anyone else, but mean the world to you. I had these:

I was five and my mother was dancing to a song only she could hear.

I was seven and my father put his arm around my shoulders while we watched the sunset and waited for the stars to come out.

I was nine and I wished for something more.

I was seventeen when I brought a bird back to life.

And I was twenty when Ryan stood by my side and my magic said *finally*.

[Adapted from ch. 13 of *The Lightning-Struck Heart*]

## II. Cornerstone — Sam, Ryan, Violin

Both: To a wizard, their cornerstone is the most precious thing in the world. Something revered, something treasured. A person who can hold the foundation for their magic together. A person who, without them, the wizard could descend into darkness.

[Adapted from ch. 2 of *A Destiny of Dragons*]

## III. The Dance — Sam, Ryan, Violin, Piano\*

Both: The music slowed around us...

The cheerful voices and the raucous laughter died down as men and women joined together and swayed along the dusty, wooden floor.

Sam: I was suddenly very out of my depth. But before I could turn, Ryan grabbed my hand and said,

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\* The Crown Prince of Verania has been kidnapped. Sam of Wilds, the apprentice to the King's Wizard, has been tasked with his rescue, alongside the prince's recently betrothed, Knight Commander Ryan Foxheart—on whom Sam has had a crush for years. But, only recently has Sam realized that his bond with Ryan might be the secret to deepening his understanding and control of his own magic—what wizards call a cornerstone.

Ryan: “We should dance.”

Sam: “Should we?”

Ryan: “Sam, it’s just a dance.”

Sam: I wanted to argue with him. I wanted to tell him it would never be just a dance. To tell him what a cornerstone meant and how it could never be just a dance. That all of this was a bad idea.

“Just a dance,” I said. And he pulled me close.

I thought for a moment, for a singular shining moment that maybe I could have this. That maybe this could be mine.

I knew it wasn’t meant to be. But I allowed myself to think such thoughts. Because no one else could hear them. They were my own. Like a wish upon the stars held in secret hearts.

We danced.

Ryan: And we danced.

Both: And we *danced*.

[Adapted from ch. 17 of *The Lightning-Struck Heart*]

#### IV. The Top of the Keep — Ryan, Violin, Piano<sup>†</sup>

“Sam. I care about you. You have no idea how much or for how long.

Ever since I first saw you, you’ve been with me. I couldn’t have forced you away if I tried. I’m sorry I made an oath. I did it because I thought it was the right thing to do. And I’m sorry that I can’t break it. But you have to believe me that it’s always been you. I promise. I promise.

I promise, because when I look upon these stars, there is *nothing* I wish for more than you.”

[Adapted from ch. 24 of *The Lightning-Struck Heart*]

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<sup>†</sup> Upon rescuing the Prince, Sam learns the truth behind his relationship with Ryan—the two don’t love each other. The Prince was required to choose a partner before his 25th birthday, and chose Ryan, offering him in exchange the position within the knights that Ryan now holds. An impersonal, but binding agreement.

## V. A Brief Interlude — Sam, Ryan, Violin, Piano

Sam: “It’s how I feel when I’m with you. It’s how I think I’ve always felt. You’re my lightning-struck heart. It doesn’t matter about who I am or who you are. Not to me. Ever since I’ve known you, you’ve struck my heart, and now I have to let you go because you’re not mine to keep.

I need someone that I can be strong for. But I need someone who can also be strong for me.”

Ryan: “Sam,”

Sam: “I think I love you.”

I looked up at the stars, but I did not make a wish.

[Adapted from ch. 28 of *The Lightning-Struck Heart*]

## VI. Happily Ever After — Sam, Ryan, Violin, Piano<sup>‡</sup>

Both: Things like this rarely work out. But fate is a funny thing. It weaves its thread through the loom with steady hands. At first the result is a seemingly distorted mess, but if one can wait long enough, the full picture comes into focus, the threads tightly intertwined, strong and true.

Ryan: “How do I do it? Become your cornerstone?”

Sam: “You don’t have to do anything. My magic already knows you like I do. It’s known you for years. One day, and one day soon, it’ll just happen because that’s what you are to me. I wished for this even before I knew what it was. And I’ll spend the rest of my days showing you why.”

Both: “Sam,” I said. And his magic sang, like the stories of old, of whimsy and fancy-free—this was our ending.

Sam: My heart was lightning-struck

Ryan: And it beat for me.

Both: This was it. This was our happily ever after.

Sam: And it was. For three days.

[Adapted from the epilogue to *The Lightning-Struck Heart* and from ch. 2 of *A Destiny of Dragons*]

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<sup>‡</sup> The day of his wedding to the Prince arrives, and Ryan doesn’t go through with it. He asks the Prince to release him from his oath, before the assembled people of Verania. Despite the Prince’s irritation, the King urges him to release Ryan from their agreement. He does, and Ryan and Sam become free to forge a new path forward together.



## Part II

### VII. Cornerstone II — Sam, Violin, Piano

To a wizard, their cornerstone is the most precious thing...

A person who can hold their magic together...

A person who, without them, the wizard could descend into darkness...

[Adapted from ch. 2 of *A Destiny of Dragons*]

### VIII. The Vision — Sam, Ryan, Violin, Piano§

Both: Stone crumbles.

The magic in you will prolong your years... centuries...

Until most everyone you love has passed through the veil and ascended to the beyond.

Sam: The King was gone. My parents, gone.

Morgan looked as if only twenty years had passed.

Ryan, though.

Ryan had fallen to the ravages of time. He was bone-thin, and his beautiful hair was gone. His skin was wrinkled and his hands gnarled as they held the sword to his chest. His armor didn't fit like it had, much larger than he was now. Like a child playing dress-up, skin pale in death.

And I caught my reflection in its shine.

I looked almost the same.

Ryan: You will lose him.

You will watch him age while you do not.

You will see the end coming and won't be able to do anything to stop it.

The moment you chose to love him was the moment you chose to watch him die.

[Adapted from ch. 9 of *A Destiny of Dragons*]

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§ Thrust into a vision of the future, Sam moves through a haze with increasing urgency, unable to sense that thing that anchors him to the light—his love, his cornerstone.

## IX. Ryan's Letter — Ryan, Violin, Piano

I saw the look on your face, Sam, when you were told of how long your life could be.  
I know how much it hurt you. How much it probably scares you.

Life isn't defined by how long it is. It's the moments you have while you're alive.  
Even if I age and you don't, or if something were to happen to one of us before the other,  
still, I have been filled with so many moments — between you and I — that I have lived a  
thousand lifetimes, in the moments I cherish, because I cherish you.

I am here to help you carry your burdens, to make them my own,  
because that's what it means to be a cornerstone. Sam, you're not alone.

[Adapted from ch. 8 of *The Consumption of Magic*]

## X. A Wish Upon the Stars — Sam, Violin, Piano

Make me mortal. When all is said and done.  
I will protect my King, this one and the next.  
I will protect my kingdom. I will do all you ask,  
but I want a mortal life for my happy ending.  
This is my wish.

[Adapted from ch. 1 of *The Consumption of Magic*]

## XI. Stone Crumbles — Sam, Ryan, Violin, Piano\*\*

Sam: Ryan didn't cry out as the sword pierced his skin. He exhaled explosively, but the only other sound was the harsh *thunk* as the sword ran him through.

I was shattering, breaking into a thousand pieces — hitting the barrier than surrounded me, trying to do something, *anything*, to get to Ryan, to make it all okay again.

Ryan: "Sam?"

Sam: "Shh. Don't talk. It's okay, sweetheart. It'll all be okay. I promise."

Ryan: "Hurts, Sam."

Sam: "I know. I know it does, but..."

Ryan: "Sam... I need you... to listen. You remember? What I told you. At the top of the keep."

Sam: "Don't you do this. Don't you say goodbye to me. You hear me? *Ryan. Don't you fucking do this.*"

Ryan: "I told you... that I wished for *nothing*... more than you. Still mean it."

[Adapted from ch. 21 of *The Consumption of Magic*]

## XII. Sam's Letter — Sam, Violin, Piano††

Ryan, you will wake up. I know you will. There's no other choice.  
And when you do, I'm not going to be there. I'm sorry for that.  
You're going to be mad. Because it's not fair.

I never wanted this. I never asked for this. But it was given to me, regardless.

Hold on, okay?

Just hold on.

Because one day, and one day soon, I will come back for you.

And I will never let you go.

Ryan, I love you.

[Adapted from the prologue to *A Wish Upon the Stars*]

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\*\* Betrayed by a friend and preyed upon for their trust, Sam and Ryan find themselves caught in the enemy's trap. With Sam and his magic sealed behind an invisible, but unbreachable barrier, Ryan is left to face their foe alone. Soon disarmed and rooted in place by spellwork, the enemy takes up Ryan's sword and drives it through his gut and into the wall behind him.

†† Ryan lays comatose. The kingdom's healers have done all that they can do in the wake of his injury. As Sam sits by his bedside, the situation in the kingdom grows dire and Sam's destiny beckons. Unable to hold off any longer, Sam leaves this letter for Ryan to read, if he wakes.

### XIII. Every Story Has an Ending — Sam, Ryan, Violin, Piano<sup>‡‡</sup>

Sam: Every story has an ending.

And fairy tales tend to have the happiest of them all.

The ones where *they lived happily ever after*.

This, here, is mine:

“It was something the gods could never understand.

I am loved, and I love in return.

Magic doesn’t matter—none of this matters—if you have to go it alone.”

Ryan: “Sam, what did you do?”

Sam: “I took control of my own destiny. Set my own path. There was a light.

All I had to do was snuff it out.”

Ryan: “You made yourself mortal.”

Sam: “We’ll grow old together.”

Ryan: “Are you sure?”

Sam: “More sure than I’ve been about anything.”

“Life isn’t defined by how long it is. It’s the moments we have while we’re alive.

Both: And our lives will be filled with so many moments, between you and I, that I we will live a thousand lifetimes, loved, and loving in return.”

Every story has an ending.

And fairy tales have the happiest of them all.

The ones where *they lived happily ever after*.

This, here, is ours.

[Adapted from ch. 8 of *The Consumption of Magic* and  
chs. 12, 14, and the epilogue of *A Wish Upon the Stars*]

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<sup>‡‡</sup> A year passes. Ryan wakes to find Sam gone and the Kingdom of Verania in turmoil. But, when Sam does return, he comes with newfound power, a plan to right things in Verania, and some profound news to share with Ryan.

## Prologue

[Adapted from the prologue  
to *A Destiny of Dragons*]

Slow, with a sense of wonder ( $\text{♩}=60$ )

Piano

*p* freely

*pp* more reticently

Ped.

Simple, a little faster ( $\text{♩}=72$ )

stringendo

Sam

*p* sweetly, free

*mf* pushing forward

*pp* colla voce

*pp* gently

*p*

Ped.

I was se - ven-teen years old when I brought a bird

rall.

Slower ( $\text{♩}=54$ )

poco rall.

Sam

*mp*

*mf*

*p*

*pp* sempre cantabile

Ped.

back to life.



**Slower yet, with rubato** (♩=50)**rall.****a tempo**

(♩=50)

9

Sam

Pno.

*pp*

*p* *bereft*

*pp*

*colla voce*

*ad lib.*

I had

12

Sam

Pno.

*mp* *earnest, with his heart on his sleeve*

*poco rall.*

felt par - ti - cu - lar - ly sor - ry for my - self that day. — There was a

14

Sam

Pno.

*Sweetly, poco rubato* (♩=88)

*mp*

*colla voce*

*Ped.*

knight in the cas - tle — I'd been har - bo - ring a

17

Sam

crush on, \_\_\_\_\_ but he did - n't e - ven know I ex -

Pno.

*poco piu f*

*rall. dim.*

20

Sam

is - ted. \_\_\_\_\_ So there I was, sad and des -

Pno.

*mp*

*p*

*pp*

*Freely*

*Slow (♩=66)*

*poco*

23

Sam

pon - dent and a - lone: when I

Pno.

*pp*

*Tempo I (♩=60)*

*almost spoken*

*p freely*

*3*

*Red.*

26

Sam

saw it. I did - n't know

Pno.

*pp* more reticently

27

Sam

why I cared so much. I did - n't know

Pno.

*p* **stringendo** *still pp*

28

Sam

why it struck me as poig-nant-ly as it did. One

Pno.

*mp* *cresc.* *meno p*

**Tumbling forward** (♩=100)

29 *mf* a sudden gush of emotion

Sam

mo - ment I was sulk - ing o - ver

Pno.

*mf* *cresc.*

12

12

**rall.**

**molto rall.**

30 *f*

Sam

some - thing that would ne - ver be

Pno.

*f*

*dim.*

12

12

**a tempo** (♩=60)

**rall.**

**Even slower** (♩=44)

31 *mf*

*piu p*

Sam

mine, and the next I was

Pno.

*mp*

6

**poco rall.** . . . . .  
*p* *sweet, heartfelt*

32

Sam

on my knees, hunched o - ver this lit - tle bird. I

Pno.

*pp* 3 *ppp* 3

**Freely, recitativo** (♩=54)

34

Sam

held it in my hand and thought to my - self:

Pno.

*pp* 6 (not necessarily colla voce) 3 *pp* 6 3

Red.

36

Sam

*pp* It is - n't fair. The thought of a se - ven -

Pno.

*poco meno p* *pp* 6 3



38

Sam

teen - year - old who be - lieved his heart to be

Pno.

*pp*

6 3 6 6

40

Sam

bro - ken: It is-n't fair. It is-n't fair.

*still pp* *molto*

Pno.

*pp* *poco piu f*

6

43

Sam

This is - n't fair. I

*f* *ff* *p* urgent, but delicate

With sudden motion ( $\text{♩}=100$ )

Pno.

*sub. f* *f* *pp* bubbling

Ped.

45

Sam

cupped my hands\_ to - ge - ther,

Pno.

47

Sam

*p poco cresc.* **poco stringendo**

hi - ding\_ the lit - tle bird a -

Pno.

*poco cresc.*

49

Sam

*molto* **mf**

way. There was this

Pno.

*molto* **f** **mf** *8va*

51

Sam

pulse. There was green, \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

(8)

53

Sam

green \_\_\_\_\_ and gold, \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

(8)

**Fast, with incredible energy ( $\text{♩}=116$ )**

*f*

55

Sam

the co - lours of the for - est whirled a -

Pno.

(8)

*ff*

57

Sam

round me: a

*mf*

Pno.

*mf*

(loco)

59

Sam

spin - ning co - ro - na of light pooled bet - ween my cupped

*sub. mp*

Pno.

61

Sam

hands. It be -

*mf*

Pno.

*f* *mf*

67 *f with abandon*

Sam

drops \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ light \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

*ff* *f* *meno f*



69

Sam

spread - ing a - long the

Pno.

*ff* *f* *ff* *f*

poco a poco rall. *mp*

71

Sam

ground, pul - sa - ting

Pno.

*ff* *mf* *mp*

73

Sam

slow - ly. The for - est

Pno.

*mf* *p*

75

Sam

fa - - ded a - round me.\_\_\_\_

Pno.

*mp* *pp*

77

Sam

*meno p*

The sky a - bove\_\_\_\_

Pno.

79

Sam

*meno* *mf*

dar - kened. Ev - ery - thing\_

Pno.

*mf* *p*

81 *non dim.*

Sam

else \_\_\_\_\_ mel - - - ted a -

Pno.

*mf*

(♩=100) *accel.* \_\_\_\_\_ *f*

83

Sam

way.

Pno.

*f*

(♩=116) *ff* *freely, at his breaking point*

84

Sam

It is - n't fair. \_\_\_\_\_

Pno.

*ff*

repeating, accel. until the gesture is as fast as is possible

**Slow, recitativo (♩=54)**

85 (not too brief) *pp* hushed, surprised

Sam: There was a flut-ter of wings a-gainst my palm, the bar-est of

Pno.: (leave depressed, when lifting the pedal.) *p* *livelier*

*dolce*

**Like the beginning (♩=72)**

87 *p* *sweetly, free*

Sam: touch- es. I was se - ven - teen years old

Pno.: *pp* *sweetly* *long* *still pp colla voce* *piu p*

89 *pochissimo* *pp*

Sam: when I brought a bird back to

Pno.: *poco* *p* *l.h.*

*Ped.*

92 *with a tumbling forward*

Sam

life. And I ne - ver breathed a word of it to a - ny - one.

Pno.

*15<sup>ma</sup>*

*pp* 3

Ped.

95

Sam

Un - til now.

Pno.

*(15)*

*ppp* 3