

Harry Styles: The Rebirth & Resurrection.

AN ANALYSIS OF HARRY STYLES' EPONYMOUS ALBUM



Hi there! Welcome to my analysis of the beloved *HS1*, but traditionally known as Harry Styles. Almost called *Pink*, too. Before we get into it, let's just take a moment to clear up some things so we avoid uncomfortable confrontation neither you nor I want to tussle with. First, these analyses I do, they're celebrations, *not interrogations*. Thinking this much, peeling back the layers, going word by word and line by line – this is how I interact with works of art that I really, really, *really* love and admire. And I really, really, *really* love and admire Harry and his art, and have for a long time now. Which leads me to making it clear that the following discussions and interpretations are not affiliated with Harry, and *I have no intention of overstepping*. Harry should be seen as an artist before an autobiographer, and trying to dig beyond personal boundaries is both disrespectful & futile. Therefore, there will be no discourse on his sexuality, family, or relationships, for it's not my place nor is it yours either. I have such a childlike love for this man, but also admiration and *respect* – and I sincerely ask of you to show him the same respect with any response you have to this analysis. This has been made, once again, as a *celebration* (*Happy birthday Self-Titled!*), and to share my notes in the margins that have always been there anyway. I mean, *think about it*, isn't that too cute? Harry's albums as their own poetry scrapbooks we all take part in annotating? Went too English geek on you, didn't I? *Sorry...* But, this has *also* been made to uplift Harry's talent, specifically in the places that doesn't give him flowers enough – songwriting, musicality, attention to detail, etc. And, unlike *others*, I don't feel comfortable disrespecting Harry for the sake of social media or to force him into my own biased boxes, or to be clouded by invasive theories.

So, guess what? On this document, you have commenting privileges! One of my absolute favorite, *favorite!!!* parts of sharing things like this... are the conversations that can bloom from it. Please, *pretty please*, feel free as a bird to decorate this document in your own commentary because it's just as valuable and welcome as my own. Anything goes! From your thoughts in the spur of the moment to additions to something mentioned to something you think I might've overlooked! And much more – I'm sure you'll teach me something new and fun! If you're unsure how to add a comment, [THIS](#) should help you out. With all good things, *of course*, there's got to be boundaries. Any comments disrespectful to Harry (*including but not limited to: invasive theories and ships, discussion of personal matters such as sexuality, using him or significant others or family as pawns in conspiracy. etc*) or disrespectful to me (*including but not limited to: personal derogatory comments, insulting over critiquing, etc*) will be removed promptly. We don't do that here! Let's just have fun with Harry's art! Also, Urban Dictionary is forbidden here.

I ❤️ making these analyses for you, but they do take a lot of time and effort over months. So, if you like this analysis or have liked any of my analyses in the past, consider donating to my [Ko-Fi!](#)

Lots of love,
Rach (@[musicforapoet](#))

RECOMMENDED: GO TO PRINT LAYOUT ON MOBILE PHONES FOR BEST VISUALS.

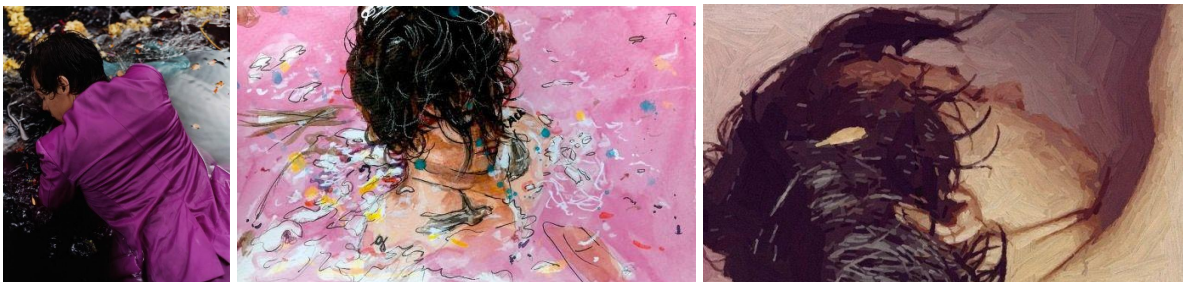
What's in a Name?

Intro, Album Themes/Visuals, Influences

A mumbled *two, three, four...* gently counts us in not just to the first song to play, but also to a metaphorical door opening to a new persona and path. Eyes are opening now, to a new perspective of life and creation outside of what one has known for so long. *The rebirth and resurrection of a star*, now standing on his own two feet, separated from what's been previously glamorized and glossed. **Harry Styles** as an album tentatively circles around self-discovery, enacting tactics to still keep his distance – something that inevitably comes with diving into new knowledge and experience. *HS1*, as it's so lovingly nicknamed, is a grand mix of everything Harry loves and holds dear to himself, all building to nourish a reintroduction into the music scene he's now approaching with a different skip in his step. Or, even, take it to be *redefinition* – peeling back thick layers of himself, removing the polished confines of boyband stardom and beginning anew. Like said before, there's moments of distance, yet, there remains this palpable push and pull of authenticity, much like the *tides of the ocean*. In this back and forth, a yearning to be vulnerable while still being apprehensive, he finds himself leaning back on what he knows and admires most, letting those influences guide his hand in painting his own self portrait.

I reiterate, *I believe that **HS1** is a culmination of everything that Harry loves*, and, in the time in which the album was made, *the things he believed would have defined him*. So keen to show us that he's a devotee and apprentice to music legends of the past, and keen to show that he won't shy away from literature, too. It's not a new phenomenon at all, pulling from experiences and influences as you work to cultivate your own identity. To create something all on your own, while still discovering who you are when you stand alone. Won't be the first or last to do so, no doubt in my mind, but *that doesn't mean it's not significant to chat about*.

This album is self aware of not knowing how to communicate properly – *a common theme amongst Harry's oeuvre, as I've pointed out before and hopefully you've picked up on!* – and basking in that silence while simultaneously resenting that character flaw. And this can lead me right into confessing just how poetic I believe it is when artists title their work with their own name, *and I know some will probably retaliate against that*. But, think about it. One's own name is one's first building block to a sense of who they are. A part of one's identity, how you're recognized and what you respond to. How you introduce yourself to others. And that's just it – to title his album as his own name solidifies how he's *reintroducing himself to his audience* – **I and my music are one of the same, and this is who I am now**. All flaws and traits included. *I'm back, I'm here, take notice!* And, in the context of *HS1*, *this is what my grieving has been* – something he feels like he couldn't express under the superficiality of a boyband. *Maybe?*



"What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."
Romeo + Juliet, William Shakespeare

The Elements

In this album's visuals, a big driving force is the water. And I love when the elements of the world are highlighted, for each of them has their own power and energy to offer. In terms of *water*, I believe we are

looking at baptismal imagery, possibly, but *most certainly* a sense of rejuvenation. You see, **HS1** came at a time when he felt this need to prove himself, to try and establish himself in murky waters – as he grieves the living and those he’s lost, wading through all feelings of doubt and worthlessness and past dependency, pushing him to seek confidence as he tests his own buoyancy. And, in my eyes, *that’s a captivating way to call the album what it is*. Trying to navigate his way in new waters, reintroduction to redefinition through sound and immortalizing stories he’s held onto, and held close to himself.

In the history of both literature and religion, water is often portrayed as a medium of purification or rebirth, and even moments of clarity. Specifically, in Chinese literature, it’s even used as a metaphor for human nature itself. And I do hold onto my initial theory when I first started diving deep (*pun possibly intended*) into the meaning of the album aesthetics – that he dances around the idea of religion in his art without ever really directly addressing it, and that burns so bright in this debut album, *to me*. Additionally, something I find that is often removed from the conversation around the symbolism of water is how it has the capability to be destructive as well. It drowns and it erodes, wearing away even the densest of stones given enough time. And, throughout **HS1**, we witness a lot of self destructive behavior, and grieving in itself can be considered destruction.

But, I’m about to say something that’ll sound like I’m contradicting myself. But, within the four elements, there’s always coexistence and nuance. Even in opposites. And even with all this discussion surrounding water, if I had to associate each of Harry’s albums with a single element, I would dare associate **HS1** with fire. In fact, I’d argue that water is better paired to the album that comes after this one, *Fine Line*. (*And I think of Harry’s House as air, might as well let you in on that too!*) And, yes, this may be one of those odd and crazy *hear me out’s* [*isn’t this whole analysis that though?*]. Fire, though the opposite of water, holds the same positive and negative, yin and yang – as the album itself holds, one could say.

We’ll start with the positive symbolism of fire. There’s a religious connotation held to fire, as well as a rebirth notion – parallel to what we discussed with water a bit, isn’t it? Most famously, the image of a phoenix rising out of the ashes, closely associated with the element itself. The phoenix is a mythical golden bird, associated with *renewal* and *regeneration*. It rises from the ashes of its previous life, solidifying it as a symbol of hope, life, and better things to come – diving into the specifics (which I always do!), *life reborn from the knowledge and experience of difficult times and challenging circumstances*. I chose to emphasize this because I believe this debut album is showing Harry rising from the ashes of what he was for so many years, and determined to take any negatives he internalized back then – mixed with the different genres of grief explored – and find a way to *redefine it for himself*, while simultaneously recontextualizing his public persona. But, *not in an inauthentic way*, but with a natural progression – a lot of **Harry Styles** feels like natural emotions, natural growth, *which is why I feel it’s fitting to attribute it back to the natural elements in a little side chat*. But, anyway!

As we talked about with water, fire can be rejuvenating but also destructive. But, if we return back to the mythology of the phoenix, from destruction can come growth. And, I believe **HS1** represents that in not only the themes and lyrics, but in the whole context of the album being released itself. *Which I kinda chatted about already, so I’ll move along*.



Left: Harry photographed by Harley Weir for *HS1* (2017)
 Right: *Ophelia* by John Everett Millais (1851-52)

Harry's Ophelia

Harry consistently being in water for the album made my mind instantly draw a little red string to this infamous Ophelia, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Is this my art history and literature nerd coming out of the woodwork? Oh, *absolutely*, but why not have a bit of fun, shall we?

To me, Ophelia is such an important character in the play because she shows the audience a frail heart, a naivety exploited and abused often. She's also the pinnacle of Shakespeare's ambiguity, defined first by the men in the play and defined second by the audience – but she never really gets to hold a definition all her own. She's driven mad when her father is murdered by her lover; dying young, suffering from grief & madness, falling into the river while picking flowers and singing, and slowly drowning. And, when the news of her death is relayed by Gertrude, it's done so in pretty verse, focusing on the serene scenery (“*willow grows aslant a brook*” [IV.VII.100]) and how “*mermaid-like*” [IV.VII.100] Ophelia looked like just before she drowned. It's an aesthetic portrait painted, but also upholds beauty without substance as a reigning portrayal of her suicide. And, shrouding Ophelia's demise in metaphor and beauty clouds the audience (*and the other characters in the play*) to see it as the true tragedy it was. *And I think that was all by design, but that discussion will make you feel like you're stuck in a Shakespeare lecture hall, so let me hold my tongue for the time being and try my best to get to my point!*

Okay. So, the most powerful elements of both beauty and metaphor in her death are the flowers Ophelia is adorned with as she drowns. Though often interpreted as only aesthetic objects in beauty of the scene, I believe they hold more nuance. As the eloquent bouquets meet the same ultimate end as Ophelia herself, turned into something adorned for beauty with no further substance. They become simply another part of her *lovely* death. *And*, throughout the photography done for **HS1**, Harry is surrounded by flowers in the water often, as well. Though there have been many art pieces made in honor of Ophelia, the painting by John Everett Millais is my favorite, as I feel like it perfectly captures not only the beauty, but the emotion. *And*, I theorize that the photographer Harry worked with, Harley Weir, might've been inspired by Ophelia imagery a bit.

Now, I will always acknowledge that these things could be way simpler than my mind makes them out to be. *Could Weir just have thought Harry looked beautiful amongst the flowers? Sure.* But I wouldn't feel right sharing this analysis with you if I didn't at least explore all my possibilities, you see? So, once again, *let's chat*. One big thing about Ophelia's character is the loss of her innocence at no fault of her own. While Harry is taking agency in this album, I feel like **HS1** does show a shedding of innocence, in a mix of things that he can and can't take fault for. Though adorned and surrounded with beauty (*Ophelia – nature; Harry – think of the color palette used for this album*), there's something just under the surface

that contradicts it all. But, as Ophelia adorned *herself* with flowers (*in my perception*), Harry adorns himself in music. Maybe, even, he drowns himself in it – to deal with the loss of innocence he’s had to face, a lot rooted in grief.

There’s something to be said when approaching pretty much every form of art, in that there’s two levels the audience reacts – a basic, surface level and a deeper, comprehensive level. *Analysis is always the latter, you know, so obviously we’re going to always end up there.* The first level, the *surface*, people are going to see the aesthetic of the flowers, and get lost in simply the sound of the song. *Oh, this is nice, I like this. This is pretty.* The second level, the *comprehensive*, is when people are going to start seeing and connecting and empathizing, and that comes in the lyrics for the songs and the deeper meanings hidden in Ophelia’s death. To *feel* what was behind the gorgeous smokescreens intended to distract and mislead. *Mind, this is all a theory. Take with it as you will.*



Album Cover / “Pink” / Other Visuals

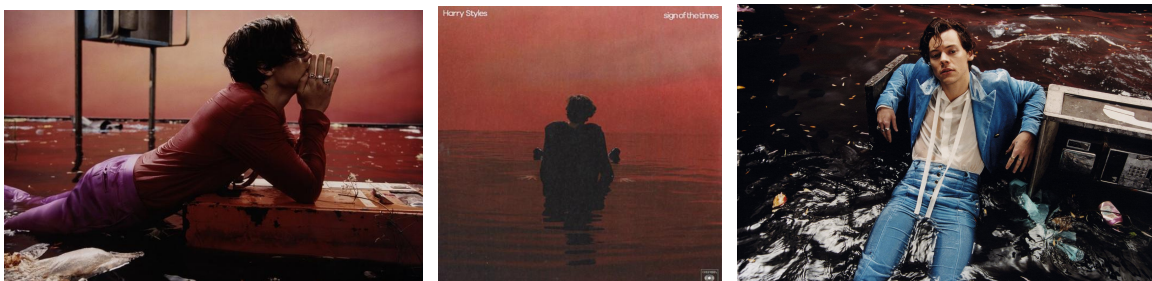
There’s something so beautiful and delicate to this album cover, do you see it? I don’t know, maybe it’s the soft color palette that creates such a calming feeling in me, but *yeah*. Aside from the aesthetics, I do find it an interesting way to present a debut to a new self, to an existing and hopefully new audience combined. So, Harry’s not facing us, but is still found in a vulnerable position. He’s unclothed (*at least from what the camera can see*), naked and curled up on himself, surrounded by this pink water. With the back turned toward us, it’s an indicator of him not letting us in *completely*, I believe, but yet he’s still more open than he was prior – as communicated through the still exposed nature. I feel like it’s also worth mentioning that it’s a part of his body *not clad in tattoos*, which aids even more to the message of the vulnerable. *Yeah?*

Ok, the water. The water is very beautiful in color, but there’s something darker hiding underneath that. *Ophelia, anyone?* It’s not clear and crystalline, but rather turned to this pink opaque – and pink water is not pure, but rather an indicator of something contaminated, *toxic*. Now, here’s where I try to segue smoothly to my other point – *did you know the album was originally going to be called **Pink**?* And it made me think of the character *Pink* that’s in Pink Floyd’s conceptual *The Wall* album. If you’re unfamiliar, you need to go have a listen, as I believe that there are songs on there that definitely influenced some songs on here. *Plus, it’s really fucking good.* A brief summary for you is as follows: *Pink* is a rockstar on the verge of a breakdown, and builds this metaphorical wall around himself, with each brick representing a certain trauma (passing of his father to the war, his love life, his upbringing, etc. etc.). *Pink* isolates in a hotel room, where the wall is absolute – then, *Pink* is in a free fall to depression and madness before *Pink* makes his wall fall eventually. *My point in bringing this into the discussion is this: **I think the pink water represents Harry’s wall, and maybe in the process of being shed.***

We already had the whole discussion about all the water imagery that made me think of rebirth, rejuvenation, the whole nine yards – and you’re going to need to remember that now. *I won’t be mad if*

you have to scroll back, because I did too! And how pink water is essentially toxic? My theory is, *in the album cover*, we are seeing Harry in the midst of his renewal, washing all the toxicity off and out. *Pink's* wall is made of bricks/traumas, and Harry's is made of toxic substances/traumas. And why I think we are seeing the middle of it instead of the conclusion is that **HS1** is more of a reflection on past traumas and experiences with no resolution in the end.

A little detail that would be a crime to ignore: *his necklace*. The way it's framed in our view makes me feel like we are meant to take notice. It's a lotus flower. *And, god, you know how dearly I love floriography!* The **lotus flower** is a symbol of purity, overcoming adversity, and rebirth (*opening with the sun rising and closing as night falls, poetic in itself*). And, know I believe, in this composure, I think Harry and the lotus flower are one (*symbolically*). Harry is *becoming* the lotus flower even, returning back to this overarching theme of redefinition and rebirth with this eponymous debut.



In my analyses, I usually don't do a whole covering of the entire album's photoshoot, and try to keep my focus on the album cover the most. But, in this case, I feel almost obligated to talk even deeper about it all – because, in the way the entire aesthetic rollout was done, is so evocative of the theme. It's so well done, that I'm just bursting at the seams to want to talk about it. *Will you give me a listen? Okay!* I love how there's a full spectrum explored – the lights and the darks, but all coming together for the one motif of *water* [which, as we've said, leads to themes of rebirth and redefinition, *blah blah blah*]. In my mind, this is like what's *underneath* the water in the album cover. The embodiment of the trauma being washed off him as he attempts to start anew.

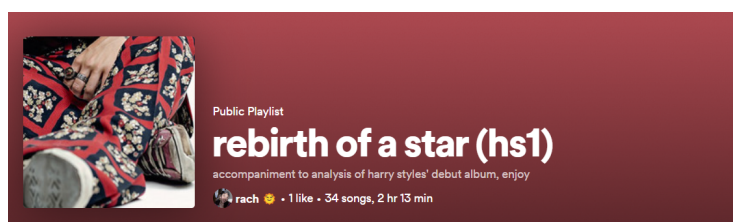
The first image, towards your left, is my personal favorite out of them all. The element I find the most intriguing is his positioning, especially in hands, that imply a moment in prayer. And I have already touched on how I believe Harry dances around the concept of religion throughout this album, so I feel like this could be a friend to that belief. But, also, it feels like we've caught him in a moment of deep contemplation, too. Like said before, and I find significant in this picture specifically, this is what's happening underneath the pink water of the album cover. The trauma, the contemplation, the prayer, etc. Maybe even in the midst of *bargaining*, even?

The image in the middle is the artwork for *Sign of the Times*, his first song out in the world as a solo artist. We, again, find ourselves immersed in the water motif, and, again, on the darker side of the spectrum. And, maybe I'm going a bit too on the dark side of this, but it kind of reminds me of *blood* mixed with *water* in color, which would be fitting for a song of *Sign of the Times*' magnitude and weight, I believe. He's in a more clothed silhouette, head tilted as he stares off into a red, apocalyptic horizon. People have argued whether he's standing or sitting in the water, but I believe the latter. Hands to the side under the water, and feet in front partially submerged. The hands are palms up, and you can make out the rings that have become a Harry signature. And I almost wonder if this is one body together, or two bodies separate? Either interpretation could be interesting to explore.

One body — Much like the first photo, we are witnessing Harry in a moment of contemplation, but there's something more *ominous* to it. If throughout the day, you caught a glimpse out of your window of a sky gone red, wouldn't you find a feeling in the pit of your stomach that's a bit uneasy? And I think that uneasy feeling is one for the viewer to internalize.

Two bodies — The old persona of Harry is the body floating, and the redefined Harry is the main silhouette we see sitting. Drowning his old self (*destructive quality of water, self-destructive tendencies*) to try and come back anew (*positive symbolism of water*).

The last image, towards your right, is the image on the inside of the vinyl. Again, on the darker side of the spectrum. And I do think it reflects a lot of the same concepts of the photo on the left that I talked about before. But the positioning of himself is different, more confident I believe. Like an acceptance of the grief, of the self-destructive, of the darkness that lurks underwater. *Maybe*.



Per usual, I made a playlist to accompany the analysis over on my Spotify.
You can listen [here](#) and follow my Spotify [here](#)!

Meet Me in the Hallway

Song 1/10

Meet in the Hallway is absolutely one of those songs of Harry's that I believe gets overlooked and underappreciated for the sole reason that people don't entirely grasp the profundity it has injected into it. This song is a masterpiece in uncertainty's devastation, utilizing setting and time in amplification. And the sober sound in itself offers up a perfect way to orient the listener to the delicate curation of *HS1*, I believe. It delves into the themes of longing, heartache, and the desperation for reconciliation. With every analysis I've done on an album, I make sure to emphasize just how much weight is put onto the opening song and the closing one, as it introduces then rounds out the story the respective artist is aching to share. *And this one won't be any different*. We are introduced to a theme that will be weaving its way fervently throughout the debut as a whole, which is *reflection* and *grieving*. Too often, it's stuck side by side with *self-regret* and *destruction*, as well.

The title itself is a metaphor, and the title itself serves as the core of the song. The term *Meet Me in the Hallway*, to me, mirrors the saying *Meet Me in the Middle*. The song has an intense tinge of a plea, the plea to reconnect and resolve unfinished business, to find a compromise. But, one party is always hurting more than the other. Per usual though, let's go deeper. A *hallway* is a temporary, empty place to be stuck in. It's used in order to reach a destination, but is never the destination itself. *This is such a key detail* in the perspective of the song. It's *torturous*, to be stuck in this limo, never reaching the point, always being pushed back onto the floor of the hallway. It's a form of stagnancy, and one can easily spiral if left to their own devices in such circumstances.

There's also another metaphor at work here, a pretty big one and overarching one: comparing *love* to *addiction*. I definitely think **Meet Me in the Hallway** is about love, but, *more so*, the loss of it. As many people have vocalized one time or many, love can feel like a *drug*. In the moment, it can make you see

the world differently, and it can *take your pain away*. But, so easily, one can become reliant, dependent, and find themselves immersed in the withdrawal pains when it's snatched away from them all at once. *And I think, essentially, that's what this song encompasses and illustrates* – the withdrawal. Partnered with the bargaining, standing in the metaphorical space between closeness and distance. Trying to find a way to meet halfway physically and emotionally in a desperate effort to *take the pain away*. He needs it, can't live without it, even as it mutilates him. And, as with the large majority of Harry's work, there's a significant struggle with *lack of communication*, now also highlighting *bad coping mechanisms*, both, as you'll come to see, find themselves in recurrence to this debut.



Meet Me in the Hallway, [Live in Studio](#) (2017)

[obviously i don't have to tell you what a gift "behind the album" was and still is. the performances are amazing, and i'm bound to pull them out for the other songs too. but especially the ballads, because you can hear his voice so clearly and passionately. wow.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Intro]

Two, Three, Four...

Something so decadent to the ear, but something so devastating to the gut. I love how the song, *and the album*, starts off with this hushed count off. Starting with a hushed tone gives this intimacy to it, which is something so intriguing, as this opening song chronicles a *loss of intimacy*.

[Verse 1]

**Meet Me in the Hallway
Meet Me in the Hallway
I just left your bedroom
Give me some morphine
Is there any more to do?**

Meet Me in the Hallway - Again, a rearrangement of the plea to *Meet Me in the Middle*. Stopped at the first line to digest, but this is only the first in many moments of begging to work it out, interwoven with many pleas of wanting to get better and get better – but still finding oneself stuck in the hallway, stuck in the inbetween, with no direction as to where to head to get to the destination. A small detail I feel like people always miss is the fact his vocals are *echoing*, solidifying that particular image of him. Sitting out in the hallway, back up against the wall, maybe with the head tilted back too – pleading in withdrawal.

Meet Me in the Hallway / I just left your bedroom - "*Hey you, out there beyond the wall, breaking bottles in the hall, can you help me?*" from Pink Floyd's *Hey You*. Just like the hallway is a metaphor, I believe the bedroom is one as well. *Take the setting and turn into poetics*. The bedroom is considered an intimate space, yes? The speaker's walked out, there's been a separation of intimacy, and is on his way out into the cold, *but isn't all the way out*. Again, remember, *the hallway is an in between space, always a method to the destination but never the destination itself*. He's stuck in this agonizing leeway, and maybe he keeps returning back to them on his own or they keep convincing him, even with the knowledge that this *addiction* is detrimental to him.

There's some detail hidden in the way it's phrased. *I **just left** your bedroom* gives us some backstory, if that's the right phrasing. They were recently together and intimate, maybe saying that *this will be the last time we do this* (but they said that the last time). Inserting a distance that's emotional as well as physical. And, additionally, back to bouncing off the bedroom metaphor, the relationship could be in such a place where the speaker feels like a stranger, like he's no longer welcome. *Lost intimacy*.

*I just left **your** bedroom*, the specification of yours, as it's not his or theirs together. *Lost intimacy*. Marking the bedroom as the other party's, in turn, it's the other one's rules in place. The speaker has no sense of control, which can serve as a double. No control in the relationship, but also, maybe simultaneously, losing control of the self. The hallway is something more neutral, less intimate, a stark contrast – and that's where the speaker's been thrown.

Give me some morphine - *Morphine* is not only a pain medication, but also extremely addictive. Could this be him begging for it as it being the only substitute to even come close to the effect this person's love had on him? The love that's been *ripped away*? Here, and written in the undertone of the song beginning to end, is a sense of hopelessness. As said before, *this person's love is a drug to him*, so he's bringing in another addictive drug to try and supplement. And, like many things here, *it's injected with a metaphor* – simple one, more broadened, trying to search for the supplement to ease the pain. A supplement to the other who left him in urgency for something to take the pain away. It suggests that the speaker has fallen into a state of desperation and is seeking any form of escape from the agony.

Is there any more to do? - *"Would you touch me? / Would you help me carry the stone? / Can you help me?"* from Pink Floyd's *Hey You*. *Hopelessness*. This song chronicles a moment of anguish, grasping at straws in an attempt to salvage the intimacy and relationship, not wanting to lose the one who's taking the pain away. *Even with the knowledge it might not be healthy, and even with the knowledge it's only a temporary solution*. But, he's become dependent. And finds himself in a weakest state.

[Chorus]
Just let me know, I'll be at the door, at the door
Hoping you'll come around
Just let me know, I'll be on the floor, on the floor
Maybe we'll work it out
I gotta get better, gotta get better
I gotta get better, gotta get better
I gotta get better, gotta get better
And maybe we'll work it out

Just let me know, I'll be at the door, at the door / Hoping you'll come around - *"Don't tell me there's no hope at all"* from Pink Floyd's *Hey You*. I see this chorus as a surrender, a fall from grace on the floor of the hallway. The repetition in the chorus captures this essence, I feel. He's ready to take the person back whenever they are willing. He's right at the door – *trying to get closer to the past intimacy of the bedroom* – ready to try and work it out, to try and *Meet in the Middle*, and forget the pain they've caused him. *But will it ever really be forgotten?* And he's *hoping*. It's on the other person to come around, for maybe he has run dry, exhausted. Stuck in the silence, the waiting.

Just let me know, I'll be on the floor, on the floor / Maybe we'll work it out - *"Together we stand, divided we fall"* from Pink Floyd's *Hey You*. He's on the floor, as all of his guards and dignity have fallen limp. Not putting up any fights to the withdrawal and pain, but rather letting himself succumb to the emotion. Surrendering himself to an addictive love, even if it's destined to harm him in the end. And he's saying *maybe* we'll work it out. *Hoping, maybe*, very tentative and insecure in his words – like he's been at this same spot of desperation before. He's experienced the come down from the high too many times.

Yet, there's still a small part of him that will still go back. That will still fall to his knees if the other party welcomes him back in. Still a small part of him that tries to *hope* in the midst of the *hopelessness*.

The lines before this and the two here now mirror each other, and, yes, *I believe there could be intention to that*. When you're in despair, spiraling within yourself, you can repeat yourself over and over to try and communicate the tortured spot you're in. Repeating the same point again and again, even if phrased a little differently.

I gotta get better, gotta get better (x3) - *What was that about repetition?* Could be for rhythmic purposes, granted, but it feels like it's telling it to himself, repeating it like a mantra. A mantra that reflects both a personal struggle to come to heal and a stronghold on the aspiration to improve the situation with the other party. And it's sung in almost a yell, and very self-chastising. He's placing himself at fault, this confession into how he feels – and, because of the urgency this repetition invokes, it could be something that's been plaguing him, weighing him down *to the floor*. Maybe he knows he's not been handling things well, like one would with a drug addiction, and needs to get better in order to work it out. Even if it's not a guarantee. And, once more, the repetition, in this section and in other moments of the song, pushes forward the feelings of *hopelessness*, *desperation*, and even *submissiveness*.

[Verse 2]

**I walked the streets all day
Running with the thieves
'Cause you left me in the hallway (Give me some more)
Just take the pain away**

I walked the streets all day / Running with the thieves - Continues along the path of the song's melancholy and introspection, and the sense of solitude is further pushed and painted. The speaker's wandering hopelessly, searching for something to replicate his drug – much like many substance abusers spend their days walking the streets looking for more. *Then*. Any saying that includes "*running with the...*" implies associating oneself with a particular group of people without identifying oneself within it. A thief is someone who seeks something they don't possess. In this song, he's waiting desperately for someone who isn't returning back to him, so he feels the connection to the thieves – *he seeks something he no longer possesses*.

Which feels reminiscent of Liam Sparkes' quote in Another Man speaking of tattooing Harry's butterfly:

"The butterfly on his torso is based on an old French prison tattoo inspired by Papillon. Traditionally, it would mean the wearer is a thief – something to do with the double meaning of 'Je vole', which translates as both 'I steal' and 'I fly'."

Running with the thieves could indicate he's let himself get carried away by things around him, to take his mind off the pain, engulfing himself in things that he knows are self-destructive. Almost like he's fallen into the dramatic justifying thoughts: *What's the point of anything if this love is lost? If the one I love won't let me in, might as well throw my entire self away*. With the withdrawal of losing the connection and intimacy with this other person, there's a lack of meaning to anything he does. So why not go and run about? Indulge himself in self-destructive habits?

'Cause you left me in the hallway (Give me some more) / Just take the pain away - He points the finger to the other person as the cause of his agonizing isolation in the *hallway*, as they've neglected him in the limbo, for he doesn't know where they stand. He's been left somewhere in the middle of an unfinished relationship, hoping for more. *Hoping for the person to take their pain away*. And, through all this, I feel like there's an indication that *he's the only one holding out hope anymore*. He blames his irresponsible actions in the lines before on the fact that he's been, again, *left in the hallway*, framing

anything he does destructively as a cause and effect phenomenon. Again, *the hallway is such a temporary and empty place to be, a way to get to the destination but never the destination itself*. If you're standing in the hallway, especially in a moment of stagnancy with no direction out, you're nowhere meaningful – and that can be torturous.

I love how *Give me some more* is a play off the earlier *Give me some morphine*, which could be used as an emphasis but also a branch off, diving deeper into the desperation. Screaming into the echoes of the hallway *Give me more!* More effort from the other person, some more hope or signals that would make him believe that they're working towards making things better too. *And this will take his pain away*. Even if that soothing is superficial, he's desperate for something to take it away.

[Chorus]

Just let me know, I'll be at the door, at the door
Hoping you'll come around
Just let me know, I'll be on the floor, on the floor
Maybe we'll work it out
I gotta get better, gotta get better
I gotta get better, gotta get better
I gotta get better, gotta get better
And maybe we'll work it out

We've returned back to the chorus, with the spiraling repetition and aching. We have the metaphors of the *hallway*, the *bedroom*, but what about the *door*? Each piece of this setting we've been placed in holds such symbolism to it. *The door* could be a metaphor for *entering back into the relationship*, for the door is what separates the *bedroom* (intimacy) and the *hallway* (isolation). It's almost as if he's waiting for their permission for him to open the door and enter the door, returning back to the feeling that the speaker's the only one who still wants this companionship. He's the one that's having the desires, this desperation, this need – but the other person is failing to meet him in the middle, to *meet him in the hallway*, even as he's collapsed on the floor in withdrawal.

[Outro]

We don't talk about it
It's something we don't do
'Cause once you go without it
Nothing else will do

We don't talk about it / It's something we don't do - Here we go again, this man and his communication issues. I've said it before, and I'll probably say it a million times as the opportunity to do so is inevitable to come up multiple times before – struggle with communication is such a common theme across this album, across his discography in general. The two of them don't talk about their issues – maybe they're scared that if they start talking about it, it'll be like pulling on a loose thread for the whole thing to unravel. There's a fear of loss, there's a fear of having to grief the companionship, as the love has grown *addictive*.

'Cause once you go without it / Nothing else will do - Once he's had a taste of what this person could be for him, how they can take the edge off, he feels as if anything and anyone that follows will pale in comparison. Drugs, such as *morphine*, are so highly addicting, people often feel like they can't live without it and nothing else is as good – after they've felt that surge in their body, or the relief.

So, what does this opener tell us about the album to come? Within the confines of ***Meet Me in the Hallway***, in its somber after-hours feel, a lot of themes were introduced and a lot of conceptualizations were set up to be returned to. This album seems to have a string of grieving, and exploring the different facets within. This song also has a lot to do with *the self*, and this will come back up, which is quite

fitting for a debut and reintroduction. But this relationship with the self isn't healthy all the time, and that's something else we'll continue to explore. *I think there's so many small details that connect all these songs together*, so here's me shamelessly encouraging you to keep your eyes and ears pricked.

Sign of the Times

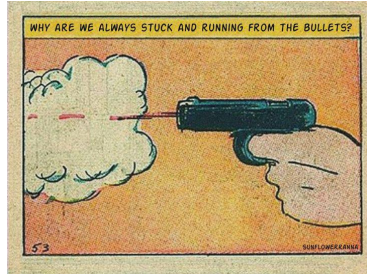
Song 2/10

The theatrical and grand **Sign of the Times** has become such a staple within Harry's discography, the true debut into the new path he set himself on. It's a song that's so layered, meaningful, beautifully vague, and bursts at the seams with symbolism that will hit everybody just that little bit differently. Obviously, as throughout this whole analysis, I'm just offering my two cents here, but, *please*, if you have another interpretation that suits your *beautiful* heart, don't let this break that image for you or make you feel as if your own take on the song is any less. This, in itself, is the beauty of art, no? *Just wanted to make that clear*, as I know myself and others have such an emotional connection to this song for more personal reasons, some shared and some kept close to themselves.

Okay, something so intriguing is in the structure, and how it doesn't follow the normal one for a pop song. This lends itself to how people were taken aback when Harry chose *this song* as his big debut single, subverting expectations held to him. *Redefinition*. Poetically, I would characterize this song with the structure of a meditation (with an *eschatological* bent to it) rather than lyrical (which seeks to explain and expound – *he's moving away from this style here*). And more details separate this song from the other album tracks – *which I believe was done intentionally, but I digress*. Once more, **Sign of the Times** creates something that feels so theatrical and grand, something that extends past just Harry himself. While a lot of songs on this album feel more intimate and like listening to personal anecdotes, this song feels like it was made with the purpose of connection and to reach out to others. *But remember that theatrical doesn't have to mean fake and inauthentic*. Theatricality is using dramatic personas or devices to demonstrate something that the artist cannot or chooses to not state simply and directly. Truly, when delivering messages or attempting to convey scenes that have such grandiosity to them, often a natural disconnect comes. *And that's not a bad thing*, and in terms of **SOTT**, I think Harry uses it to his advantage with this being his debut single as a solo artist. Like said before – *this song feels like it was made with the purpose of connection and to reach out to others* – and that in itself is exactly what he needed to do. And did so, successfully.

All this talk about a grand message beyond Harry, *but what is the daunting topic here?* Again, this song is layered beautifully and vague artistically, leaving room for many interpretations so those can hold it close to their hearts. My interpretation is a mesh between my own internalization of the lyrics, and also taking into consideration how Harry himself has explained his own work – *which is insanely valuable, and shouldn't be discarded in the way I see so many do*. I think it all circles around the idea of Judgement Day, though, and obviously more detail happens as we dive in lyric-by-lyric. But let's refresh ourselves on Harry's explanation:

"Most of the stuff that hurts me about what's going on at the moment is not politics, it's fundamentals. Equal rights. For everyone, all races, sexes, everything. ... This isn't the first time we've been in a hard time, and it's not going to be the last time. The song is written from a point of view as if a mother was giving birth to a child and there's a complication. The mother is told, 'The child is fine, but you're not going to make it.' The mother has five minutes to tell the child, 'Go forth and conquer!'"



Sign of the Times, Live from Reggio Emilia (2023)

[this song is something cinematic and was made to be experienced through all the senses in the most grandiose of occasions. when he pulls out this song at his shows, it's always something to remember, but there's something so surreal in reggio emilia's sott.]

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[Verse 1]

Just stop your crying, it's a Sign of the Times
Welcome to the final show
I hope you're wearing your best clothes
You can't bribe the door on your way to the sky
You look pretty good down here
But you ain't really good

Just stop your crying, it's a Sign of the Times - "*Hush now baby, baby don't you cry*" from Pink Floyd's Mother. This starting line gives biblical allusion to the idea of Judgement Day or even a Rapture, or even a resurrection/ascension showered in rebirth implications. Through this song, as we'll see, there's a constant allusion towards themes of turmoil – perhaps death, perhaps rebirth, perhaps even purification – all centering back to this one phrase central to the song. To bring focus to the actual wording of the lyric, many religions believe that before the end times, there will be *signs*. At the top of the song, we are recognizing signs of doom, signs of uneasiness, signs of the inevitable charging towards us, and etcetera. The speaker is reassuring the listener, telling them to *stop their crying*, for it won't change the sign of the times – letting yourself get consumed by emotions won't change the inevitable.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: The mother knows she's going to die, and knows that she's not going to be able to watch her little one grow up. But what she is able to do is relish in the last five minutes she has with her child. She begs the child to *stop your crying*, and connect with me. *It's a Sign of the Times*, I have to leave you behind, but you need to know your power to conquer.

Welcome to the final show - There's always going to be this underlying sense of inevitable terminus, whether you're ready to face it. But, to phrase in this kind of way, emphasizes the apocalyptic, and leans further to the grand nature of the song – *as I'll, inevitably, keep repeating myself about*. As a whole song, my mind makes a connection back to David Bowie's *Life on Mars?* – but there's a specific line to line string I want to hand out to you. "*Oh man, wonder if he'll ever know / He's in the best selling show*" from David Bowie's Life on Mars?. And there, Bowie is blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, which offers another nuance to look into for this line of **Sign of the Times**. Is the grandiose nature mimicking some kind of cinematic circus? The amplification of what shouldn't be amplified? These are questions I've raised but haven't quite fleshed out yet, but wanted to offer them to your beautiful minds anyway.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: I think of this as something the mother says to her child she's holding in her arms, but more than anything, she's repeating it to herself as a path to acceptance. *Welcome to my final show*, I'm dying and I can't escape the inevitable. And it's breaking the mother's heart, knowing she won't get to watch her child grow, that she has to

leave her flesh and blood behind her. *Welcome to my final show*, it's my final hour, final five minutes.

I hope you're wearing your best clothes - To me, this line can be taken as the speaker talking to the listener/receiver, or the speaker talking to oneself. Both, simultaneously, can be true. I also theorize a bit of cynicism, a little bitterness, undertoning it. Telling the other person to pull themselves together as there's no other option — *or*, let's get all dressed up to watch the downfall of it all. In the details of considering this as an accompaniment to the line that precedes it, I can't help but think of a funeral, for the person in the casket is always dressed in their best clothes to be buried underground. Then prompts the question: who could this funeral be mourning? *Is it the mother as this song stands as her last dying wish and breath?* Was it a victim of the **Sign of the Times**? *Or one who took advantage of the times?* Then, turn to considering this as a precedent to the line to follow it, and you get another perspective. Best clothes are all about presentation, *a facade*, a false exterior at times to trick other's perceptions. Trick people into thinking you're more well off than you actually are, sometimes to push forward more than who's perceived as competition. Almost like... a *bribe*?

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: A little baby swaddled in a blanket and hospital given clothes, and the mother in an issued hospital gown – the image of that brings a new nuance to the line itself. The story behind the song that Harry provided us is tragic in itself, but then when you take some of these lines and connect them back to his explanation, it hits hard emotionally.

You can't bribe the door on your way to the sky - We're sticking with the biblical allusions here, so *buckle in*. When entering the gates of Heaven, one's life must speak for itself. There's one way up, and no way to bend the rules in the face of Judgement Day. The speaker in the song suggests that the listener/receiver of the song, the one being spoken to/comforted, is simply bribing their way through life, but this won't be sustainable, especially postmortem. It's going out of its way, in the light of tragedy, to highlight a notion of superficiality and hypocrisy. Again, this reminder could be the speaker reminding themselves, too.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: If a mother had five minutes left with her child before she passed on, she might try to instill some life lessons in the midst of her last bonding moments. And that's what this line comes off as in this perspective – the mother trying to tell their child that they have to live their life well, that they can't bribe their way through their years they're granted. Simultaneously, the mother could have some regrets in the back of her own head, and make sure her little one doesn't make the same mistakes she made.

You look pretty good down here / But you ain't really good - Alluding to superficiality still, the speaker claiming that whomever they are speaking to holds tight to the facade of being *good*, but the person's not inherently good, and their malevolence will become apparent in the light of inevitable Judgement Day, in the midst of the **Sign of the Times**. Again, I can't say with ultimate certainty whether the person on the other side of the speaker's soliloquy in a song is themselves or another, a friend or stranger. *And, again, maybe all can be true at once*. From the phrasing of the line, I think the speaker could've already ascended – *prepping for redefinition, rebirth... might be a stretch, but there it is anyhow!* – and looking down at those stuck in indecision. *Or*, the speaker remains on the ground and is watching the listener/receiver trying to find their way into Heaven. I think I'm more adamant towards the latter, but I don't want to disregard any side of the imagery ever.

It's really interesting, the *But you ain't really good* bit, because it leaves me wondering a lot. Is this the speaker's opinion? Is this the influence of the words of others? Is the speaker referring to himself and/or

the listener? Is it the speaker calling out who they're speaking to? Many questions, all worth being pondered, and will be internalized in a thousand different ways depending on who's tuning in.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: The mother knows that her child has a long road ahead of them, and she can't guide them through it all. She's going to try her best to squeeze in a life's worth of wisdom into this small window of time she has left. *You look pretty good down here*, as she looks down at her child, *but you ain't really good*, but you have so much trouble ahead of you. The world is chaotic, and I won't be there to even attempt to shield and protect you. *Maybe more of an abstract interpretation here.*

[Pre-Chorus]

**We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?
We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?**

The pre-chorus is full of questions of innocence: *Why are there bullets? Why are they always aimed at us? Why does this keep happening – we've been here before?* And innocence doesn't just have to be a product of ignorance of disaster, but can also be a coping mechanism. And **HS1** is full of chronicles of *unhealthy ones*. There's a switch, also, from *you* to *we*, and that small detail in itself helps us shift to a sense of unity – and from unity could be a spark of hope in the hopelessness of end times. But, make no mistakes, the tragic tone of the song hasn't lingered at all. *Rather*, the exhibit of this spark of hope leans itself to more tragedy as there's a fast track to the inevitable end that can't be halted.

We never learn, we've been here before - Such a simple phrasing, but, *to me*, truly captures the frustration of *If we know the outcome of this, why don't we prevent it?* We also approach where you can really attempt to infer that this theatrical story of the end times is truly a metaphor for struggle in interpersonal communication. The circles of never communicating properly, which is a topic that's explored heavily in this album. Broader, it also captures the cyclical pattern of human behavior ingrained in nature, where history repeats itself and individuals fail to learn from mistakes in the past.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: Could be a moment of reflection and/or a flashback in time. With the knowledge now that having this child could result in her death, it's inevitable for a Mother to think back and wonder if there was anything she could've done differently. Feeling as if she didn't learn enough, she didn't know better, even if she had done everything right in truth. *Could I have survived to watch my baby go forth and conquer the world?*

Why are we always stuck and running from / The bullets, the bullets? - *"Mother, do you think they'll drop the bomb? / Mother, will they put me in the firing line?"* from Pink Floyd's *Mother*. A continuation of the frustration, how the speaker and the receiver have been in this moment before, perpetually stuck in a cycle that causes *deja vu*. It's as if they know the outcome, this outcome of just being and watching the world crumble around as the debris piles at their feet. Stuck in this endless cycle and running from it, *but why are running from it?* Just let yourself succumb to the inevitable, to the **Sign of the Times**. I believe that this is an appropriation of the idiom of a problem being *swept under the carpet*, now replaced with something more contemporary and paradoxical.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: Maybe the Mother has had the knowledge for a long time, how she was going to have to die in order to give her child life. And she knows she can't run away from the inevitable, wondering why, *possibly*, she used to. Now, she's skin to

skin with her new child, having a short time to live as she ponders this new soul she conceived, and through heartbreak, wants to give her child the courage to go forth and conquer.

The bullets, the bullets? - When he sings the word *bullets*, it always sounded so soft to me, contradicting the sharpness of the imagery. And that makes me wonder if there's a double layer to it intentionally. The bullets that bleed, that maim, but can also be felt as caresses simultaneously. But is it a genuine caress, or one laced with hypocrisy? The people making judgements, the hands that should nurture and caress, are delivering bullets instead, with an inhumane mendacity that reassures their targets (later, *It'll be alright*) even as they are being destroyed.

As for where the bullets are coming from? People have argued for a while now that they hear *your bullets*, and I actually like the idea that the bullets come from the ambiguous you, because it deepens both the religious connotation and hypocrisy notion, as those two seem to be forever interconnected. But, also, this could be a general moment of reflection whilst in the midst of the end times – maybe thinking if any of these *bullets* ever mattered. Doesn't mean they hurt any less, though.

[Chorus]
Just stop your crying, it's a Sign of the Times
We gotta get away from here
We gotta get away from here
Just stop your crying, it'll be alright
They told me the end is near
We gotta get away from here

We gotta get away from here - Here, there's an awareness and denial swirled together, I believe. They know that the end is near, so they want to escape it and get away from it – but that's not necessarily realistic. And the repetition of this phrase specifically indicates a spiral, the hopelessness of trying to escape death and judgment. The ending motif is ever present through the song, if you haven't caught on already – and the chorus comes off as an attempt for a call to action, *in desperation*. *We have to leave before the bullets start flying* – but, in the snap of reality clouding over, one realizes they're stuck in the midst of it with no feasible way of escaping the inevitable.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: The Mother wants to remain in a life where she continues to be with her child, to protect and shelter this innocent life she brought into the world. She wants to whisk both of them away to somewhere neither of them can get hurt, but, at the end, the inevitable end is barreling towards her. It's striking and poignant in itself, one person dying so another could live.

It'll be alright - A small detail I used when analyzing here is thinking of this line being unable to be separated from the term *the end is near*, which I think captures it in its true nature. Because the small sense of reassurance and attempt at comfort is a product of circumstances. Could this be another factor of denial, trying to move away from the inevitable crash and burn? Yes, *possibly*, whether you have the perception of the speaker addressing someone else, himself, or both.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: Goes hand in hand with the explanation previously, but even though the Mother is overcome with pessimistic views and hopelessness, she looks toward her child and remembers she has to be hopeful and strong for them, even for the last five minutes of her life. She wants her child to *go forth and conquer*, no matter what, even as the Mother is on her deathbed.

They told me the end is near / We gotta get away from here - To me, these lyrics hold a crucial part to the song as an entirety because of the urgency they convey when paired together. The awareness, the panic, and the denial wrapped up together.

[Verse 2]

Just stop your crying, have the time of your life
Breaking through the atmosphere
Things look pretty good from here
Remember everything will be alright
We can meet again somewhere
Somewhere far away from here

Just stop your crying, have the time of your life - I believe that this second verse is taking place after the speaker has ascended to Heaven, a realm outside. There's a different tone to this second verse when put next to the first – though a subtle contrast, it's a contrast nonetheless. If we stick with the biblical allusions, then I'll take this line as after death and reaching Heaven, the pain of the subject's and/or the speaker's personal issues are lifted. As a result of this realization, they advise the living to accept that death is inevitable, and focus on making their lives worth living in the time that's left on their clock.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: The Mother can feel that her time is coming to a close, that she has to leave her child behind in death. So, she reassures, *just stop your crying*, and verbalizes her greatest wish for her little loved one into small ears that can't comprehend yet – *have the time of your life*. Acceptance that death is inevitable and inescapable, and she can't run from it. But, rather, she must encourage her child to live their life to the fullest with the time they've been given at the expense of hers.

Breaking through the atmosphere - This is a second allusion that we're in the midst of/referring to something beyond this world. Heaven, another realm, however one wants to interpret it.

Things look pretty good from here - This presents a stark contrast with the ending of the first verse, and I believe that it was intentionally crafted in this way. *You look pretty good down here / But you ain't really good* shifts to *Things look pretty good from here* with no followup of the cynics. I believe we're branching off from the first line of the verse, and the interpretation there – *advising the living to accept that death is inevitable*, and now adding on the realization that what was feared offers something beautiful, something that looks *pretty good*.

We can meet again somewhere / Somewhere far away from here - These last two lines are so pivotal and bittersweet. We can reconnect in peace with those we love in the afterlife, after the end of the times, after the inevitable catastrophe that the **Sign of the Times** is pointing to. *We'll always meet again*, which, to me, indicates that the speaker and the receiver have a strong connection and affection for one another. And that can still hold true if the speaker is the receiver simultaneously, like we've debated before, with the undertone of growing self-respect and acceptance. It's just this bittersweet idea of being unable to be together or find resolution right now, but this hope of a future together, even postmortem. *Everything will be alright*, we'll see each other again. *Stop your crying*, we've been through tragedy before and made it through, we'll find each other on the other side.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: The dying Mother comforts her newborn child, promising that they'll soon be reunited in the afterlife. With the awareness of her death forthcoming, we've heard and witnessed her passing on life lessons and hope to her child, wanting them to live a life worth living even though her death, leaving the child alone, is inevitable. But she has faith and hope, knowing that there will come a time when she's united

with this little love of her life. *Somewhere far away from here*, Heaven, away from this deathbed I'm confined to now.

[Pre-Chorus]

We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?
We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?

Repetition of the same pre-chorus, and I always believe repetition is intentional as first resort. Here, the intention is this feeling of being unable to escape (*in terms of not being able to escape the end times*) and a sense of urgency (*only having a limited amount of time to comfort/communicate/teach during the fight against this impending end*). A Mother trying to cherish the last minutes with her child before she passes away from complications from the birth.

[Chorus]

Just stop your crying, it's a Sign of the Times
We gotta get away from here
We gotta get away from here
Stop your crying, baby, it'll be alright
They told me the end is near
We gotta get away from here

Repetition of the chorus, putting further emphasis on the want to escape the inevitability of a dire situation. But, still the acceptance of the inevitable disaster to come, and reassurance as a coping mechanism, in *stop your crying* and *it'll be alright*. This hope that there's a way to escape this negative phenomenon barreling towards them, an ache to find a place of safety, physically or metaphorically. But, like discussed before, there's no way to escape the inevitable. But, in the resurfacing of the chorus constantly, there's this resortment back to a hope that's almost *naive and childlike*, which can tie into a Mother speaking to her child before death, as well.

[Pre-Chorus]

We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?
We never learn, we've been here before
Why are we always stuck and running from
The bullets, the bullets?

Again, this repetition of the pre-chorus, the push of urgency and no sign of escape. *We never learn, we've been here before* captures such an insurmountable feeling, the suffering of the subject[s] and being exhausted from witnessing the pain over and over. Then, the feeling is further categorized by the following *Why are we always stuck and running from the bullets?* – being stuck, stagnancy, but more on the level of the loss of control one once had.

[Bridge]

We don't talk enough
We should open up
Before it's all too much
Will we ever learn?
We've been here before
It's just what we know

We don't talk enough / We should open up - In comes a term that will be used countless times throughout this document and in discussions of Harry's music, but *what is that symbolizing folks? Lack of communication!* The constant motif of concealing emotions and pain, and inability to talk through those things. This comes across, to me, as a possible intimate thought or spoken conversation rooted in regret. When faced with the **Sign of the Times**, and knowing that one's end is near, people have this willingness to seek amends in hopes to *die without regrets*.

Through the lens of Harry's explanation of the song: The Mother's regrets come crashing down around her within these last minutes of her life, regretting – *even though it may be through no fault of her own* – that she doesn't have more time with her child, more time to connect and communicate, to teach the child what they need to know for the life they are about to face on their own.

Before it's all too much - This is truly an accompaniment to the two lines that precede it. The cycle of keeping emotions and pain inside and brushing on forward will only lead to destruction of sacred things, from relationships all the way up to lives. *Before it ruins us. Before it kills us.* Alternatively, or as a companion, one can see that someone is burdened and suffering to their limits, especially if there's an established connection between the two. *Maybe?*

Will we ever learn? / We've been here before - *Will we ever learn?* Will we ever learn to honestly communicate with one another? Will we ever learn to not get fooled? And, tell me, will we ever learn to evade the bullets? *Or should we learn to embrace the bullet wounds?* Again, we have the speaker referencing this cycle one's found themselves stuck in.

It's just what we know - The feeling of helplessness is not something foreign to the speaker and the receiver. But, there's also this moment of realization when coupled with the other lines in the bridge, that the speaker realizes there's something uneasy about it being so comfortable. In some way, it's in this line that he's answering his own question about why they or "we" always feel stuck and running and never learn. And that all reminds me of his quote from *Rolling Stone* when speaking of the song, saying "This isn't the first time we've been in a hard time, and it's not going to be the last time."

[Outro]
Stop your crying, baby, it's a Sign of the Times
We gotta get away
We got to get away, we got to get away
We got to get away, we got to get away
We got to, we got to, away
We got to, we got to, away
We got to, we got to, away

The conclusion to the song is done with a repetition of the call to action. And, done in the midst of the most climactic, powerful section of the entire song, as all the instrumentals and poetry have been building up to this point. A mixture of hope and fear still remains, but in the rising of the ending, it feels like release into the unknown has taken over. The pleading and the exclaiming into the almost mantra of *We got to get away* – extends in haste to *We got to, we got to, away*. Then, as it falls back down to the simplistic piano – *in the same nature the song began* – is as they've finally *broke through the atmosphere in finality*, and where *the Mother finally passes*, and the child is left alone.

I think the first single on an album often gets a repetition of lacking in comparison to other songs on the same album. And I can understand where it might have stemmed, in the way it's the song you're familiar with before you discover everything new that you were anticipating. But in no way and in no place does **Sign of the Times** lack. An eerie calm covers the song while sadness is soaked into every syllable that

comes from his tongue. There's so much growth, soul, wisdom, patience, heart, grit, life, death, and love in it. It's a song that's truly cathartic to listen to and sing along with other voices you stand shoulder to shoulder with. It's an absolute statement, and in the thematic friendship of cycles, I'll bring you back 'round to what I said in the beginning – it's beautifully vague, and people can experience their catharsis through his art in any way they need. **Sign of the Times**, my true beauty. *What a way to come back, huh?*

Carolina

Song 3/10

Carolina, what a song, brings in such a jarring shift of tone, and it makes me want to get up and *dance!* Actually, you know what else it gives me the ache to do? Get up, grab a bunch of kitchen [pots and pans](#), and compose my own accompanying beat to the serotonin boost I get from this song! A funky bass line lures into a scene of flirty small talk, and we, much like Harry himself, become so invested in such a short time, wondering just where this thing's gonna go. In the song, the speaker becomes obsessed with someone he meets whilst out and mingling, to the point of which *she's all he thinks about*. Yet the song gives the implication that he only met her once and that's all. And then, when bringing in the context of the album, **Carolina** seems to be the speaker prematurely trying to fall back in love to rectify the emptiness of losing so much in his life. In this flood of emotions and ecstasy, amongst the contrasting flux of loneliness and grief, could we be witnesses to another coping mechanism that isn't the healthiest? An avoidance of pain? An avoidance of having to face difficult emotions by letting someone whisk you away from them, *even for a fleeting moment?*

The song is additionally thought to be inspired – to a lesser extent, but still something worth mentioning – by Johnny Cash's *Cocaine Carolina*, which chronicles Cash meeting a “woman” on the road, who (*or which*) left a lasting impression on him. It's an utilized metaphor for cocaine, or, rather, the personification of it. And it follows a storyline similar to what's narrated in **Carolina**, so I can understand where the similarities are drawn, and won't dismiss it. And it could fit right into the unhealthy mechanisms when face to face with the different genres of grief.

While I don't believe this song is as heavy laden with as much melancholic poetics in comparison to its album companions, I do think it represents a bit of fun that was needed to initiate *balance*, which can mirror the *balance* that Harry was seeking for himself at the time the album was being compiled and artistically driven. A lot of the songs on this album are heavy, and cause a tsunami of emotions and destructive reflection, so *sometimes*, you just need that little bit of fun thrown at you to round out the listening experience. Even, to round out the coping experience in the ups and the downs.



Carolina, [Live From The Late Late Show with James Corden](#) (2017)

[this performance just gives all the serotonin for me. not only is he absolutely adorable during the whole performance, but i feel like it truly captures the true essence of fun and excitement and carefree-ness? injected in the song's veins.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Verse 1]

She's got a family in Carolina (Oh yeah)
So far away, but she says I remind her of home (Oh yeah)
Feelin', oh, so far from home (Oh yeah)
She never saw herself as a West Coaster (Oh yeah)
Moved all the way 'cause her grandma told her (Oh yeah)
"Townes, better swim before you drown" (Oh yeah, Oh yeah)

She's got a family in Carolina / So far away, but she says I remind her of home / Feelin', oh, so far from home - The girl at the heart of the song is away from her home when the speaker meets her, and, as they are chatting with each other, she makes a passing comment that the speaker brings her a sense of comfort and easiness, *reminding her of home*. Then, I feel like a lot weighs into that last line in the trio, which would be coming from the speaker himself. The *oh, so far* comes off as teasing the other party a little – maybe teasing her accent, maybe teasing her on how she's trying to flirt... and maybe it wasn't this perfect interaction, but it stuck in the speaker's head. *Because it wasn't so rehearsed*.

An additional annotation to make to that last line is when you look at it on its own, it's vague enough that could be applied to both people if one feels that's applicable. *And, well, maybe I do*. Because we know the girl at the center of the song is physically *so far away* from home. But could the speaker be feeling a sense of disconnect, too? Metaphorically, *so far from home*, as the speaker's lost those close to them. And they find themselves both seeking solace in the other's companionship? Is this another one of the speaker's coping mechanisms? *An avoidance of pain?*

She never saw herself as a West Coaster / Moved all the way 'cause her grandma told her / "Townes, better swim before you drown" - *"You got to swim before you fly"* from Townes Van Zandt's *Two Girls*. The subject never saw herself as finding herself here, being on an opposite coast, *so far away from home*. My prediction is maybe she had a dream that would be more plausible to pursue out West, which isn't unheard of, and would lead into the next two lines of needing her grandma's encouragement. To take the chance, but her grandma is encouraging. *We love sweet and supportive grandmas!*

Now, about that little tidbit of dialogue. *Townes, better swim before you drown*. As I subtly inserted before, *or maybe not so much*, there's this little string I made in my mind back to a song by Townes Van Zandt that has a lyric that mirrors this line here. Also, I can't help but make the connection of *swimming* back to the album's heavy use of *water visualization*, as a lot of imagery throughout circles around baptismal imagery, rebirth, and so forth. Her grandma's advice is simple to decipher – encouraging her to put herself out there before finding oneself stuck in a stagnancy rooted in fear. *At least, that's how I took it*. And, my little extra context I like to add on from the back of my mind is just how he met this girl with a unique name that piqued his interest, thinking *"That's odd. Only other person I've ever heard named Townes is this fabulous musician Townes Van Zandt. Are you related to him?"*. To which, the sweet girl could reply something along the lines of: *"No, I'm named after [insert obscure relative here]. I'm from (North or South? Wait.) Carolina."* And his brain just kind of files it away – and, before watching Behind The Album, I also considered it being an alias, but I'll trust him on his front always as he speaks that he put her name in the song, so *he's a bit fucked*.

[Chorus]

She's a good girl (La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la)
She's such a good girl (La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la)
She's a good girl (La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la)

She feels so good (Oh yeah)

You have to admit it – this is such a fun chorus, and, *at least for me*, it's so hard to hold myself back from joining in to *la-la-la-la* with the best of 'em. And, well, *you know how I feel about repetition* – this time around, I feel like the repetition aids to the swirling sensation captured. The infatuation, and for argument's sake, could be applied to the high you get when using drugs too. Lastly, there's a certain insinuation connected to *feels* that I don't think I have to spell out... *use your imagination!*

[verse 2]

**She's got a book for every situation (Oh yeah)
Gets into parties without invitations (Oh yeah)
How could you ever turn her down? (Down, down, down, down) (Oh yeah)
There's not a drink that I think could sink her (Oh yeah)
How would I tell her she's all I think about? (Oh yeah)
Well, I guess she just found out (Oh yeah)**

She's got a book for every situation / Gets into parties without invitations ... There's not a drink I think could sink her - This second verse embodies admiration and unspoken feelings, as the speaker's captivated by the girl's ability to navigate through life effortlessly, so it seems. *Yet*, this second verse also feels like an embodiment of the manic pixie dream girl trope in song's form. But, is the subject at the soul of this work truly this character? Or, has he added this fictionalized and exaggerated embellishment to this persona he has stored in his mind? *Which is kinda funny since we are talking about someone having a book for every situation!* This characterization with spontaneity and smarts and an aura of irresistible charm, even if pushed up quite a few notches, only furthers the storyline – a spiraling infatuation.

Gets into parties without invitations and on is where I see the majority of the interpretation of the girl being a personification for drugs (cocaine, specifically) as well or instead of – how drugs are almost always smuggled into parties, and *how can you turn down such an offer?* I can understand this interpretation, but also think it applies to a person just as easily. But, *please*, take whatever interpretation serves your fancy!

How could you ever turn her down? ... How would I tell her she's all I think about? - The running motif of the dreamy person he met that he can't get out of his head. This night and/or moment of fun and joy he sought out amongst all the emotional turmoil and pain that's chronicled throughout the album.

[Chorus]

**She's a good girl (La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la)
She's such a good girl (La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la)
She's a good girl (La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la)
She feels so good (Oh yeah)
She feels so good (Oh yeah)**

Are you singing the *la-la-la-la*'s as you read?

[Bridge]

**I met her once and wrote a song about her (Oh yeah)
I wanna scream, yeah, I wanna shout it out (Oh yeah)
And I hope she hears me now (Oh yeah)
(Oh yeah)**

I met her once and wrote a song about her - We spoke about tropes being amplified before, *well, can you believe it*, here's another one! The trope of the lonely, hopelessly romantic musician who meets a muse on a whim and writes a song for them, which is to be regarded as the highest honor bestowed.

Which, I mean, it's Harry's pen, so it truly is! Again, this running motif is prominent, this fascination with the woman at the heart of the catchy tune, stuck in the back of his head. This song is the product of his *infatuation* and *fixation*. But, again, there's this question in the air of how accurate this memory of her is as we fall back on classic romantic comedy tropes and interactions. The manic pixie dream girl who comes and fixes all the man's issues in life, which would align with the theory of the search for solace from the melancholy spread across the album in its entirety. But, in whichever sense, the encounter was brief but left a lasting impression, as this art has been created.

I wanna scream, yeah, I wanna shout it out / And I hope she hears me now - A chronicle of a companionship short-lived, *I met her once*. A short-lived moment of affection and excitement as the speaker tried to avoid the pain that'd been consuming him (*again, inferred from the context instilled in the majority of the album*). Yet, there's this deep-seeded hope that maybe she'll hear this song playing on the radio and smile, and maybe they'll pick up their companionship where they left off. Instead of the narrative coming to a perfect close, rather, it's left open-ended. Which I actually *really* love.

[Interlude]

La-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la
 La-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la
 La-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la
 La-la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la-la

[Chorus]

She's a good girl (*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la*)
She's such a good girl (*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la*)
She's a good girl (*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la*)
Feels so good, she feels so good (*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la*)
She feels so good (*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la*)
She feels so good (*La-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la, la-la-la-la*)

[Outro]

She's a good girl
She feels so good (*Oh yeah*)
(Oh yeah)
(Oh yeah)

Make noise. Be loud! And maybe I'll take this moment to tease how this could parallel my theory for *Kiwi* coming up, embracing the stereotype of the rockstar. The rockstar who writes a song for a girl he just met. Culturally, **Carolina** reflects the modern romanticization of fleeting connections and the habit to idealize individuals we meet only once. The speaker captures and chronicles the essence of a muse, one who sparks creativity and desire without becoming a permanent fixture in the respective composer's life. However you picture the song or whatever you believe is the inspiration behind it, I think there's one thing that most can agree upon — *Harry sounds like he's having the time of his life* with that catchy melody, and that is going to make me melt with a smile every time this comes on. And, I'll be dancing to it. *Care to join me?*

Two Ghosts

Song 4/10

Too often do I see people publicly admit that they forget about this song, walk right over it when listening to the album run through again – and, while I can't deem it a criminal offense, I dream about if I could.

But let's get serious now! **Two Ghosts** is a melancholic and nostalgic reflection back on a relationship lost to the past, where the theme of grieving returns after a breather found in the song before. Lots of personification and metaphor is at play here, giving way to stunning prose to catalog a relationship that has reached its expiration date. Which can be an eerie feeling, in which everything looks the same, you're still with the same person and you're still you – but something has happened that's shifted the dynamic, or something that's changed both people in such a way that when they're together, there's no longer a romanticism. *The soul of the relationship is no longer there, it's dead.*

A ghost can be seen as a spirit or a soul of an once living entity, not being able to pass on to the afterlife. It's lingering, which can happen when there's unfinished business. The **Two Ghosts** in question can have two visuals to branch off into. One, referring to the two people that were once part of a relationship, with the ghosts being the past version of both of these people. Second, more abstract and my preferred, the personification of the relationship itself, thinking of the relationship as its own entity, with its own soul. But the soul has left, and is now a relic of the past. When a relationship doesn't have a soul, it's hollow and the essence is gone.

Could be like running into an old flame that was once your entire life, so important in every sense, but ending up growing apart from each other. And, whilst dealing with the end of a relationship, it also tackles themes of maturity and *change – fluctuation*, in one self and in the relationships held dear to us.



Two Ghosts, [Live on The Late Late Show with James Corden](#) (2017)

[there's just something so intimate, so elegant about this performance. maybe it's the fact he looks a bit like a prince as he sings, or that it's just him and his guitar and a few carpets on the stage, but i feel as if it brings a whole new range of emotions to an already beautiful piece of poetry.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Verse 1]

Same lips red, same eyes blue
Same white shirt, couple more tattoos
But it's not you, and it's not me
Tastes so sweet, looks so real
Sounds like something I used to feel
But I can't touch what I see

Same lips red, same eyes blue / Same white shirt, couple more tattoos - I love this attention to detail, as there's the details one'll remember about a person one once let themselves become so interwoven with. It also acts as context clues about the partner in question. Two ex-lovers are seeing each other after the relationship has ended, or maybe right before. *But*, the *couple more tattoos* feels indicative of a passage of time. The repetition of the word *same* three times in these two lines – *and you know how I feel like repetition*, repetition signifies significance.

It brings in the concept of *sameness*, driving the point home of how things are the same but *they're not*. Establishing this will emphasize the contrast to come, and reminds me of the saying that you can't recreate the same memory twice. Even if you try to find your way back, dancing the same steps, will it ever truly be the same if things have been so different in a passage of time apart?

But it's not you, and it's not me - Clever allusion to a classic breakup line – *It's not you, it's me* – but there's a subtle shift in its language, shifting the blame away from both of them. Leading into an implication that circumstances and forces bigger than them have made their relationship die off. *It's no one's fault that this isn't working*.

Despite the *sameness*, we're not the people we were the last time we stood here, face to face. Looks can be deceiving, as the internal state of both parties is so distinctly different now. We're both here, *but we're not us*.

Tastes so sweet, looks so real / Sounds like something I used to feel - These two lines and the line to follow it create a somber symphony of the senses. Rounding this portrait of the speaker and this person that's removed from his life, *but doesn't seem like they're forgotten*. He's *haunted* by the memories of what the relationship used to be. Still taking over all of his senses. In their presence, it's all still so sweet to him that he can taste the experience, or maybe still taste of their lips on his. All of what has preceded this point has been what *sounds like something he used to feel* – past tense, a memory lost to time.

But I can't touch what I see - Intangible things being made tangible. *The soul of the relationship is no longer there*, what's left is merely a metaphorical hollow skeleton of the relationship. He can't touch the love, can't touch the spark, the chemistry, the life of the relationship – it's no longer in existence, and there's nothing left to grasp onto. *Even if he feels like he can see it*, it's no longer viable.

[Chorus]

**We're not who we used to be
We're not who we used to be
We're just Two Ghosts standin' in the place of you and me
Trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat**

We're not who we used to be - The most repeated truism throughout the song, and I find that to be so significant because that's what the speaker's thinking in the back of his mind. They keep trying to make it work, but in the back of his mind and even within his soul and subconscious, they know that they're both not who they used to be. The dynamic has shifted in a way that doesn't allow for a romance to flourish anymore. They both have changed as people. Whatever has happened or transpired between them, either a lot of time elapsed or enough events in their respective lives where they come out completely changed. There's no common ground for both of them to stand on – the relationship has run its course.

We're just Two Ghosts standin' in the place of you and me - The symbolism and metaphor within the *Two Ghosts* and just *ghost* as it stands is what brings such an eloquence to the song. In the vision of the two of them turning into the *Two Ghosts*, they're each merely a shell of a person that the other one once knew. And each of them haunts the other, living in the other's mind. And, with the vision of the personification of the relationship itself, I see it as them going through the motions. But, the spark, the life source of the relationship was no longer present.

Trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat - *Oh, this line*. This line makes me ache. Since we were just talking about the personification of the relationship, we'll continue on that front – the heartbeat of the relationship, trying to remember what it felt like before the relationship flatlined. And, pulling away

and looking at the two of them, indicating them having the heartbeat – in which they felt alive, they felt the spark. This line is truly the indicator for me that *the relationship is dead*.

Together is when they had a steady heartbeat, a constant, something to rely on as it felt so natural to them... *back then*. Now, there's been this time elapsed in distance and separation, where the constant gets lost to the past. *There's the cliché romantic trope about the heart fluttering when infatuated*. Usually, we don't feel our heart beating in normal circumstances, but when you see the person you have fallen in love with, you can feel your heart beating, as if it will beat its way right out of your chest. And, as the speaker is realizing the death of this relationship, he misses the feeling – the adrenaline rush to cause this beautiful but haunting sensation. He struggles to recall how it felt because his heart isn't fluttering anymore, and that can be heartbreaking.

[Verse 2]

The fridge light washes this room white
 Moon dances over your good side
 And this was all we used to need
 Tongue-tied like we've never known
 Tellin' those stories we already told
 'Cause we don't say what we really mean

The fridge light washes this room white / Moon dances over your good side - I find these lines so vivid, painting such beautiful imagery. It's a scene that's so romantic and intimate, especially in the wording in the second line, how the moonlight *dances* over them, as it feels a little flirtatious. And it's a memory that remains stuck in his head, back when there was still soul inside. All this domestic imagery and bliss and infatuation – but *that was then*.

Moonlight is something so interesting to interpret, *and I'm aware I might be putting on my poet-went-in-too-deep shoes*, but let's throw it in just in case you find your fancy with it. It's such a beautiful and almost ethereal image of someone, especially someone you admire (*at the moment*), being cascading in the moonlight. But the light doesn't come from the moon, but rather light is emitted from the sun and reflected onto the moon which then reflects into the moonlight people are fascinated by. Which lends itself to melancholia and somberness, as the moon can't create its own light, but must rely on the sun. Maybe the speaker felt as if this person was the sun, him the moon, and then the moonlight reflected back on the person in this imagery. Just an abstract theorization and bundle of thoughts!

And this was all we used to need - Of course, this is a companion to the previous two lines. Back when the soul was alive and well in the relationship, everything was simple and low effort. And that's how you want the chemistry to be – a natural occurring spark, and you don't want to have to force it in a relationship. Simple things, like intimate domestic moments spent in the moonlight, used to be all they needed to get the heartbeat going. *But something has shifted*. There has to be *more* effort now, and the two can no longer expect everything to work itself out.

Tongue-tied like we've never known / Tellin' those stories we already told - Again, we find ourselves face-to-face with the motif of difficulty with communication. And this breakdown of communication within the relationship feels something that plagues the speaker significantly. They stumble over their words now when they try to speak – they don't know how to communicate with one another anymore, something that we can infer came easy to them once. There's something about being able to naturally understand the other person, and when that ability is lost, it's a clue that you're no longer in sync with one another. *And*, that presents such a stark contrast with the beautiful imagery at the top of the verse – *but this is where they stand now*. A shift, the magic is gone, *the soul of the relationship is no longer viable*. They have nothing to talk about anymore, nothing new, and they both revert back to what they've

already told each other thousands of times – maybe trying to feel reinvigorated, but it falls flat. *The soul is gone, and the relationship has been lost, only a relic in their minds.*

‘Cause we don’t say what we really mean - Both parties have an awareness, I feel, that the relationship has run its course, but neither of them want to say it out loud. Maybe, deep down, they still have love for each other. But, there’s nothing you can do when the spark is gone and the communication is lacking. And they let themselves succumb to this cycle of repetitious stories that are associated back when they were flourishing to possibly *avoid* talking about the reality – *avoid* the grieving of what they once were, holding back their emotions. No true feelings are being said, and nothing real with genuine intentions is being given, either.

[Chorus]

We’re not who we used to be
 We’re not who we used to be
 We’re just Two Ghosts standin’ in the place of you and me
 We’re not who we used to be
 We’re not who we used to be
 We’re just Two Ghosts swimmin’ in a glass half empty
 Trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat

There’s a repetition of the chorus twice, but each additional iteration offers itself a little variation. One lyric change per repetition that could be missed if you aren’t listening deeply enough, *which could bring in the miscommunication the speaker feels into the lyrical structure too*. I personally believe that these two lines snuck into the reiterated choruses hold just as much significance as the full verses.

We’re just Two Ghosts swimmin’ in a glass half empty - “*We’re just two souls living in a fish bowl*” from Pink Floyd’s *Wish You Were Here*. Pretty metaphorical here, yeah? Again, the *Two Ghosts* visualization, how the two of them are shells of who they used to be within the context of this relationship lost to time and has become a relic infused with nothing but memories. A glass half empty is a very negative image, and is one of the classic ways to determine if someone is more idealistic or more fatalistic. If someone views the glass half full, they’re optimistic – if someone views the glass half empty, they’re pessimistic. The use of this acts like a foreshadow to me, giving a clue about the inevitable fate of this relationship. Even if we want to look at it a bit deeper and a bit of a stretch, it shows how they’ve shifted from the optimistic to the pessimistic, where the bright memories illustrated are through an idealistic screen, while snapping back to the now and the reality has a fatalistic one.

A glass, even a metaphorical one, doesn’t have much room. And it’s cylindrical, so swimming in it would result in going in circles again and again. When one swims a lot, it tires your body – but, here, it’s such an inefficient activity, getting nowhere. And, with the pessimistic cloud being cast over this whole image, it’s swimming to no destination. Of course, there’s also the water imagery brought in, which feels important to chat about given its significance to the album as a whole. Water, through *HS1*, has been tied to renewal and rebirth – but, within the context of this song, it takes on the more somber undertext. If they make their way out of this glass, could they be cleansed of constantly trying to revive a relationship that’s dead?

[Chorus]

We’re not who we used to be
 We’re not who we used to be
 We’re just two ghosts standin’ in the place of you and me
 We’re not who we used to be
 We don’t see what we used to see
 We’re just two ghosts swimmin’ in a glass half empty
 Trying to remember how it feels to have a heart beat

Repetition of the chorus, but a new line is added in, as I said before.

We don't see what we used to see - The mindset of each person has shifted and changed, in a way that they don't see eye-to-eye in the way they used to. They've lost this foundation of understanding with one another, which is a component of *the soul* of the relationship, a soul no longer full of life. They could also not see the spark in one another anymore, in which the attraction has faded more into neutrality.

[Outro]

Trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat
I'm just trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat

More repetition, but the phrasing of the last line has changed in the slightest bit, but that tiny detail added offers up so much.

I'm just trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat - Now, we have something in first person, which always makes the tone a little more intimate, bringing everything back to the speaker. And, with it being the last lyric we hear in the song adds a bit more intimacy. Almost like a sense of exhaustion. They are really trying to still care for this person and respect this person and find the spark again... *but sometimes relationships just run their course*. And, with the addition of the first person point of view, you can sense that the separation is beginning. *We to I*. He's looking into himself, trying to remember how it feels to have a heartbeat. *Alone*.

As I've mentioned times before, grief is one of the concepts explored in the album, in all its different forms. **Two Ghosts** casts the end of the relationship between the two as some kind of death, as the life has been snuffed out in the relationship itself, but also death to the individuals. The two people changing so much within the grieving of the loss of what meant so much to both, metaphorically becoming ghosts of their former selves, and there's no recognizing the other in the present as the speaker lives in the past. It's a bittersweet pang to grief of what has been, what's irrevocably changed. And I find it continuously beautiful how these different aspects are explored.

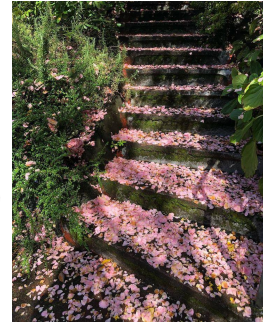
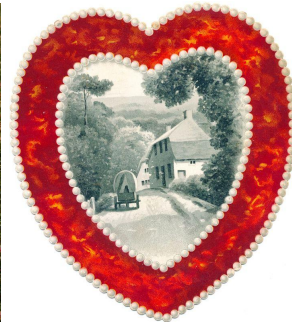
Sweet Creature

Song 5/10

I'm not tuned out enough to ignore the amount of silliness when it comes to *arguing* about this song, whether it fits into this theorization or that twist – and, sadly, among all of that hassle and tussle trying to designate a name, many lose perspective in how beautiful **Sweet Creature** is. On the surface, it's rather simplistic in its prose, but clever and beautiful in how it's a *love song* that embraces *multiple forms of love*, in each one's differences and similarities. This song can be applied to platonic love, romantic love, familial love, any relationship that'll cause you to hold such affection and care for someone, and relishing in the comfort of connection. Someone who makes you feel like you can always be at *home*, that you can be *yourself*, with no inhibitions as they all melt away from you when you're in their presence. It's a tender ballad that delves into the complexities of a close relationship that's stood the test of time and youthful uncertainty. A connection that guides one back to a place of emotional security and mutual understanding, amidst the inevitable uncertainties and disagreements that'll be placed in the path.

With an album like *HS1* that's heavily rooted in melancholia and reflection and self-admittance of destruction, a song that radiates like a beacon with this more hopeful undertone is worth noting due to its high contrast *alone*. It feels like a silver lining amongst the storm clouds of break-ups, depression,

loneliness, etcetera. It's at the midpoint of the album, and offers something that isn't morose and isn't sexy. I, in fact, find its simplicity to be a strength – for it leaves an opening for the listener to determine what the song means *for them* while the lyrical direction meanders vaguely. And, *I'm such a sucker for poetry and anything literary*, so the Shakespeare reference has me bringing out my heart eyes, so I will always find a way to praise *that*.



Sweet Creature, [Live in Studio](#) (2017)

[so much emotion in this rendition. something so tender about it, the delicateness in his voice solidifies my belief that this song is trying to immortalize a sweet hug. idk.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Verse 1]

Sweet Creature
 Had another talk about where it's going wrong
 But we're still young
 We don't know where we're going
 But we know where we belong

Sweet Creature - *No worries*, I'll give you my non-Shakespeare induced ramble about the phrase first, for I'm aware Shakespeare isn't everyone's cup of tea. It's most definitely a term of *endearment*, even able to argue that this person is being referred to as otherworldly and not of this earth because of how good and *precious* they are to the speaker. *Or*, maybe even an *and*, how magnificent one finds them. I think it, as in the term, also embraces the same abstract feelings the song in its entirety is exploring: childhood, innocence, home, and the tendency to hold onto the past in moments of turmoil. *Though...*

... this *could* additionally call back to William Shakespeare's *Othello*, in Act III (3), Scene III (3).

*"In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona
 Let us be wary, let us hide our loves.'
 And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand
 Cry 'O, sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard."*

Othello has many twists and turns in intrigue, all encompassing the classic human weaknesses of jealousy, deceit, selfishness, wrath, mistrust, and miscommunication. The speech in which the phrase is coined comes from the character Iago, and is so dark and erotic. *And I find that Harry has a habit of pulling pretty words out of their original context to recycle them to suit his own creative ends* – so I don't believe that we're going in that dark direction for this song. I actually feel as if the Shakespearean insert isn't inherently connected to the hopeful song – but, when talking about a reference, no matter how intrinsic or vague, it's important to understand the source. So, who's up for a quick Shakespeare lesson?

First, a brief summary of the play as a whole, then we'll describe the individual scene. In *Othello*, as briefly as I can manage to explain, Iago is furious at being overlooked for promotion and, as a result, plots to take revenge against his General: Othello, the Moor of Venice. In this malicious plan, Iago manipulates Othello into believing his wife Desdemonda is unfaithful, which stirs and instigates Othello's

jealousy. And, Othello allows this jealousy to consume him, as he murders Desdemonda and then kills himself. Now, *to explain the individual scene in which **Sweet Creature** is coined* — Iago begins to infiltrate Othello's mind, trying to make him believe that Desdemonda is having an affair with Cassio. Iago alleges that Cassio, one night, talked in his sleep about making love to Desdemonda and that Cassio had wiped his beard with Desdemonda's lost handkerchief once. At first, Othello can't believe that Desdemonda would act in such a way, but slowly Iago poisons Othello's imagination until Othello believes what Iago is telling me to be fact. Othello vows to kill Desdemonda, and Iago vows to kill Cassio. Othello, then, appoints Iago to the lieutenantancy.

Abstractly, I believe some themes in *Othello* can be applied to **Sweet Creature**, despite the difference in tone of the two pieces. One theme in particular is the danger of isolation. In *Othello*, isolation enables many of the play's most important effects, and Iago is an expert at manipulating distance between other characters – isolating whom he chooses to target so they fall prey to their own obsessions more easily. In how I apply this back to **Sweet Creature**? As you'll see as we comb through the lyrics, the relationship between the speaker and subject is *important* and *precious*, and there's such emphasis put on the implication that this person grounds and guides the speaker through moments of despair. Which, in turn, highlights the danger of isolation, in a much more subtle way than *Othello*, but still an important theme nonetheless.

All that rambles to come to this conclusion about the term: While coming from Shakespeare's *Othello*, the term doesn't have the same darkness to it. Rather, it's a sweet term of endearment. *But*, *Othello*'s influence isn't completely lost, as we hold the theme of the danger of being left to your own devices, and left to your own human weaknesses, in both. So, *come on Sweet Creature, let's continue with the analysis, shall we?*

Had another talk about where it's going wrong / But we're still young - The opening verse feels like it's coming from a reflective state, which in turn sets the stage for the rest of the song to follow. Beginning with a conversation about the difficulties and pitfalls of life, as I take it, between the two. *But*, with the addition and acknowledgement of *But we're still young*, it adds a bit of exuberance back. We're still young, and our future is uncertain, *there's time for this to work out, as long as we have each other* – that's how I've always read this line. *Another talk*, also, could imply that they've been in this spot before, so there's already this established feeling of closure on the horizon.

We don't know where we're going / But we know where we belong - Both the speaker and the subject share this profound sense of belonging with one another, and it's this theme of belonging and comfort that fleshes out the heart of the song itself. The first line jumps off from *But we're still young* for me, this admittance of uncertainty, but then the reassurance of how they know that they have ground to settle on when in the presence of one another. The prominent pronoun in the song is *we*, as in an unit, which is a small detail but a significant choice, *I believe*. But I'm a sucker for words in any capacity!

[Pre-Chorus]
And, oh, we started
Two hearts in one home
It's hard when we argue
We're both stubborn, I know
But, oh

And, oh, we started / Two hearts in one home - Home can be taken literally or figuratively here. Maybe it's an either or situation, or both can co-exist harmoniously. *I'm taken to the latter, but take whichever you please*. Literally, *two hearts in one home* can be interpreted as these two people (speaker and subject) living together for a significant portion of their lives, and bringing in the addition of *and, oh, we started* just before gives me the feeling that it's in this time together under one roof that fostered the

relationship illustrated now. Using the term *hearts* to refer to the two instead of simply saying *two people in one home* suggests an intimacy and familiarity between them, which can be love in the platonic sense or the sensual – which can, then, attribute to the figurative interpretation of the line. Specifically, the *home* conceptualization. The familiarity between the speaker and the subject could have felt like *home*, even if they weren't in the same residence – ever or anymore. But it's this sense of comfort that still connects them, no matter any distance between – physically or emotionally – or anything that comes up in their respective lives.

It's hard when we argue / We're both stubborn, I know / But, oh - More implications on this album toward communication issues, a theme and motif we just seem to keep running into. In this case, there's more of a communal blame, *keeping the speaker and the subject linked as a unit*. And this whole thing sounds lovingly admitted, not begrudgingly. They're *both* stubborn as they *both* argue – then, with the *but* tacked on to the end, it leads perfectly into the chorus being the *hope*, the *brightness* reflecting off of whatever conflict they might have. I personally *adore* this structural choice, and hope you do too!

[Chorus]
Sweet Creature, Sweet Creature
Wherever I go, you bring me home
Sweet Creature, Sweet Creature
When I run out of road, you bring me home

The chorus stands poignant, an affirmation of the stability and the role this *sweet creature* plays in the speaker's life. The repeated lines *You bring me home* suggest that no matter where life might take the speaker, the presence or mere thought of this person provides a sense of safety and grounding. Like I'll detail very soon, this falls back on the metaphorical *home* encompassing comfort and familiarity. Interwoven with the gentle melody, the feelings of affection and warmth are delicately enhanced. He refers to the subject again with *sweet creature*, maybe calling for them, maybe calling for their attention as in to reiterate *I'm talking to you*.

Wherever I go, you bring me home - This line leans more towards home in the figurative. Whenever the speaker is reunited with the subject, that's when he feels at home. *No matter where he goes*. The most calm in a familiar environment, in a familiar person.

When I run out of road, you bring me home - Ok, so the poetry geek inside of me totally tries to connect this to Robert Frost's *The Road Not Taken* time and time again. *But anyway!* When the speaker runs out of "road" – runs into an obstacle in which he metaphorically has to make a choice whether to go left or right – it's the subject that helps guide them in the right direction. Which furthers my feeling that **Sweet Creature** is a song that encompasses all kinds of love and affection, as the sensual to the platonic can have this impact.

[Verse 2]
Sweet Creature
Running through the garden
Oh, where nothing bothered us
But we're still young
I always think about you and how we don't speak enough

Sweet Creature / Running through the garden / Oh, where nothing bothered us - *We're going back to Othello for a hot second*. Remember Iago? He's got a strange preoccupation with plants. His speeches to another character, Roderigo, tend to make extensive and elaborate use of vegetable metaphors and conceits. "*Our bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme ... the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills.*"

(I.iii.317-322) is one example of this, but another example lies hidden in a quote I already *planted* in your mind before (yes, that pun was completely intended).

If we extend the quote in which we found **Sweet Creature**'s namesake, we further discover Iago's tendency to use gardens and plants as metaphor in his speech. In the dream story, he describes kisses growing from his lips, rooted there, which Cassio is trying to pull out to emphasize how *deep* Cassio was in his (completely contrived) affair with Othello's wife.

*"And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand
Cry 'O, sweet creature!' and then kiss me hard,
As if he plucked kisses up by the roots,
That grew upon my lips"*

(III.iii.425-428).

Iago, as he likes to show through the words he speaks, is in tune with nature and believes that humans are always a part of it, whether they like it or not. Some ways, Iago comes to seem to say that you can manipulate nature by *sheer force of will*, yet in others he seems to think his nature is something he can only follow, like with what he says about "*his nature's plague*", also in Act III (3). *I want to focus on that first half of the previous sentence I said, though*. For I believe this ties into another interpretation of the garden I hold onto.

The garden could be an actual garden, and I've had that visual in my mind, but I also believe the garden could be a metaphor for their safe place. Moving away from the Shakespeare-focused to the most broad literary, garden's symbolism across literature is a place of youth, a place of peace, a place that's more secret and more intimate. *Running through the garden, oh, where nothing bothered us*. No disturbances from the outside – for when they are there, they're safe, without any of the difficulties and obstacles explored in the first verse. *They share beautiful times together in this place*, whether a true place in their shared memories or a manifestation of the peace they feel when relying on the other's presence. *But, also, this could be a moment of looking back* – reminiscence of a time in life where things were simplistic, innocent, and sweet between the speaker and the subject, then contrasting it with the lines to follow.

Very quickly, I want to play around with a little of possibility with religious symbolism. Of course, I'm diving into the Garden of Eden. Because, as I said before, *I believe that Harry dances around the idea of religion in his art without ever really directly addressing it*. The first garden in which humans lived, everything was perfect and people were very naive, with no worries or struggles. Then, Eve ate an apple, and the result made all of them hyper aware of everything around them. The *apple* eaten here could be a big change in the speaker's life, something that's making him *yearn* for those *moments with the sweet creature in the peaceful garden*. It follows along with how this album deals with loss and change, and a significant life change – *from the outside infiltrating* – could change the minds of those once innocent. Now, the speaker's in a situation where everything's under scrutiny, and though there's gratitude for a life of wider recognition, there's still this urge to want to regress back to a simpler time. With a simpler person. The sweet creature. *His* sweet creature, whom he feels at peace with. *In the garden*.

But we're still young / I always think about you and how we don't speak enough - The same reassurance, the same bit of exuberance, is brought back – *we're still young*, time hasn't run out. The speaker hasn't run out of hope, holding onto the belief that he and the *sweet creature* can always return to that garden. We get more of the miscommunication trope in this last line, but *even in the moments where they've fallen slightly from grace*, the speaker's constantly thinking of the subject. While they don't speak enough, the speaker reassures that he never forgets about them. *And even thinks about how they ought to speak more* – which, yes, we need some improvement on the communication front over here. My goodness!

[Pre-Chorus]

And, oh, we started
Two hearts in one home
It's hard when we argue
We're both stubborn, I know
But, oh

[Chorus]

Sweet Creature, Sweet Creature
Wherever I go, you bring me home
Sweet Creature, Sweet Creature
When I run out of road, you bring me home

[Bridge]

Oh
Oh-oh
Oh

[Pre-Chorus]

And, oh, we started
Two hearts in one home
It's hard when we argue
We're both stubborn, I know
But, oh

[Chorus]

Sweet Creature, Sweet Creature
Wherever I go, you bring me home
Sweet Creature, Sweet Creature
When I run out of road, you bring me home
You'll bring me home

The rest of the song returns to the familiar pre-chorus and chorus, and that expected repetition. But, *that last line*. The shift in language. **You'll bring me home**. Brings in a unique future tense right at the end of the song, addressing the subject directly rather than using the sweet nickname coined. *And I find this a beautiful way to end the song* – the implication that the subject has brought the speaker home in the past and present, and there's faith that they'll continue to do so in the future. *And, to me*, I feel like there's this unwritten assurance from the speaker, saying *And I'll reciprocate*. Despite the ups and downs, **Sweet Creature** makes both of their stubbornness a loving quality, and doesn't shy away from what the outside will unexpectedly bring to anybody, even those who are connected at the hip. *Platonic and romantic*. It pushes forward a message of enduring connection and the reassurance that results from having someone who understands and supports you unconditionally, *even in your fluctuations*. A bond that remains a constant force, with the knowledge that the other will always guide you back to where you belong, to *who you are*. To your sweet, sweet roots.

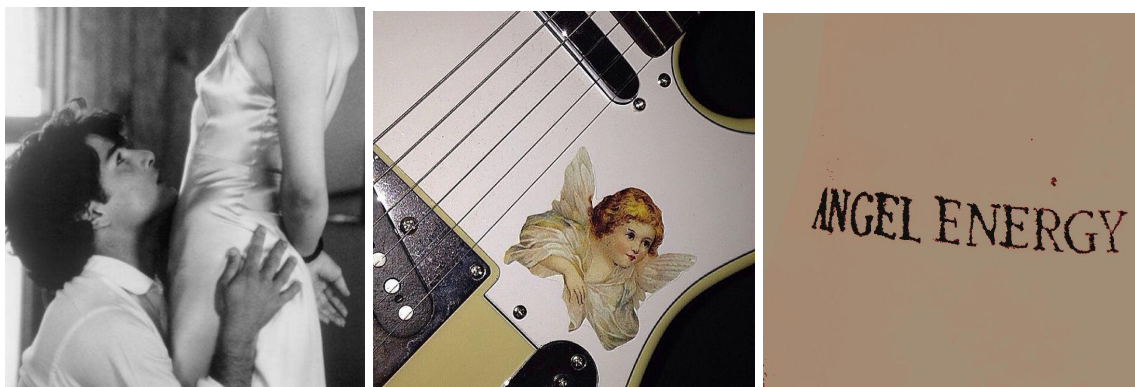
Only Angel

Song 6/10

Dare I say... *Harry's hottest song?* I fear I'll stand by my word on this and can't be swayed by you or anybody else. *Which is a total just kidding moment because I'm the most mood-driven consumer of media, but my love for this song has no bounds, it's true.* **Only Angel** swells and bursts into a rollicking romp of glam rock, bursting at the seams with passion of all kinds. *Name it and it's yours*: anger, desire,

obsession, even the vaguely suicidal. It's even sprinkled with references to a poet – Charles Bukowski, quite a controversial figure that sorry old man was and remains. A poet of the latter 20th century known for his unflinchingly transgressive works, truly a self-proclaimed “[dirty old man](#)”, owning up to his terrible characteristics. Characteristics that all too often got the better of him. *But, remember that concept*, taking ownership over a part of yourself that you despise. Moving past one's individual opinions on the *dirty old man*, it's important to admit that the Bukowski insert had a threefold effect: he pays homage to a preferred poet that still has influence in respective literary corners, he portrays himself as well-read and intelligent as he pushes forward anew, and the inherent filthiness of Bukowski's content distances him away from the polished and wholesome boyband image he might've felt glued to and unable to escape.

Oddly enough, **Only Angel** plays off of track 2, *Sign of the Times*, capturing the three-note piano melody from the end to be reinvigorated into a new atmosphere as Faye Dunaway's voice echoes over top of it. *And, naturally, I find that an interesting choice*. If you recall, *Sign of the Times* is a song definitely more on the apocalyptic side. Very much life versus death in an inevitable battle. And, *you know*, this song captures the extremity of life versus death, but in its own unique way – through the clouds of sensuality and seduction. There's always that one person with the dramatization, who believes they will stop breathing when separated from whoever they're infatuated with at the time – that's the kind of energy radiating here, *do you feel it?*



Only Angel, *Live at The Garage* (2017)

[this is such a rockstar song and just so damn attractive and sensual, and i feel like him singing it live at the garage is something so chaotic & intoxicating just like the song itself.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Intro]

I saw this angel (Ooh)
I really saw an angel (Ooh, ooh)
Hey, hey!
(Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh)

This minute-long musical interlude at the top of the song marks the second act of Harry's solo debut whilst standing with ambiguity through dreamy though misleading chorals. I would even call it a tool for eloquent foreshadowing – in the way that his **Only Angel** seemed angelic and a goddess not of this earth at first, when captivated by her beauty so much as to ignore the signs. These signs, of course, evolve to him coming to see how devilish and egregious she becomes as intimacy and seduction grows.

I saw this angel / I really saw an angel - This dialogue's pulled from the film [Barfly](#) (1987), screenplay done by Charles Bukowski, and the words are said by Faye Dunaway's character, Wanda. The film deals with adultery, violence, etc. The story itself is partly autobiographical to Bukowski, representing himself as his alter ego, per say. One of the main characters, *an adultress*, proclaims at one point that she can see angels. Now, angels are *usually* revered as a positive symbol in art, whether being an illusion or

showing up in a dream. *But*, in Bukowski's work, *angel* is often a derogatory term, taking on a more sinister connotation.

dogs and angels are not / very far apart

Much like the instrumentals, this can be a tool for foreshadowing, and also offer up context for the journey we're about to embark on through the song. In the switched meaning from complimentary to derogatory, in the illusions of angel versus devil, etc. Many people make the choice to skip this intro, anxious to get to the point where the music drastically shifts, but ones who do so *aren't experiencing the full atmospheric intent of the song*. The artist himself has chosen for it to be included, after all!

[Verse 1]

Open up your eyes, shut your mouth and see
That I'm still the only one who's been in love with me
I'm just happy getting you stuck in between my teeth
And there's nothing I can do about it
Broke a finger knocking on your bedroom door
I got splinters in my knuckles crawling 'cross the floor
Couldn't take you home to mother in a skirt that short
But I think that's what I like about it

Open up your eyes, shut your mouth and see / That I'm still the only one who's been in love with me - So full of bravado. *Lust over love*, that seems to be the implication here to me. The relationship between the speaker and the *angel* seems to be consumed with ardor, but nothing beyond – except maybe idolization of the *angel* from him. Telling someone to open up their eyes and shut their mouth is definitely an attention getter – but to whom is he addressing? *I have two possibilities*: (1) an ambiguous call out to those who have been perceiving him (*and, inevitably, any of his relationships*), or (2) addressing himself, slapping himself silly to snap out of the fascination and come to the realities.

The second line can allude to a little bit of narcissism, maybe. The term *in love* is usually said to or about someone else, not oneself. And there's a decision of *with me* instead of *with myself*, which is such an interesting choice to me, for the natural phrasing would favor the latter. *Is he invested in himself? Invested in his self?* Would he maybe say *I love myself* if he were more familiar with what that self entails? *Ok, that's me letting my philosophical brain get in the way a bit possibly*. So, the speaker's the only one who's in love with *him* because, like said before, this relationship is *lust over love*. And there's this awareness right off the bat, *but he's not walking away*.

I'm just happy getting you stuck in between my teeth / And there's nothing I can do about it - God, I just love this line. *Giving off that borderline animalistic desire*. Another instance in this song of taking something that has one meaning and connotation, and flipping it to something a bit unexpected – a *pattern that seems established*. If someone gets something trapped between their teeth, it'll probably annoy them, and cause some discomfort. This *angel* is stuck in the speaker's thoughts like food would be stuck between teeth, and, although there's definitely some negatives and frustrations in the fixation, he finds the chaos of it all *exciting*. Or, if you'd rather take this in more a physical and sensual sense, the biting of lips when lost in a kiss with someone, that he'll be happy just sinking into this *angel* he's so infatuated with, despite the consequences to his own psyche. And, with the context of the song, it can be applicable.

Broke a finger knocking on your bedroom door / I got splinters in my knuckles crawling 'cross the floor - Calls to mind the imagery of *Meet Me in the Hallway* with a more violent twist. And I believe *Meet Me in the Hallway* and **Only Angel** are each other's emotional foils, with the first track begging to be numbed while this sixth track begs to feel everything so intensely. A lot of the details in the song are exaggerated and amplified. And this creative decision ties back into the themes weaving through fixation

and infatuation centered around this *archetypal femme fatale angel* character. Plus, the strong emphasis of the impact the door and the floor have on Harry serves as an exaggeration of his anticipation and even ferocity to get into the room.

Couldn't take you home to mother in a skirt that short / But I think that's what I like about it - Adds a sense of *forbidden* romance to the song, but in the way that there's something in the back of the speaker's mind saying that this *angel* is not good, more devilish rather than angelic. But then, he continues on to make a point that he likes it and is still falling deep within the infatuation – with no enthusiasm within him to get himself out of it.

[Chorus]

She's an angel (Ooh), Only Angel (Ooh)
She's an angel (Ooh), my Only Angel (Ooh)

The one at the heart of this song is a woman referred to as an *angel*, or to which the speaker insists, “my *Only Angel*”. Like said briefly in passing before, she's an archetypal femme fatale character, alluring and irresistible but always seems to be just out of reach, perhaps even dangerous to the unsuspecting. And the emphasis on the speaker's possessiveness might even play into that danger aspect, in an odd way – he doesn't want to taint or fall out of the infatuation, so he ignores the signs of harm, and instead holds on even *tighter*. But, I do believe the speaker's aware here.

Like I mentioned at the beginning of the song's analysis, Charles Bukowski's use of the term *angel* differs greatly from the norm. In his poetry, it's used in a derogatory connotation rather than a complimentary one. And with the nod of Bukowski's through the interlude at the beginning, and the context clues given up to this point, there's confidence in my theory that there's inspiration taken here, bringing in that alternative perspective of the term.

Another facet in the choice to use the phrase *angel* is how they are regarded and revered by God and by humans, which can be argued as yet another exhibit of amplification and exaggeration that follow the song's existent pattern. Angels are powerful figures, given a platform by the almighty. While there's already an understanding of a negative connotation to the term influenced by Bukowski, could there be another allusion hiding here? Like a power hierarchy between the speaker and his angel character that causes him to fall on his knees? *How he has given the angel character a platform? By putting her up on a pedestal?* Just some last thoughts on this to leave you with.

[Verse 2]

I must admit I thought I'd like to make you mine
As I went about my business through the warning signs
End up meetin' in the hallway every single time
And there's nothin' we can do about it
Told it to her brother and she told it to me
That she's gonna be an angel, just you wait and see
When it turns out she's a devil in between the sheets
And there's nothing she can do about it, hey, hey

I must admit I thought I'd like to make you mine / As I went about my business through the warning signs - Another pointed lyric alluding to the fact that the speaker will continue on with this fascination with the *angel* character, no matter what is shown to him or spoken towards him. Ignoring all the warning signs alluding that this angelic figurehead grasping onto the speaker's head and heart has something a bit more sinister underneath. *But the speaker has this unwavering determination.*

End up meetin' in the hallway every single time / And there's nothin' we can do about it - Another moment that calls back to the album opener, *Meet Me in the Hallway*, and I believe there's intention

within that. As I mentioned when we talked about the first callback, I believe that song and this song are one another's emotional foils. What's their connecting string? *The same metaphor*, but in different contexts. *Let's unpack*.

The hallway is a neutral ground: not the bedroom, not the kitchen, both settings of intimacy explored thus far in the album. In this moment, in contrast to the rest of the song, no person seems to be dominant over the other. Maybe there's never an agreement between the speaker and the *angel*? In regards to what they should be? On the severity of their conquests together? Or maybe capturing a second of wavering, realization that neither are asking nor giving everything? And with the addition of *every single time*, this isn't a new occurrence. *Many ways one could go with this*, just consider this as me getting you started.

Told it to her brother and she told it to me / That's she's gonna be an angel, just you wait and see / When it turns out she's a devil in between the sheets - Revelations about the true nature of the *angel* idolized keeps coming up for the listener whilst the speaker actively ignores despite the subtle descent towards emotional turmoil and turbulence. This woman is repeatedly referred to as an "angel", yet the revelation that she's a *devil in between the sheets* further insinuates the darker side, not-so-hidden it seems. These constant twists on the angelic metaphor suggest that the speaker is drawn to the purity and danger all the same.

The insert of *her brother* confused me at first, but this is how I've interpreted it for myself since: The people around this *angel*, the ones closest to her that one would expect to know the truth, are under her same spell – this same facade she has put on as an angelic figurine that the subject has idolized. There's reassurance directed toward the subject that things with this femme fatale archetype will work itself out in the end, *just wait and see!* But any companionship the speaker keeps sinking deeper into with his *angel* finds itself as something sinister, addicting, enthralling – *more of the opposite of the facade all see*.

And there's nothing she can do about it, hey, hey! - We have gone from *nothing I can do about it* to *nothing we can do about it*, now to *nothing she can do about it*. Even the *angel* can't run away from her own duality, like it's just simply in her nature to be an angel and a devil. And I believe, by this verse, the speaker has come to more awareness of the true nature of this *angel* he's put up on a pedestal. *But he's still holding on to this companionship he's revered*.

[Chorus]

She's an angel (Ooh), Only Angel (Ooh)
She's an angel (Ooh), my Only Angel (Ooh)
She's an angel (Ooh), Only Angel (Ooh)
She's an angel (Ooh), my Only Angel (Ooh)

[Post-Chorus]

(Oh, ow, ow, hey)
(Wanna die, wanna die)
(Right now)

The chorus continues to reinforce this theme of duality that's centered with the *angel* at the core of the song. And though there's not a lot of words said, there's this unwritten sign of tumultuous interaction. The *angel* embodies both innocence and temptation. The holy and unholy. The puritanical and the risqué. *See the pattern I'm trying to go with here?*

[Bridge]

Wanna die, wanna die, wanna die tonight
Wanna die, wanna die, wanna die tonight (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)
Wanna die, wanna die, wanna die tonight (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

(Ow)

The bridge vibrates with self-deprecation and self-destructive tendencies, looped around what seems to be an emotional turmoil within the speaker, most likely instigated and invigorated by the *angel*. He sings wantonly through the bridge, hyperbolising his desire for his *angel*, fulfilling the destructive prophecy that resides in the *angel*. It surfaces this self-destructive drive, which echoes other parts of the album as a whole, including the heavy presence of death. And this self-destruction calls back to Bukowski, who's already prominent within this song.

I also find myself thinking about religious implications and imagery once again, as it's hard to not make that connection when discussing angels and devils. To become an angel, one must die. *But*, this wish is something dark, which contrasts the light associated with the term *angel*, yet makes sense when we remember the darker connotations of the term – injected by Bukowski, carried on by Harry.

[Chorus]

She's an angel (Ooh), Only Angel (Ooh)
 She's an angel (Ooh), my Only Angel (Ooh)
 She's an angel (Ooh), my Only Angel (Ooh)
 She's an angel (Ooh), my-my-my-my Only Angel (Ooh)

And we return to the chorus. The song **Only Angel** paints an oil portrait of the intensity of an infatuation that is both elevating and destructive, seductive and devastating. It inverts the normal shape of religious worship, praising the body and its sins, in a way that mirrors the saying *the devil made me do it*. But, the devil was in disguise of an angel, the angel that he raised up on a pedestal of his own accord.

Kiwi

Song 7/10

Is this song fun and loose? Yes. Is **Kiwi** also one of Harry's most misunderstood songs on this album in my vision? Yes. And I can already feel your judgment of me, wondering why I bother to go in this deep to a song referencing a fruit never named that is meant for jumping and dancing. Well, *because it's an analysis, my darling*. Comes with the territory, I fear! Harry has said himself that this raucous and energetic song started out as a joke, and I'm gonna branch off that — to claim that the song itself is supposed to be a *satirical piece*. At the top of this analysis, I mentioned how I theorize that this eponymous debut is a scrapbook of all the things he believes could define him and/or influence him. But, he's also testing out the waters.

Kiwi is a pastiche of the debauchorous rockstar, singing about some cool woman and illustrating double entendres and implications of drug use. He steps into different shoes and embraces the stereotypical *rockstar* of the 60s and 70s – a time period in which Harry likes to frolic about – while simultaneously, *I believe*, poking fun at the way that (some of, not all) classic rock portrays women. While, naturally, I'm still going to chat with you about the lyrics, *I don't believe they're meant to be the main focus*. Rather, it's the detail in the *instrumentation* and the classic rock sound that drives this point. And, the suggestive *sniff!* later in the song is, like I said before, another way to bring in more of that classic rock narrative, building upon building this caricature of himself, influenced by the hands of rockstars he's known. Sex, drugs, rock and roll is the motto. A decent chunk of his life was spent in a boyband, and that glues a stigma onto you that's hard to shake. This genre of music was the least expected out of him, so maybe it

was seen as a challenge to show everybody, *Hey, I can be a rockstar too! Look what I can do!* Which seems quite fitting for an album born from a need of rediscovery and reintroduction, yeah?



Kiwi, *Live in Studio* (2017)

[like i said before, “behind the album” was truly a gift that keeps on giving. this performance of kiwi sends electricity through my body, especially the end. my *goodness*. what else can i say? is there any more to say? just indulge.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Verse 1]

**She worked her way through a cheap pack of cigarettes
Hard liquor mixed with a bit of intellect
And all the boys, they were saying they were into it
Such a pretty face on a pretty neck**

She worked her way through a cheap pack of cigarettes - First line sets the scene and the character, as good first lines in art do. A woman who doesn’t hold up the epitome of class, I suppose, but from the lyrics to follow, there’s something about her that keeps pulling people into her. *Are we in for another femme fatale archetype like we saw in Only Angel?* Additionally, letting myself drown in the details, smoking many cigarettes in a row is a habit tending towards stress, an unhealthy coping mechanism, which adds onto this feminine character.

Hard liquor mixed with a bit of intellect- Hmm. Has enough money for the shots of hard liquor, a direct contrast from the cheap pack of cigarettes found in her hand in the preceding lyric. In other interpretations, I often see people take this line as derogatory, so I’m going to offer you the opposite. *Can you sense a hint of a smile there?* ‘Cause I can. Impressed with the impression, the intellect still radiates as she loses herself to all these substances. But, I bring in the question too: *is it all just a persona? A cracked actor?*

And all the boys, they were saying they were into it - Oh, whatever it is, *she’s got it*. It’s there, she’s outfoxing all of the others, standing there with her cheap cigarettes in hand and the burn of liquor still fresh down her throat. *The use of they is very interesting to me*, removing the speaker from the spell of her. He’s not as infatuated as the others? Is the speaker just an observer?

Such a pretty face on a pretty neck - Just adding to the fact that this woman is infatuating, a real looker, someone with the power to make men fall at her feet, to round out the first verse.

[Pre-Chorus]

**She’s driving me crazy, but I’m into it (Oh)
But I’m into it (Oh), I’m kinda into it
It’s getting crazy, I think I’m losing it (Hey!)**

I think I'm losing it, oh, I think she said

There's this whole feeling of Harry toeing the lines of parody, but I find it's in this specific point where it's the most palpable, where he fully embraces the satire and fun and looseness. Like said before, **Kiwi** is a pastiche of the debauchorous rockstar that comes to mind when thinking of the music scene of the 60s-70s, which is coincidentally the same aesthetic playground Harry likes to frolic in.

She's driving me crazy, but I'm into it - First thing to address is how the speaker went from keeping the distance to putting themselves right into the action, speaking about his own reaction to the *femme fatale*. And there's this parallel present here with earlier songs on *HS1*, like *Only Angel* and *Carolina*, when the expression of crazy becomes synonymous with infatuation, and can be taken as either a positive or a negative. Or, maybe at times, a neutral. *Crazy* could be annoyance, could be desire, and *crazy* could be a feeling of something hectic and chaotic. Maybe it's up to the listener to decide it for themselves.

But I'm into it, I'm kinda into it- Bringing this line in for quick consideration in the context of the satirical. Trying out the stereotypical rockstar thing, trying to prove he had the capability of removing himself from the boyband stigma. It's supposed to come on a bit sarcastic, a bit like a shrugging of the shoulders. *Yeah, I guess I'm kinda into this!*

[Chorus]
 "I'm having your baby!"
 "It's none of your business!"
 "I'm having your baby!"
 "It's none of your business!" (*It's none of your, it's none of your -*)
 "I'm having your baby!" (*Hey!*)
 "It's none of your business!" (*Oh!*)
 "I'm having your baby!" (*Hey! Hey!*)
 "It's none of your, it's none of your -" (*Ow!*)

The chorus is where you really get the feeling of a group of people just having fun in the studio. Though I am finding the story being told in the song, a story I presume to be fictional and made up on the fly, it's truly just messing about in the studio and you can feel that sense of fun being transferred to you, as the listener. The repetition makes it easy to catch on, to sing along, or even scream along if one feels so inclined to do so.

[Verse 2]
 It's New York, baby, always jacked up (*Hey!*)
 Holland Tunnel for a nose, it's always backed up
 When she's alone, she goes home to a cactus (*Uh!*)
 In a black dress, she's such an actress

It's New York, baby, always jacked up / Holland Tunnel for a nose, it's always backed up - *Long live Sex, Drugs, and Rock n' Roll, am I right?* Falling back on the notion that the whole song is satire for the stereotypical rockstar persona... of course, drugs are going to make an appearance. Now, whether this is a reference to the speaker or the *femme fatale*? I find it unclear, personally, and think it can be applied to either party and hold up equally.

When she's alone, she goes home to a cactus - First impression *first*, in the way cacti can give you a quick prick if you're not careful. We're playing on this a bit, alluding to *another kind of prick*, a man who's your textbook asshole, really. Interestingly, cacti hardly need watering or other forms of nurturing, which could be a sneaky way to mirror the type of lackluster relationship our *femme fatale* character is in.

Now, here comes the inevitable part of the song analysis where I'm sure I'm thinking way deeply and excavating too much in my imagination, but I feel obligated to share it with you anyway. Thinking way too deeply about it: playing off the knowledge we have about how cacti needing less nurturing and growing in barren lands, and also holding onto the theory that the entire song is a satire of the stereotypical rockstar... *you know*, I can't help but notice the distinct contrast to the album's own imagery. *HS1's* imagery is very much compatible with water and baptismal imagery. Thus, showcasing that this lifestyle is not his own, furthering the satirical element and the idea of a caricature. *Well, it's out there now!*

In a black dress, she's such an actress - This feeling that the charm that radiates off her is all an act, a facade put on, all calculated possibly. Alluring in a black dress, but everything else is something that will dissipate. To anybody, even the *prick* she goes home to. *Faking an orgasm, anybody?*

[Verse 3]

She sits beside me like a silhouette
Hard candy drippin' on me till my feet are wet
And now she's all over me, it's like I paid for it (*Cha-ching!*)
It's like I paid for it, I'm gonna pay for this (*Oh!*)

She sits beside me like a silhouette - Like a mirage? Is this femme fatale character even there, or just a fictionalized figure? Something of the speaker's imagination? A presence made up in assistance to a song of the satirical? Like a shadowed part of this persona he puts on for this song, aiding to the all-over atmosphere. One of *mystery, seduction...* you catch my drift, I hope.

Hard candy drippin' on me till my feet are wet - *Well*, I feel like if I went into a normal deep dive about this lyric, my analyses would switch from *PG-13* to *R*, so I'll leave one of the interpretations up for you to figure out yourself. But I will offer you *something*, no worries. This indistinct silhouette of a *femme fatale* beside him is the one getting *hard candy* all over him. Could this be a specific drink? [Yes](#). Could this be a metaphor (too)? *Possibly*. I go searching for metaphors everywhere, *I know*. We've chatted about the sexy context, but also could be all over the speaker's thoughts, a focus of obsession or an altered state of mind. *Just a thought*.

It's like I paid for it, I'm gonna pay for this - Going along with the sexy context first, there's an implication that this mysterious woman is, um, a prostitute, or *acting like one*. So enthusiastic and persistent in her advances, while there might be a lack of emotion. But, let's move over to the *metaphorical*, where the term "*I'm gonna pay for this*" can also mean "*I'm gonna have to face the consequences of my action*" – also, it's worth noting that after each line of him talking about paying for it, his voice seems to get more and more wary, almost as if one is coming to the realization that one's actions will have consequences (*and, possibly, one of the consequences is hidden in the chorus!*)

Ever Since New York

Song 8/10

No matter how much love this song receives, I will always believe it deserves more and more. Deserving of all the flowers and awards and accolades I can possibly shower upon it. ***Ever Since New York*** is a poignant highlight of the album, and it's something I will defend until I'm blue in the face. It's a true showcase of Harry's songwriting ability, even with such sparse lyricism and repetition. The vibrant images in the verses radiated against the desperation in a constant refrain. When shutting the eyes and pressing play, the listener is transported in the mind of someone in pain, in grief, but also impatient and

desperate – but in the know that he is helpless, which elicits anger. It's not just one note, but rather an eloquent symphony of melancholy.

This song is an enigma that'll never be *fully* cracked, and that's okay. In fact, maybe, it's all in its design. Truly, this one is for Harry, for the writer and composer himself, as a method of catharsis whilst keeping the story close to himself. What's being chronicled and illustrated is something so intensely painful and personal, which makes it impossible to figure out *completely*. Yet, in putting his pain out there, people have found their own sense of catharsis in it. ***Ever Since New York***, similar to a lot of his ballads, I find, can be an intricate web of emotions and the things that cause him pain all connecting in the middle to create such a work of art.

One thing I find intriguing and feel prominent to mention before delving into the details of the prose is the use of the ambiguous *you*. This ambiguous *you* needs to give him answers, to tell him something beyond the superficial. And, the prayers, the prayers might be a red line within the song. He's come to the point where he's relying on something he's never done before and maybe never believed prior, as he feels like no one is listening – but *you* might be able to offer some words to soothe his mind. And, *to me, the song itself is the prayer*, the prayer he never thought he'd be uttering, and using this angle to approach the song helps the listener sink in even deeper. The desperation to find a way to cope when you feel you have no way out, and no way to change the *grieving* you're stuck in.



Ever Since New York, *Saturday Night Live* (2017)

[no matter how many performances he does of this song, the time he sang it live on snl will forever hold residency in my heart. there's something so personal about it to me. so eloquent, and his voice sounds majestic. shut your eyes when you play it, ok?]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Verse 1]

Tell me something, tell me something
You don't know nothing, just pretend you do
I need something, tell me something new
Choose your words, 'cause there's no antidote
For this curse, *oh*, what's it waiting for?
Must this hurt you just before you go?

Tell me something, tell me something / You don't know nothing, just pretend you do / I need something, tell me something new - This begging for information, *new information*, will repeat through the whole song, at increasing desperation. The ambiguous *you* takes on the person the speaker is pleading with to relieve him of his agony. *Give me something, give me anything*, even if it's just something pretend, *as long as it's not the same thing I keep hearing a thousand times over*. It suggests a conversation, or perhaps even an internal monologue, where the speaker is seeking something beyond the superficial, something *new* that they haven't already been made aware of time and time over.

Choose your words, 'cause there's no antidote / For this curse, what's it waiting for? - An antidote is a *remedy to counteract the effect of poison*, and poison spreads through the body, causing a slow and

painful demise. With this metaphor, the speaker knows that he can't evade the inevitable pain that will consume him. Noting that it's important to be told about the news, but he needs to be let down easy (*Choose your words*). Grasping this matter, no matter how gentle words are said, will open a distressing period of his life, and there's no way to reverse the emotional disarray he's almost surrendering himself to (*'cause there's no antidote / For this curse*). And with this knowledge of no escape, impatience grows into a desperation to just get it all over within the shortest amount of time (*Oh, what's it waiting for?*).

Must this hurt you just before you go? - The *you* here is the person at the center of the news the speaker is hearing, I believe. And, in this line, there's this sense of pure helplessness of knowing someone you care deeply about is in the midst of pain and suffering, and you can't change the design of the events occurring. A wish to take the pain away. Maybe a wish for them to *be at peace*.

[Chorus]

Oh, tell me something I don't already know
Oh, tell me something I don't already know

Repetition is (almost) always intentional, and I don't mind if you're annoyed with me pushing the point home in all my analyses because I just want to get it stuck in your head. The entire song encapsulates this feeling of loss of hope, desperation, and melancholia that can come together in moments of isolation. But, the most important motif to focus on at this moment is *desperation*, as that's what is being illustrated in the constant chorus. *One line*. That's it. *But an important one*. Whatever news has been given to the speaker has been devastating, and he's begging to be told something other than that. The curse, the news that's been looming over him and circling his mind. *Tell me something I don't already know*, tell me something that will get me out of this stagnant circle of desolation, anything, *I'm desperate*. This underscore of a sense of frustration and a yearning for deeper insight or revelation.

[Verse 2]

(my favorite verse!! of all time!!)

Brooklyn saw me, empty at the news
There's no water inside this swimming pool
Almost over, had enough from you
And I've been praying, I never did before
Understand I'm talking to the walls
I've been praying Ever Since New York

Brooklyn saw me, empty at the news - Personification of the city, which is a technique that can, *oddly enough*, amplify the speaker's loneliness and isolation. The speaker's company in this melancholia was the empty city itself, which then leads into the speaker describing himself as empty as well. Also, *I want to consider a supplementary implication*: Suggesting an entire borough saw him in such a personal and intimate moment of grief could be exploring his status in modern day culture, and perhaps even criticizing it for sometimes feeding off his vulnerability. An underlying implication that even his own intimate moments aren't his own anymore, *maybe*.

Empty at the news links in nicely with the line to follow, alluding to the speaker's desperation and hopelessness felt about the information just heard (*cause and effect*).

There's no water inside this swimming pool - When you find yourself in a swimming pool with no water, you're essentially *stuck at the bottom* and it's incredibly hard to find and/or climb your way out. An emotional metaphor, you see? More implications toward the speaker's feeling of hopelessness, hitting rock bottom as the devastating news settles in. A key motif in the HS1 universe is water, remember that. So, for there to be a line that blatantly contradicts this, it only further emphasizes how at a loss he must've felt in the moment he's trying to immortalize here. He seems to find a lot of comfort *in water*, as

an escape or simply to seek stillness and calm – therefore, in this case, he couldn't find a way out of the sadness and reality of it all, no moment of stillness amongst a whirlwind.

Almost over, had enough from you - The ambiguous *you* that looms over the song, and I think it goes through different hands throughout. Here, I feel like *you* takes on the embodiment of the curse, the grief itself. The speaker had enough of this curse looming over him, tired of hearing it over and over, teetering between acceptance of it and wishing that it's almost over and frees his mind.

And I've been praying, I never did before / Understand I'm talking to the walls / I've been praying Ever Since New York - *These lines*. The most poignant and beautiful lines in the whole song to me, it grabs hold of my heart every listen, at this turning point towards spiritual seeking in a time of confusion and despair. At the last line of this trio, we still have the specification of a place, but instead of the detailed personification of Brooklyn, we have this broader visualization of New York (*whether he speaks of the city or the state is unclear, but I'm going to assume city due to the context with Brooklyn, but feel free to interpret how you please!*). Going from a detailed, focused view to a broad, blurred abstraction mirrors the speaker's own deterioration.

And I've been praying, I never did before is a single line that speaks volumes. How often atheists or people who don't have a strong opinion on religion start praying or hoping for a higher power after finding themselves in a situation so consuming. It feels like a last call, begging for a change in fate and a moment's sanctuary. But, now, the speaker feels that this opportunity has fallen flat. *Understand I'm talking to the walls* highlights this, his doubt that anybody is out there listening – he's never felt more abandoned and alone. Knowing the whole time that nothing he can say or do will change anything, despite his pleas.

But, yet, *I've been praying Ever Since New York* – there was some solace found in it. And, he doesn't want to find himself back in the pit of melancholia he was so desperately stuck in back in New York. Maybe he realizes it can be fruitless, or maybe it has reignited a sense of hope, but he's doing it again – a cause and effect of desperation, and feeling a low that he never wanted to return to. And that he's been doing it ever since, so the situation, or *the effect it had*, is still there in times of reflection.

[Chorus]

**Oh, tell me something I don't already know
Oh, tell me something I don't already know
Oh, tell me something I don't already know
Oh, tell me something I don't already know**

Repetition again, the chorus remains a constant. And whenever that happens, it reminds me of a *mantra*, or a *coping mechanism*. In the context of this song, I believe it to be the latter. Repeating the same plea over and over to avoid hearing the same devastating conversation one more time. Begging something to just say something different, talk about anything else. Avoiding hearing the inevitable, avoid letting the curse sink under his skin deeper and deeper – even though it's already there, and has been.

[Bridge]

**Tell me something, tell me something
You don't know nothing, just pretend you do
Tell me something just before you go**

First two lines are pulled directly from the opening verse, and, like described before, *repetition is a huge part of the song*. While often written off as weak songwriting, if used correctly, it can become the most powerful tool at a creator's disposal. Again, it's being used to emphasize the emptying feeling of *desperation*.

Tell me something just before you go - I want to bring in more religious aspects, as they've already been implied. *Can we connect one last time before you go*, where the ambiguous *you* now embodies the person at the heart of the cursed news the speaker is tired of hearing and dreading hearing one more time. This, *to me*, parallels *Sign of the Times*, how he's seeking a "Go forth and conquer" moment, not caring if the *you* knows what he's speaking of or not – just aches to be connected to this person he cares about one last time before it all sets in, before it all gets worse.

[Chorus]

Oh, tell me something I don't already know
 Oh, tell me something I don't already know
 Oh, tell me something I don't already know
 Oh, tell me something I don't already know

Just one phrase holds its own in many iterations, and it's always been something so devastatingly beautiful as it truly captures the haunting feeling of *desperation* and *hopelessness* – as I know I've already detailed, but it's worthy to speak about over and over. This constant repetition, eloquently utilized, of the isolating feeling: *I'm empty, I'm desperate, there's nothing more I can do. But I can think, I can feel, and that might be the only thing to give me hope. I just need somebody, something, to tell me something new, give me a different insight, give me a reason to believe. Whatever, I don't care, just give me something other than this. Help me.* And hearing this plea grow in intensity as the song carries through makes it hard not to get emotional while listening.

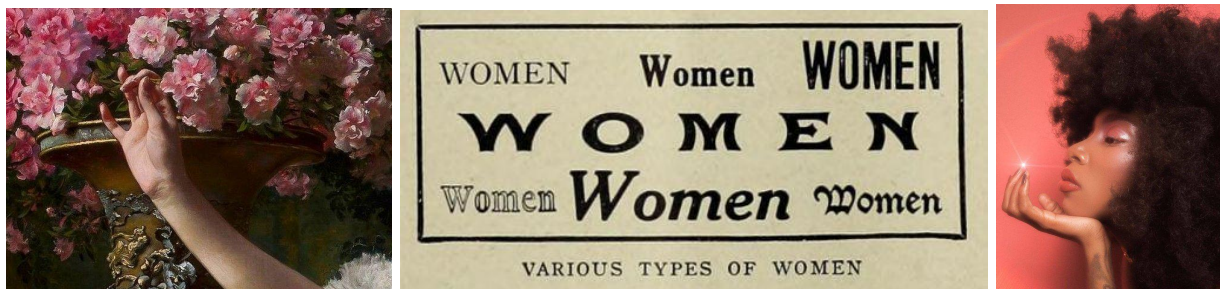
At least for me, the overly sensitive one, I admit.

Woman

Song 9/10

The penultimate song **Woman** returns us to the overarching estrangement, and, similar to back with *Only Angel*, it begins with a spoken introduction as a male voice echoes in the listeners' ears: *Should we just search romantic comedies on Netflix and see what we find?* It's a reference that leans on the self-indulgent, and tongue-in-cheek as the song that will follow is anything but romantic or comedic. Because, similar to *Only Angel* once more, this spoken word offers some hidden context for the experience to follow, *even in an ironic way*. This song delves into the complex emotions of jealousy and desire, and the detriment of the inner turmoil that can follow. The woman at the heart of this chronicle of his turbulence is referred to as nothing more than just that, as *woman*. It signifies a shift – from the personal and intimate to the impersonal and memory. *This isn't a love song*, but rather a song of *envious spiral*, and the self destruction that permeates as a result – *which could be argued for both parties*.

If you couldn't tell already, I believe that *Only Angel* and **Woman** could be connected in a subtle way. And maybe this is just my goofy mind trying to find connections wherever I can go, but offer me your ear for a moment in time here. The chronological order is the same order of where they sit in the tracklist, *of course*. The events in *Only Angel* – the relationship being built on lust over love, on idolization and infatuation over mutual respect – led to the events in **Woman** – consumed by covetousness and inner unrest from the loss of infatuation and lust. ANGEL has fallen from grace, and is now only referred to as WOMAN, as the pain of remembering how he idolized her further pushes the agony of the inner turmoil chronicled in **Woman**. *Do you see?* Not to mention both songs pull from the same poet, and the same film, but *we'll get into those details later*.



Woman, Live in Studio (2017)

[so so so smiley while singing this song, how cute! once more, we find ourselves back at “behind the album” because his voice sounds oh-so-heavenly and dreamy.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Intro: Alex Salibian]

Should we just search romantic comedies on Netflix and then see what we find?
(*La-la-la-la-la-la-la-la*)

Should we just search romantic comedies on Netflix and then see what we find? - This spoken addition to the song, vocalized by Alex Salibian, comes off as something adorable, but even more sarcastic. And I’m putting this out there completely unaware if this will be a popular perception, but this is always the double way I’ve perceived this opening line. The quote-en-quote “*love story*” represented in this song is the polar opposite of one shown in a classic romantic comedy with a perfectly tied up happy ending. The fiction versus nonfiction battle, you could say. Sensationalization versus reality.

Like mentioned before, it comes off tongue-in-cheek. Maybe even a nod to the speaker of the song looking back on how *silly he was back then*, to think that this relationship would turn out like the ones in the perfect romantic comedies you can play on a moment’s notice. But the story to follow in the lyrics is *what really happened*, a defining stark contrast. This song is encompassed by jealousy rather.

[Verse 1]

I’m selfish, I know
But I don’t ever want to see you with him
I’m selfish, I know
I told you, but I know you never listen

I’m selfish, I know / But I don’t ever want to see you with him - *Starts with a confession*, over a piano that reminds me vaguely of Elton John’s *Bennie and the Jets* but I digress. A bit self-deprecating, admitting that he knows that this character flaw is embedded into him, *he knows*. This confession is repeated in the verse, like the speaker has to make it known time and time again that he knows his flaws, even as they’re simultaneously consuming him. Moving onto the next line, which when sung has this natural emphasis at the end, on the *with him* – there’s a bitterness that starts and extends. This unnamed *woman* has such a hold on the speaker still, that seeing her with anybody else digs at him. The *woman* has moved on while the speaker’s still in the depths of post-breakup depression, and this petty jealousy swarms his psyche.

I’m selfish, I know / I told you, but I know you never listen - Have you caught on yet? *I love some intentional repetition*, and I believe we’ve found ourselves in another instance of it. This confession from the speaker, laced with melancholia, is repeated twice in the first verse, and it feels as if it’s this *pattern he can’t break out of*. Repetitive circling around this tendency to be consumed by envy amidst feelings so passionate, and *he knows*, he’s aware of his own weakness. Then, move onto the next line which deals with miscommunication, a common motif once more. *I told you, but I know you never listen*, as in the speaker tried to communicate the flaws, the weaknesses, but the *woman* refused to hear whatever

he was saying. Could've also been attempts at communicating how the relationship wasn't healthy, wasn't take and give but rather unbalanced, as well.

[Pre-Chorus]

**I hope you can see the shape that I'm in
While he's touching your skin
He's right where I should, where I should be
But you're making me bleed**

I hope you can see the shape that I'm in / While he's touching your skin - This couplet illustrates *selfish tendencies*, one of the many he confessed to knowing he possesses. It's this self-serving urge to have the *woman* be in his midst only to witness how much pain he's been in, caused by her loving and living beside a man *who's not him*.

He's right where I should, where I should be / But you're making me bleed - Companion couplet to the previous two lines, with the first line illustrating the obvious – *the speaker wants to be in the new guy's place and still touching her skin*. The second line also parallels the past pairing, a selfish tendency to want the person who hurt you to know how much you *bleed*.

[Chorus]

**Woman, Woman (La-la-la-la-la-la-la-la)
Wo-Woman, Woman
Woman, Woman (La-la-la-la-la-la-la-la)
Wo-Woman, Woman (Hey)**

This chorus, with its simple repetition of a singular word followed by melodic la's, serves as a haunting backdrop to the speaker's emotional turmoil. It illustrates the focus of the intensity and longing, and spotlights it even. While the sequence of la's can be there for solely musicality reasons and those reasons alone, I want to propose a quick little theory in addition.

I've always thought, in the back of my head, that the la's sequence is the equivalent of somebody blocking their ears and refusing to listen to someone telling them something. Like, a child holding their fingers in both ears, goofily sing-singing, "I can't hear youuuu!". Maybe the speaker wants to ignore this unnamed woman now and onward, trying to ignore how much of a hold still remains. But, as the song continues on, it's clear to see that it's not too easy to separate.

[Verse 2]

**Tempted, you know
Apologies are never gonna fix this (Mmm)
I'm empty, I know
And promises are broken like a stitch is**

Tempted, you know / Apologies are never gonna fix this - What are his temptations? *The selfish tendencies*, maybe, as he points back directly to the *woman*, changing the language from *I know* to *you know*. He knows that the woman is aware of how easily his temptations and selfish and jealousy takes over him, yet she continues. *Maybe there's a subtle maliciousness in the undertext?* A thought I'm not one hundred percent on, but I always like to share.

Then, move our focus to the second line. A simple apology isn't going to fix all this inner turmoil, all this pain that's left over and the new wounds the *woman* is inflicting on the speaker. Many times, an apology is seen as a fix-it-all scheme, a quick bandaid that will cover the most brutal of wounds. But, sometimes, the issue is deeper than such, and apologies won't be the solution. The issues between the speaker and the *woman* are more than simplistic tussles, but something that roots down deep inside the speaker.

I'm empty, I know / And promises are broken like a stitch is - More on the self-deprecation, in this sense of the speaker undervaluing himself. Consumed by jealousy, seeing the *woman* with another man in the place in which he once stood – but he doubts if he has enough to offer her. Or, another one to interpret the sentiment *I'm empty, I know* is how the experience with the *woman* has drained him, leaving with nothing else to give, as he's run dry. Either interpretation you take, the speaker makes it clear that he's aware of this painful reality.

Second line's implication is that promises and trust were broken between the two of them. And those events were the contributing factors for where we stand now. I've always loved his choice of words here, *promises are broken like a stitch is*, as I feel like it seamlessly ties back to the first pre-chorus, with *But you're making me bleed*. There's such an emphasis put on the pain, the agony, and the turmoil that the subject of the song has put the speaker through. The speaker refuses to downplay it, rather he wants to accentuate it as much as possible.

[Pre-Chorus]
I hope you can see the shape I've been in
While he's touching your skin
This thing upon me howls like a beast
You flower, you feast

This thing upon me howls like a beast / You flower, you feast - And here's where the homage to Bukowski continues on. This pre-chorus, with its visceral imagery of howling beasts and blooming flowers, illustrates the raw and primal nature of the speaker's reaction to the *woman's* action. I feel like it's also a moment to deepen the contrast, the beauty and the pull of the *woman* at odds with the pain he feels. And I know I won't be in short company when I admit this is my favorite line in the song's entirety. *But, let's move our focus to the origins.* This is a loose quotation of another few lines from the film *Barfly*, which originates in Bukowski's 1961 poem, *Old Man, Dead In A Room*.

this thing upon me is not death
but it's as real
 (...)

as all my lovely women
 (wives and lovers)
 break like engines
 into steam of sorrow
 (...)

this thing upon me
like a flower and a feast
 believe me
 is not death and is not
 glory
 (...)

... this thing upon me,
 great god,
this thing upon me
crawling like a snake
terrifying my love of commonness
 some call Art
 some call Poetry;
 it's not death
but dying will solve its power
 (...)

My interpretation of this poem is – in the most basic way I can describe – Bukowski trying to capture and describe his writing and passion for the art. A passion that removes him from ordinary life and prevents him from simply living and loving because the desire to write something (which he doesn't even necessarily believe is good) is so strong it makes him go *mad*. It dives into something pretty morbid, as I find a lot of Bukowski's work does, as if *death* would be the single thing to release him from the all-consuming obsession in passion. Bukowski has a strong sense of self-loathing mixed with the crippling desire to put something into words, but not always finding the right ones. *Which is a factor that felt reminiscent of HS1 as a whole, for there's been a lot of self-criticism, self-doubt, and self-destruction explored.* But, what does this poem have to do with **Woman**?

Simply put, **Woman**, the beautiful song we have the pleasure of listening to, could be the vehicle to capture his jealousy, *that has become crippling and something he needs to find an escape from.* But, also, it fuels his inspiration to write, so he won't get rid of it in the end – which can be coupled with the repetitive *I know's* from earlier on in the song, *maybe?*

This thing upon me, the phrasing of it, implies being submitted to it without a choice in the matter. Almost like second nature, this thing upon him that howls like a beast. In Bukowski's context, it's due to a *fault* in his character and I feel like it's a similar case with the speaker's context, as well. While Bukowski's character flaw (*among many*) relates to his all-consuming desire to write, the speaker's character flaw would relate to the all-consuming emotion of jealousy. *Which is something that he references about himself throughout the song*, whether directly or through selfishness, etc.

Then, the companion half: *You flower, you feast*. This is where I believe Bukowski and Harry differ slightly within how these words are utilized. In Bukowski's case, he's using a figure of beauty and a figure of consumption – one that can be taken savagely, if one chooses. To illustrate *this thing upon me*, is something ravishing but also destructive. *And, I do believe this is how the speaker sees the woman character, to briefly go deeper into why this certain poem of Bukowski's was chosen. And believe that it could still be interpreted that way. But, I also think there's more to add.* In the case of this song, I lean towards my initial take on this line, during my first encounter with it. *You flower, you feast* feels synonymous to **you reap what you sow** to me, and I feel like this notion can be applied to both the speaker and the *woman*. How it applies to *woman*? The speaker addressing *woman* – *you did this to me, you hurt me by letting him touch you where I did, therefore you must live with watching my exhibition of my agony inflicted by you.* How it applies to the speaker? The speaker addressing oneself – *you did this to yourself, you let the self-destructive envy take control, therefore you must live with the pain that's been inflicted from that.* Both perspectives of the addresses hold equal weight to them, I believe – and whichever one chosen offers a new perspective on a beautiful line.

[Chorus/Outro]
 Woman (Ah-ah, ah-ah), Woman (La-la-la-la-la-la-la)
 Wo-Woman (Mmm), Woman (Mmm)
 Woman (La-da, la-da, la-da), Woman (La-la-la-la-la-la-la)
 Wo-Woman (Mmm), Woman
 Woman!

And before the end of the song, we return to the chorus, for which I previously said has this haunting quality to it. Now with the added perspective given by the Bukowski piece referenced, the repetition and the simplicity in what's being repeated really lends itself to the experience of being consumed, whether little by little or all at one go. The speaker can't fathom anything else but *woman*, even as it *destroys him*. It flowers and feasts within him. *But*, tie in the song's soulful and somewhat retro vibe, and you get an extra *seductive* undertext paired with emotive delivery. *And I love that, I'll eat that shit up.* And, looking back to how the song began, with the call to the carefully curated romantic comedies as the flower, the jealousy and consumption and *past idolization* (*Only Angel*) is the carnivorous feast.

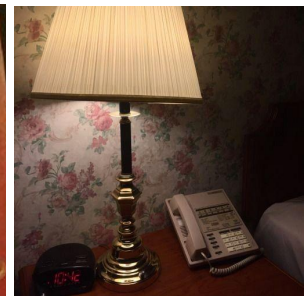
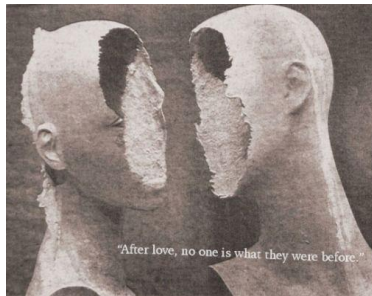
From the Dining Table

Song 10/10

We have reached the end of the eponymous debut, and my oh my, what a journey it's been, hasn't it? And what a way to go out. The somber tone and longing lyrics depict the pain of a heart being torn, then seeing the one responsible move on to somebody else. Abandoned, alone, and pathetic all encompass the wallowing in the hotel room to chance meetings with his replacement. There's these half-hearted attempts to distract oneself from reality, *unhealthy coping*: sleep the day away, drowning in drinks, and even trying to move on with someone else like the other party seemed to do effortlessly. **From The Dining Table**, in its bleakness, has Bukowski influence written all over it, and maybe people will hate me for saying that often throughout, *but when it's there, it's there!* The same poem we found ourselves drawn to for *Woman* is utilized again, Bukowski's *Old Man, Dead In A Room* – and I find the parallels in how the poem ends, reflecting on his art and work.

and as my gray hands
drop a last desperate pen
in some cheap room
they will find me there
and never know
my name
my meaning
nor the treasure
of my escape

The grim scene parallels the brutal staging of this album's epilogue, and *I find such beauty in it*. The story that's flickered through, like one's swapping tender stories tinged in melancholy with others under the light of a kitchen lamp, as his voice crackles through speakers or headphones. As much importance I emphasized on the opening track, I place the same amount of stock into the closing song too. Instead of introductions, we are *rounding out*. For *this will be the last song heard*, and when it finishes, the listeners sit in silence after listening to the album top to bottom and contemplate what they just consumed. I mean, *hopefully they do*. But, you know, this song is perfect for that reaction – more than just a simple song, it is. It's a time stamp of memories, of the black and white film reels of love and loss, all as a gentle arrangement coaxes it all along, *as the lyrics are given their proper voice*. He's given his side of everything, *and that's where the album ends*.



From the Dining Table, *Live in Studio* (2017)

[every single time i listen to this song, tears magically start to gather in my eyes. but this, this is what gets them rolling. It feels so intimate, so special, so delicate and breakable, like the song suggests. then comic relief at the end to let us breathe, of course.]

[Full Song Pinterest Board](#)

[Verse 1]

Woke up alone in this hotel room
 Played with myself, where were you?
 Fell back to sleep, I got drunk by noon
 I've never felt less cool

Woke up alone in this hotel room - Hotel rooms are something unfamiliar and foreign as opposed to a place you have created your own residence in, *or maybe a person you have become comfortable with*. From the very first line, we set up this drastic separation of the speaker and *the lost lover*. This loneliness, self-wallowing, and melancholia is not something new within the realm of the album, divulged to us in its many forms.

Played with myself, where were you? - This yearning for attention, in which I think can be taken as both sensual and non, and there's almost this bit of petulance to it, like you can hear this undertone of a subtle whine to the line. Wondering where they have gone *still*, when the speaker believes *the lost lover* should still be giving him companionship – instead, he has to manage about on his own.

Fell back to sleep, I got drunk by noon / I've never felt less cool - In an attempt to curb his thoughts, the speaker turns to drinking, but *feels pathetic after doing so*. Consistent falling back on unhealthy coping mechanisms, a running motif on the album. This combined with the emotional damage of having *the lost lover* leave with no word results in the speaker feeling as if he's at an all time low.

[Chorus]
 We haven't spoke since you went away
 Comfortable silence is so overrated
 Why won't you ever be the first one to break?
 Even my phone misses your call, by the way

We haven't spoke since you went away / Comfortable silence is so overrated - Definitely not the first time silence has been illustrated and mentioned between the speaker and the opposite party, for miscommunication and struggle to discuss is, *again*, a consistent theme and motif throughout. The two are stuck in this comfortable silence that comes off as neverending – a tiring cycle of going from being with someone to becoming total strangers, getting nothing but silence from their end. The *comfortable silence* enables things that people don't want to address to stay hidden within themselves, but the speaker's shown *growth* in how he wants to move past this comfort zone, calling it *so overrated*. It's like a cry out into the void of how he would prefer awkward conversations rather than not hearing anything at all, not engaging at all.

Why won't you ever be the first one to break? / Even my phone misses your call, by the way - Here, the speaker seems to always be the one who has to give in first, which could be just a character trait or something he feels obligated to do to keep the balance between the two. Perhaps he always had to show vulnerability or be emotional first in order for the other to open up. *But he begs for a change here*, wondering why *the lost lover* can never take the first step towards reconciliation? Then, amplified by the second line, personification of the phone, highlighting the classic sentiment *the phone goes both ways*. There's this underlying sense of disappointment and frustration as well as melancholy.

[Verse 2]
 I saw your friend that you know from work
 He said you feel just fine
 I see you gave him my old t-shirt
 More of what once was mine

I saw your friend that you know from work / He said you feel just fine - The second verse starts off with another scene, another visual. And I always imagined this as seeing someone he knew in passing

because of *the lost lover*, because the pain amplifies when coming across them after things have fallen apart, for the unsuspecting person is a reminder of a part of life that's now removed. The phrasing *just fine* is interesting, as it comes off as something one would say if the opposite is true. With the knowledge that the song is told from the speaker's perspective, not *the lost lover's*, there's a possibility of projection here. Almost wanting to believe that the other person is as torn up as he is, that their life has been shifted just as dramatically – *even if the reality is the opposite*.

I see you gave him my old t-shirt / More of what once was mine - There's some idiosyncrasies developing, centering around the most simple basic of clothing, a t-shirt. And, within this simple shirt, there can be a lot of meaning. The shirt could've been gifted to *the lost lover* by the speaker in an intimate moment, that still remains in his mind as a tender moment. But, seeing it in the hands of *a friend you know from work* gives the confirmation that they've moved on. And maybe indicates they might not have been as attached to the relationship as the speaker was at the time, and he still wallows in the pain from loss of it.

More of what once was mine is one of my favorite lines in the song, as it truly encompasses the song's narrative as a whole. Because, of course, where it stands, it's referencing the shirt that used to be his but is now in the hands of someone else. But it simultaneously parallels the agonizing spiral he's been in, coming to terms with the fact that this person is no longer in his life anymore – *and might just be in the arms of somebody else*, while he's left alone with his withdrawal.

[Chorus]

**I see it's written, it's all over his face
Comfortable silence is so overrated
Why won't you ever say what you want to say?
Even my phone misses your call, by the way**

I see it's written, it's all over his face / Comfortable silence is so overrated - *What's written all over his face?* I take this as an extension from *He said you feel just fine* from the top of the second verse, implying that the speaker can tell that the friend is trying to cover for *the lost lover*. But, again, the song is told from the perspective of the speaker, who feels like an unreliable narrator for anybody but himself, so we have to perceive it as what he perceives. *Yeah?*

The line *Comfortable silence is so overrated* is repeated, but with different intent this time around. In the first chorus, it pertained to the silence that has fallen between him and his ex-partner. Now, in this second chorus, it pertains to the speaker and the work friend, as the interaction between the two is bound to be awkward – and it also serves as the confirmation that *the lost lover* has truly moved away from the speaker while he's stuck thinking about them often. The speaker ridicules the quote-en-quote “comfortable” silence between them, highlighting the nervousity and discomfort in the guy's face, and inevitably flushing up on his, as well.

Why won't you ever say what you want to say? / Even my phone misses your call, by the way - The first line has changed from the first chorus, but I think the intent and message remains consistent. We return back to the constant motif – *lack of communication and/or miscommunication*, especially heavy on the other party. It's still in the same realm of the differences in vulnerability given, but with the focus on a different aspect. The speaker feels as if *the lost lover* wasn't entirely honest with him, for if they held their tongue on how they were feeling or what was bothering them, it could've led to further issues. And, the speaker is stuck now in this *inevitable reflection*. Maybe left with him wondering if they were ever as comfortable in this relationship as he was, just like he was contemplating if they were as vulnerable.

[Bridge]

Maybe one day you'll call me and tell me that you're sorry too

Maybe one day you'll call me and tell me that you're sorry too
 Maybe one day you'll call me and tell me that you're sorry too
 But you, you never do
 Woke up the girl who looked just like you
 I almost said your name

Maybe one day you'll call me and tell me that you're sorry too (x3) / But you, you never do - Playing with an expectation of catharsis, layering the same hopeful line on top of itself in this bridge, with strings that build our expectations to great heights. Paralleling the last bit of hope to reconciliation that the speaker might have in regards to *the lost lover*. But it sharply drops back down to that sparse guitar as the reality sinks in – *But you, you never do* – emphasizing and illustrating the emptiness the speaker's going through the whole time.

The repetition, you guessed it, *is intentional*, to signify this yearning for closure. The addition of the word *too* at the end of each of the three repetitions implies the speaker has been apologetic, taking on some of the responsibility, and wants the other party to reflect that. Instead of only resentment, there's a feeling of longing for what's been torn apart.

Woke up the girl who looked just like you / I almost said your name - *Drunk by noon*, calling up someone else and almost letting the name of *the lost lover* fall from his lips out of habit. Trying to find companionship to fill the emptiness left within him. He could've been seeing *the lost lover's* features in other's faces, even as he attempted to forget them – seeing their smile, their expressions, etc.

[Chorus]
 We haven't spoke since you went away
 Comfortable silence is so overrated
 Why won't you ever say what you want to say?
 Even my phone misses your call
 We haven't spoke since you went away
 Comfortable silence is so overrated
 Why won't you ever say what you want to say?
 Even my phone misses your call, by the way

This chorus holds nothing new, but brings everything back together for one last iteration, and the last chorus on the album as a whole. I find it interesting how HS1 ends in the same way it began, with the speaker waiting for *you* to return back to him. In *Meet Me in the Hallway*, he sounds more desperate, pleading with his lover to come out and talk. He doesn't know what to do with himself when he's left to his own devices. By the time we come to *From the Dining Table*, moving from the top of the album to the bottom, there's been some soul-searching. And some conclusions have been reached.

It feels like a deliberate choice to end the eponymous debut on such a somber note, and for the majority of the album to be really diving into different kinds of grief and avoidance, and the unhealthiness that lingers under it all through self-destruction. It feels devoid of the boyband's sunny disposition of the past, as he makes it a mission to redefine himself on his own terms, picking up the tradition of legends who came before him. He reads serious literature, and sings about heavy and important subjects – but doesn't forget to let loose in sex and rock and roll. *He isn't polished. Not anymore.*

With soul-searching, there's always a sense of insecurity wading in the water underlying – an anxiousness to prove to an existing audience and new that he should be taken seriously as an artist. But, most importantly, an intensified need to *prove it to himself*. The erratic and mood throughout the album reflects upon this. This album just shows that there were and are so many things Harry wants to say, and so many sides of himself he wants to reveal. He's still finding his footing as he treads in these uncharted waters, a bit clumsy at times, but with a newfound determination. ***Harry Styles***, the debut, wasn't just

simply the natural next step, but a fresh beginning. He emerges from the symbolic body of water on the vulnerable framing of the cover art, the striking image reminiscent of baptismal traditionals, and rinses off his past to be reborn into a star.

