

Evenly  
Spaced  
Waves  
of Irony

for baritone & piano

- I. The Willies
- II. Flames
- III. Weighing the Dog
- IV. Embrace

ca. 14 minutes

text by:  
Billy Collins

music by:  
David Cutler

# Text by Billy Collins

## I. The Willies

There is no known cure for them,  
unlike the heeby-jeebies  
or the shakes

which Russian vodka and a hot bath  
will smooth out.

The drifties can be licked,  
though the vapors often spell trouble.

The whips-and-jangles  
go away in time. So do the fantods.  
And good company will put the blues  
to flight

and do much to relieve the flips,  
the quivers and the screamies.

But the willies are another matter.

Anything can give them to you:  
electric chairs, raw meat, manta rays,  
public restrooms, a footprint,  
and every case of the willies  
is a bad one.

Some say flow with them, ride them out,  
but this is useless advice  
once you are in their grip.

There is no way to get on top  
of the willies. Valium  
is ineffective. Hospitals  
are not the answer.

Keeping still  
and emitting, thin, evenly spaced  
waves of irony  
may help

but don't expect miracles:  
the willies are the willies.

## II. Flames

Smokey the Bear heads  
into the autumn woods  
with a red can of gasoline  
and a box of wooden matches.

His ranger's hat is cocked  
at a disturbing angle.

His brown fur gleams  
under the high sun  
as his paws, the size  
of catcher's mitts,  
crackle into the distance.

He is sick of dispensing  
warnings to the careless,  
the half-wit camper,  
the dumbbell hiker.

He is going to show them  
how a professional does it.

## III. Weighing the Dog

It is awkward for me and bewildering for him  
as I hold him in my arms in the small bathroom,  
balancing our weight on the shaky blue scale,

but this is the way to weigh a dog and easier  
than training him to sit obediently on one spot  
with his tongue out, waiting for the cookie.

With pencil and paper I subtract my weight  
from our total to find out the remainder that is his,  
and I start to wonder if there is an analogy here.

It could not have to do with my leaving you  
though I never figured out what you amounted to  
until I subtracted myself from our combination.

You held me in your arms more than I held you  
through all those awkward and bewildering months  
and now we are both lost in strange and distant  
neighborhoods.

## IV. Embrace

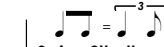
You know the parlor trick.  
Wrap your arms around your own body  
and from the back it looks like  
someone is embracing you,  
her hands grasping your shirt,  
her fingernails teasing your neck.

From the front it is another story.  
You never looked so alone,  
your crossed elbows and screwy grin.  
You could be waiting for a tailor  
to fit you for a straightjacket,  
one that would hold you really tight.

words by:  
Billy Collins

# I. The Willies

music by:  
David Cutler

  
Swing 8ths throughout  
= 96

Baritone

*mysteriously*  
*pppp*

*ppp*

Piano

*♩*  
*una corda*

*pp*

5

15

*pp*

*p*

9

*pp*

*p*

There is no known cure for them, \_\_\_\_\_

15

\*

14

15

*mp*

*♩*

17 *mp* *mf* (shake)

un - like the hee - by - jee - bies or the shakes

15 8

*pp*

20 *mp* *p* *pp*

which Russ - ian vod - ka and a hot bath

8

*pp*

*Leg.* *Leg.*

23 *p* *p*

will smooth out. The

8

*p* *ppp* *p*

*Leg.* *Leg.*

26 *mf*

drif - ties can be licked though their va - pors of - ten spell

8

*mf*

# II. Flames

$\bullet = 90$

*mf*

Baritone

Smo - key the bear \_\_\_\_\_

*arrogant*

Piano

*f*

*mf*

3

\_\_\_\_\_ heads in - to the Au - tumn woods

5

*f* with a red can of gas - o - line \_\_\_\_\_ and a

7

box of woo - den match - es \_\_\_\_\_

*mp*

9 *mp*

His ran - ger's hat is cocked

11

at a dis - tur - bing an - gle.

13 *f* (falsetto) (thee)

His brown fur gleams un - der the high sun

15 *p*

as his paws, the size of cat-cher's mits, cra-ckle in - to the dis - tance.

# III. Weighing the Dog

Baritone

$\bullet = 66$  *p* *pp*

It is awk - ward for me \_\_\_\_\_ and be - wild - ring for him \_\_\_\_\_ as I

Piano

*calm*

*p*

Detailed description: This system contains the first two measures of the piece. The Baritone part begins with a half note G2, followed by a quarter note F2, and a triplet of eighth notes (E2, D2, C2). The lyrics are "It is awk - ward for me \_\_\_\_\_ and be - wild - ring for him \_\_\_\_\_ as I". The Piano accompaniment consists of a single bass note G1 in the left hand and a single treble note G4 in the right hand, both held for the duration of the measures. The dynamic is *p* (piano).

6

hold him \_\_\_\_\_ in my arms \_\_\_\_\_ in the small bath - room \_\_\_\_\_ bal - an - cing our

*ppp* (tr.)

*pp* *p*

(D#)

Detailed description: This system contains measures 3 through 6. The Baritone part continues with a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, and a triplet of eighth notes (E2, D2, C2). The lyrics are "hold him \_\_\_\_\_ in my arms \_\_\_\_\_ in the small bath - room \_\_\_\_\_ bal - an - cing our". The Piano accompaniment features a treble clef with a *pp* dynamic. It includes a measure with a treble clef change at measure 5. A trill is indicated above the piano part in measure 6 with the marking *ppp* (tr.). The bass line continues with a single bass note G1. A chord symbol (D#) is written below the piano part in measure 6.

11

weight \_\_\_\_\_ on the sha - ky blue scale, \_\_\_\_\_

*mf* *pp*

15 *mf* *pp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 7 through 10. The Baritone part begins with a half note G2, followed by a quarter note F2, and a triplet of eighth notes (E2, D2, C2). The lyrics are "weight \_\_\_\_\_ on the sha - ky blue scale, \_\_\_\_\_". The Piano accompaniment features a treble clef with a *mf* dynamic. It includes a measure with a treble clef change at measure 15. The dynamic changes to *pp* in measure 9. The bass line continues with a single bass note G1.

38

*ff*

*fff*

ne - ver fi - gured out what you a - mount - ed to \_\_\_\_\_

*ff* *fff* l.h.

8vb - sfz Ped.

42

*ff*

un - til I sub - tract - ed my -

*ff*

3 3

3 3

V V

**RIT.**

46

*mf*

*pp*

self from the com - bi - na - - - tion. \_\_\_\_\_

*mf* *pp*

*mf* *pp*

(D#) Ped.



# IV. Embrace

♩ = 148

Baritone

Piano

*psychotically playful*

*mf*

5

Musical score for measures 5-8. The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with frequent changes in meter (3/4, 4/4, 3/4, 4/4). The dynamics range from *f* to *mf*. The baritone part is mostly silent, with a few notes in measure 8.

9

Musical score for measures 9-12. The piano part continues with complex rhythms and dynamics including *p*, *f*, and *mp*. The baritone part has lyrics: "You know the par - lor".

13

Musical score for measures 13-16. The piano part features dynamics *p*, *mf*, and *mp*. The baritone part has lyrics: "trick."

16

*mp*

Wrap your arms a -

20

round your own bo - dy

24

*p*

*mp*

*mf*

and from the back it looks like

28

*mp*

some - one is em - bra - cing you,