Scene 5 - “Tick Tock”

The same day, later. KAT sits in the band room, alone, playing her wood block. Repeating the same rhythmic passage many times over to perfect it. ALICIA enters, going to retrieve a folder of sheet music that she left on her stand.

KAT
Oh, sorry. You usually practice in here during G block, right? I can leave.

ALICIA
That’s okay. I’m on my way out.

KAT
I don’t usually have G block free but Mr. Martinez isn’t here today, so I took a page out of your book, I guess!

ALICIA
What are you working on?

KAT
Band stuff. I’m not auditioning for conservatories. Where are you off to?

ALICIA
Only the audition that will decide if I get to live my dream or have to find a new hobby and go to community college. No biggie.

KAT
That sounds hard.

ALICIA
The audition is one thing, but with my parents breathing down my neck looking for any sign that I’m overloaded, I also have to pretend to be totally happy and fine all the time and it’s killing me. How do you do it?

KAT
Do what?

ALICIA
Act so cheerful.

KAT
Who says I’m acting?

ALICIA
The rest of us are tearing our hair out over college stuff, but you seem like you’re not even worried about college at all. You’re so… happy. What’s your secret?

KAT
I try not to think about it, I guess.

ALICIA
I wish I could do that. I gotta go; Bailey’s waiting for me in the car.

KAT
See you! Good luck with the audition. Break a… reed?

ALICIA has already left. KAT shrugs and returns to practicing the same passage from before, then loses focus. Sighs. Begins to sing.

KAT
I’M HAVING A TOUGH TIME
IF YOU HADN’T NOTICED.
YOU PROBABLY DIDN’T NOTICE,
‘CAUSE I’VE GOT SUCH A HAPPY FACE.
THAT’S WHAT PEOPLE TELL ME.
THEY WISH THEY WERE HAPPY LIKE ME.
THEY DON’T WANNA BE “HAPPY” LIKE ME.

I’M SORRY FOR WHINING
IT’S NOT SUCH A BIG DEAL.
NOTHING’S REALLY WRONG, BUT SOMETIMES I GET TO A DARK PLACE.
THEN I HAVE TO SMILE.
I’VE GOT TO BE HAPPY LIKE ME.
HOW IS IT WHEN PEOPLE SEE ME, “HAPPY” IS ALL THAT THEY SEE?

I KNOW THAT I COULD TALK.
I PROBABLY SHOULD TALK.
BUT I’D RATHER JUST SIT HERE WITH MY WOOD BLOCK.

TICK, TOCK, ALL I HEAR.
TICK, TOCK, CHASE MY FEAR AWAY.
I’M OKAY.
I’LL JUST SIT HERE AND PLAY.
TICK TOCK.

LET’S JUST FORGET IT.
I CAN GET THROUGH THIS.
THERE’S NOT EVEN ANYTHING THAT SHOULD BE CAUSING ME DESPAIR. NOTHING EVEN HAPPENED. NOTHING THAT SHOULD MAKE ME FEEL SAD. SO WHY DO I FEEL SO BAD?

THIS IS RIDICULOUS. MY LIFE IS NOT DIFFICULT. THERE ARE SO MANY PEOPLE WITH ACTUAL PROBLEMS OUT THERE. SOME PEOPLE ARE STARVING! I CAN’T IMAGINE THEIR PAIN. SO YOU SEE I’VE GOT NO REASON TO COMPLAIN.

SO I’LL SLAP ON A SMILE, AND BREATHE DEEP FOR A WHILE, AND SIT HERE DENYING MY DENIAL.

TICK, TOCK, TIME PASSES BY. TICK, TOCK, WE’RE ALL GONNA DIE SOMEDAY. WELL, OKAY. I’LL JUST SIT HERE AND PLAY. TICK TOCK.

DEATH IS INEVITABLE. WE WILL ALL EVENTUALLY SUCCUMB TO OUR MORTALITY. ALL THAT AWAITS US IN THE AFTERLIFE IS OBLIVION. WITH EACH PASSING INSTANT DISORDER INCREASES; THE ENTROPY OF THE UNIVERSE CAN NEVER GO DOWN, NEVER REVERSE, UNTIL EVENTUALLY CHAOS CONSUMES ALL THAT HAS BEEN AND EVER WILL BE… AND I HAVE A PHYSICS TEST THIS AFTERNOON. TICK TOCK.

I’M HAVING A TOUGHS TIME IF YOU HADN’T NOTICED. YOU PROBABLY DIDN’T NOTICE, SINCE I TRY TO COVER IT UP. IT MIGHT BE UNHEALTHY. IT MIGHT BE… BUT WHAT IF PEOPLE KNEW THAT?

IF I WASN’T HAPPY LIKE ME, WHY WOULD ANYONE LIKE ME? I KNOW THAT I COULD TALK. I PROBABLY SHOULD TALK. BUT I’D RATHER JUST SIT HERE…

JILL enters.
There you are. I thought since chem was cancelled we could go get burritos.

KAT

(instantly smiling)
Thanks, but I want to stay and practice a bit. Don’t want to be the disappointing wood block player.

JILL

Is everything okay?

KAT

Everything’s great.

JILL

Apparently Mr. Martinez is out of town for the whole weekend for some science teacher convention, so there’s gonna be a party at Ned’s house tomorrow night.

KAT

Sounds fun.

JILL

Well… See you later.

JILL exits. KAT is alone again.

KAT

Maybe I’ll feel better tomorrow.

KAT hits her wood block. Hard.