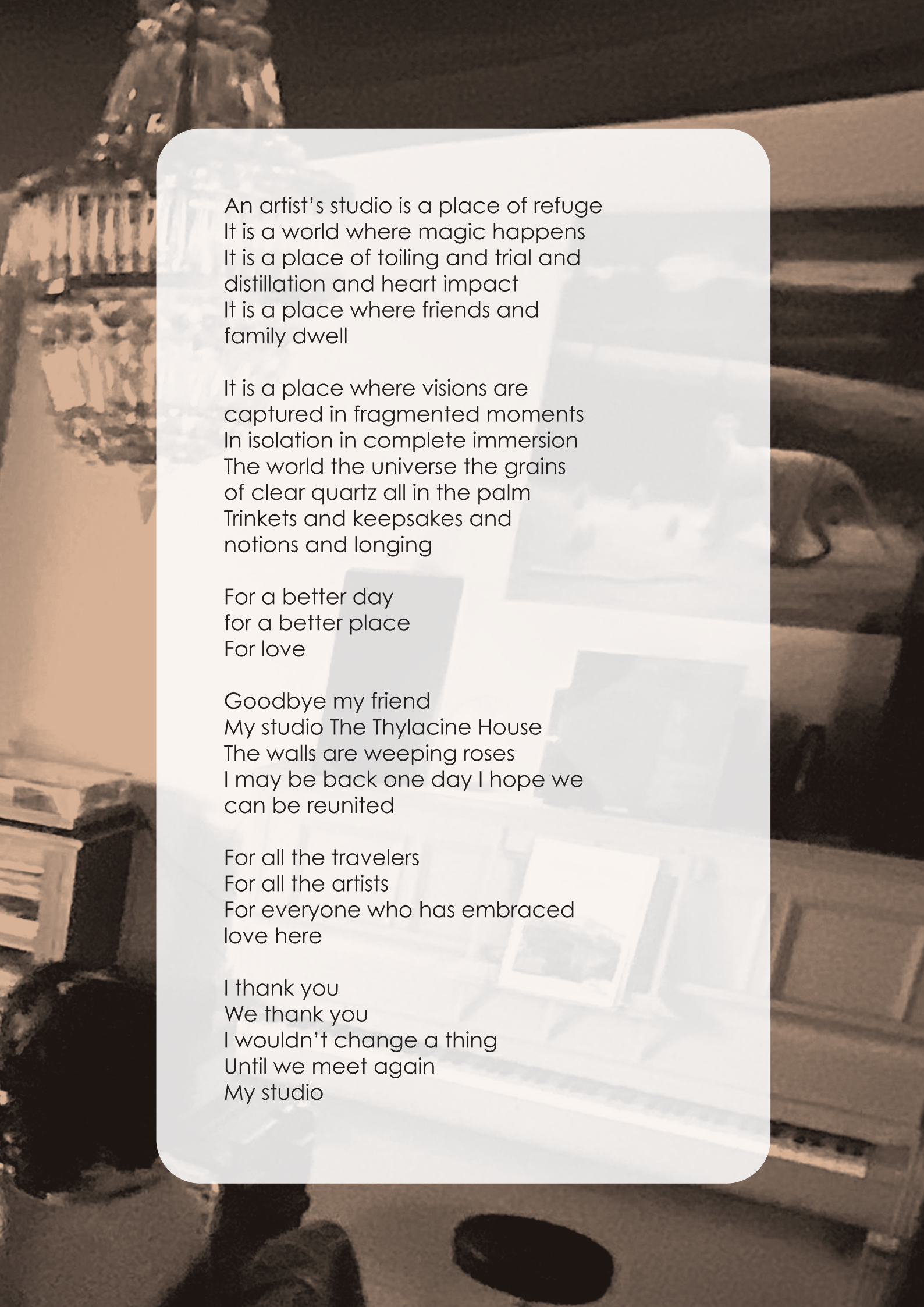
GOOD NIGHT MY FRIEND

Monique Brumby
Steve Crump



An artist's studio is a place of refuge
It is a world where magic happens
It is a place of toiling and trial and
distillation and heart impact
It is a place where friends and
family dwell

It is a place where visions are
captured in fragmented moments
In isolation in complete immersion
The world the universe the grains
of clear quartz all in the palm
Trinkets and keepsakes and
notions and longing

For a better day
for a better place
For love

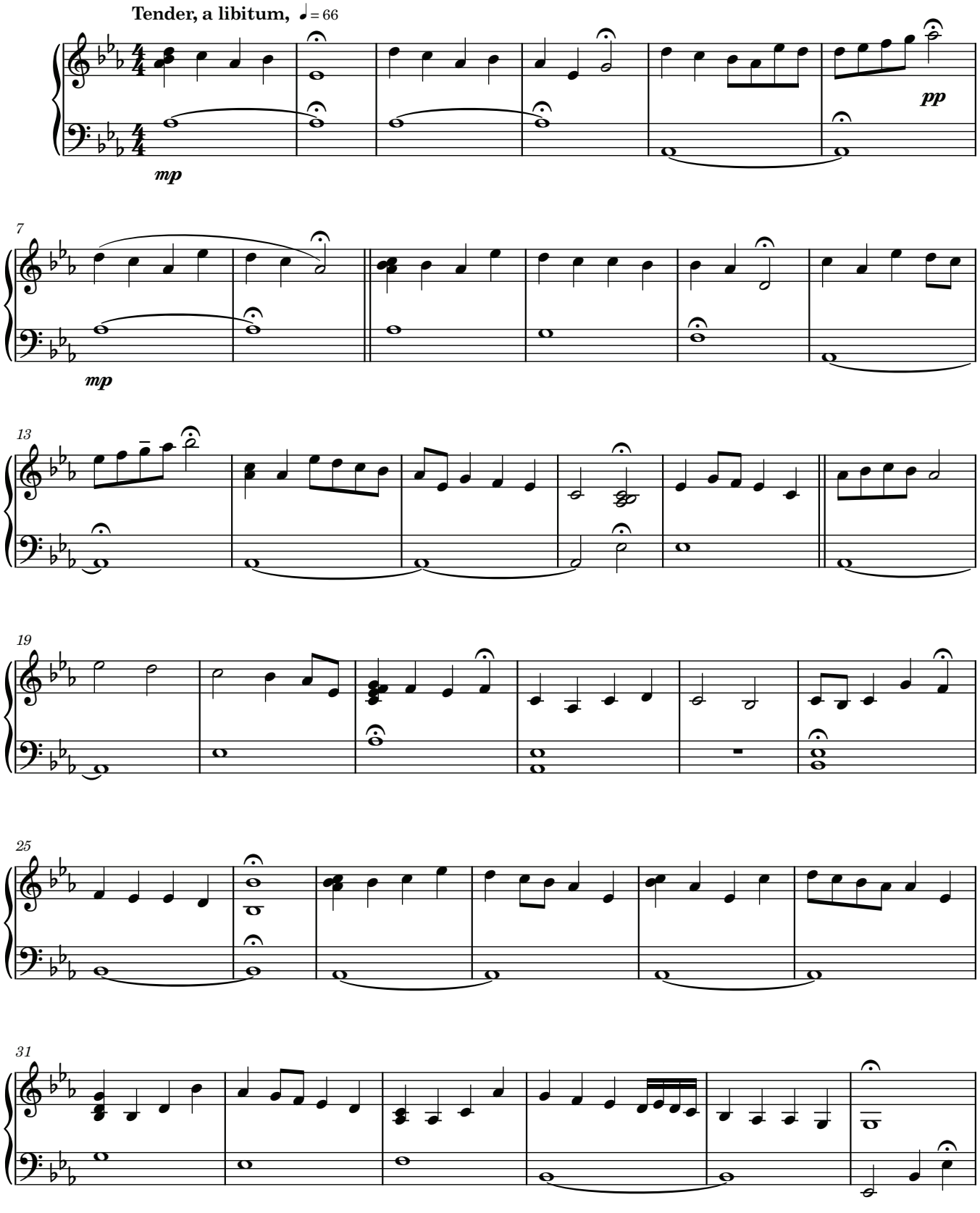
Goodbye my friend
My studio The Thylacine House
The walls are weeping roses
I may be back one day I hope we
can be reunited

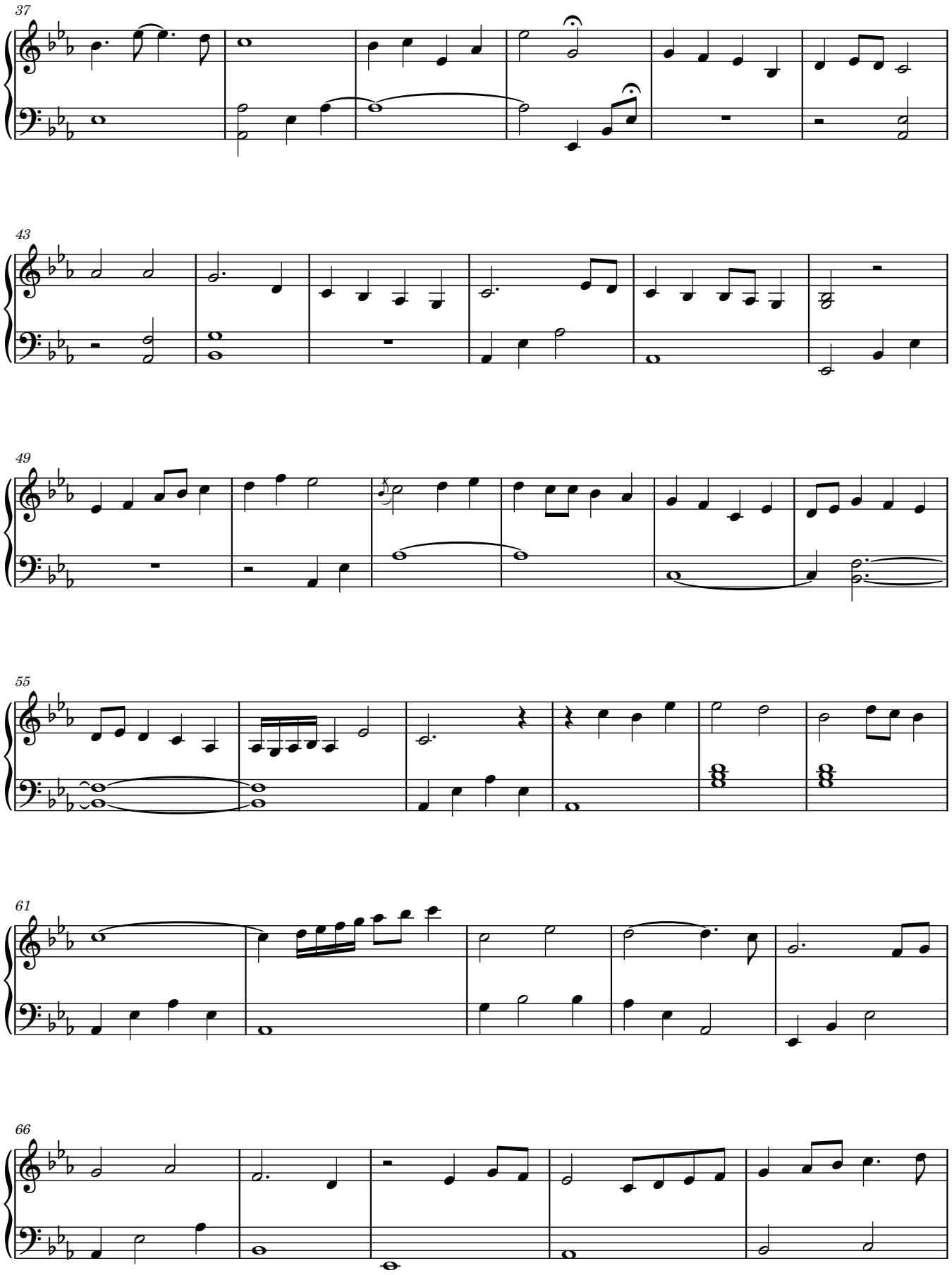
For all the travelers
For all the artists
For everyone who has embraced
love here

I thank you
We thank you
I wouldn't change a thing
Until we meet again
My studio

GOOD NIGHT MY FRIEND

Music: Steve Crump
Words and vocal arrangement: Monique Brumby





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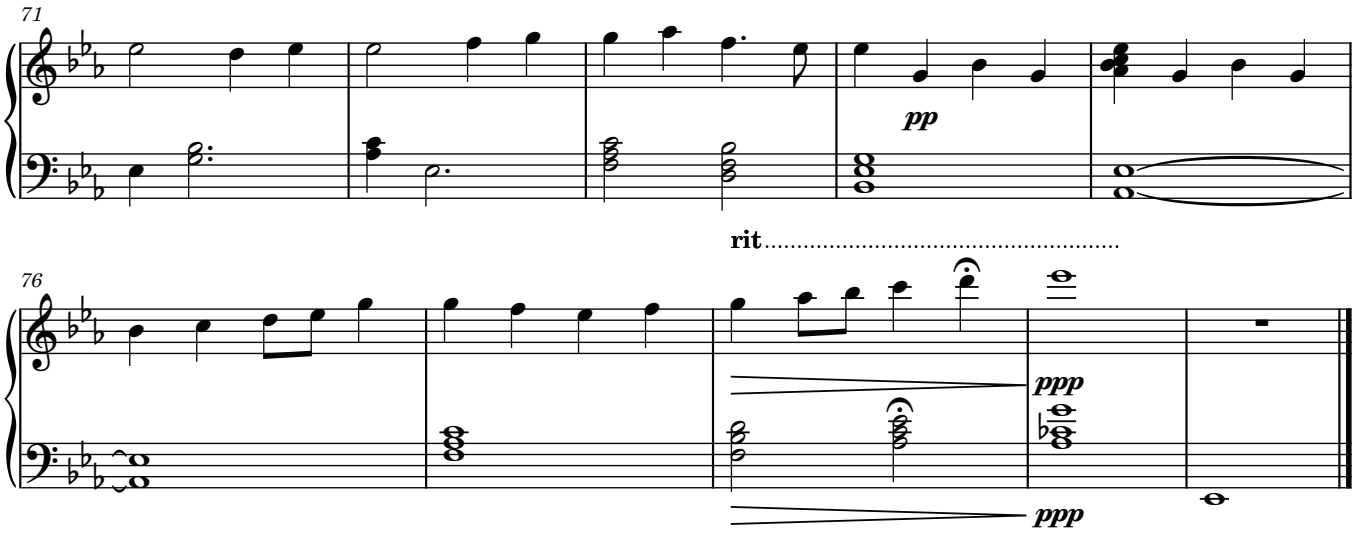

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COMPOSITION NOTES

Many of the most satisfying things in Life happen by complete chance. Given how Instagram constantly relegates 'posts' to obscurity, piling new post on new post so that earlier ones are easily missed, it was a simple twist of Fate that one morning I woke up early and saw Monique's poem "Good Night My Friend" top of my phone screen.

It had been written late the night before as she packed up and farewelled her Thylacine House Studio. Monique had told me this was about to happen, unexpectedly, a sudden shift that cut her to the core ("the walls are weeping roses"). That night, late into the early hours, her "trinkets and keepsakes" were boxed up, ARIA awards, candles, flowers, favourite vinyl albums, books and notepads with the ink still wet with ideas, counterpoints to the metallic technology where, often, she would be "in isolation, in complete immersion", her space "where magic happens".

I was so fortunate to have been one of the recent "travellers" through that space, huddled together over her Nord synthesiser, her faithful Bear and April under our feet, caught in an intense and intimate experience that brought into being an album ("Hidden Vale") of Bob Brown's poems put to music. So, reading "Good night my friend" on Instagram, I could feel some of her pain, loss, grief and yet also sense her untrammelled hope for the next studio iteration, "Until we meet again".

I quickly took screen shots of the Insta post, loaded them on to my laptop, put the laptop on top of my Kawai grand, read through the poem once more, then started improvising what I felt starting with Monique's hanging on, struggling to let go, the slow realisation it was ending; worse, breaking up her studio into pieces that mean nothing on their own. Thus, the first section - taking a long minute to play - is a recurring phrase repeatedly broken up with 'fermata', a musical notation that tells the performer or conductor they can hold the note for as long as they desire - in my case, allowing the piano strings to echo and reverberate like a tolling bell before variations on the riff start and stop again, and again.

Slowly, inexorably, Monique's poem acknowledges time cannot be defeated so the music moves towards acceptance, hard won and fond memories of a place where friends and family will continue to dwell, though now in a suspended state, still reaching for "A better day / for a better place / for love". The music then shifts to a more upbeat tempo as Monique says her goodbyes to the studio and "everyone who has embraced love here", the melody shifting this time to affection for people and place, ending on the gently realised optimism of "I wouldn't change a thing". As her poem closes, Monique knows she can rebuild her "place of refuge", as soon she did. Just as from the words came the piano piece, when we met in her new studio to record "Goodnight My Friend", Monique arranged the vocal phrasing and melody from my piano line in a creative burst of magic, with lots to follow.
(SC March 2022)

Studio Photo: Steve Crump

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