About the piece:

When Dr. Kenton began conducting a study on a college campus, she thought she was on the brink of a biomedical breakthrough. Today, she appears before a jury. Elsewhere, an unlikely friendship between two college students takes a bitter turn. As these stories unfold and begin to echo one another, lines blur between the past as we remember it, and the future as we fear it. This original (untitled!) contemporary musical investigates themes of Fate and Free Will through the lens of modern medicine.

About the excerpt:

This excerpt comes at a saturation point in this story. We’ve watched Dr. Kenton’s fixation on a young man participating in her study intensify, she crosses lines with increasingly serious repercussions -- even placing him on a drug trial for which he is not eligible. Bubbling up throughout the narrative, we’ve seen glimpses of Madeline and Drew, whose friendship began with a jump in the lake. An unsettled quality has clouded their last few scenes together. By the time the severity of the situation clicks for Madeline, it’s too late. This song follows Madeline’s processing of a tragedy for which she missed every warning sign.

12.1

Madeline enters the common room, soaking wet. Her clothes, her hair, her backpack, everything. She pants.

**SONG: FOCUS ON YOUR HANDS**

**MADELINE**

They say if you’re seasick you should focus on your hands
Just focus on your hands
You’ll be ok

That’s the thing about seasickness that no one understands
If you focus on your hands
It fades away

So when the world is spinning
And you can’t take in air
And you can’t feel your fingers
If you just stare
If you focus on your hands
Focus on your hands
Focus on your hands
It’s like you’re not there.
I don’t remember when I got there, I don’t remember how
I couldn’t say what time
It must have been

I must have walked a mile, I can’t remember now
I just remember water
And going in

And feeling ice inside my chest
Freezing in my hair
Stinging in my eyelids
Sand instead of air
   But if you focus on your hands
   Focus on your hands
   Focus on your hands
   It’s like you’re not there.

But there was glass at the bottom and blood in my mouth
And my vision got darker and grey
And the world kept getting farther away
You can’t choke underwater, your body starts to sink
Your thoughts race and your mind slows and all you can think
   Is this how he felt?
   Did his heartbeat slow?
   Did he change his mind?
   Would we even know?
   But if you focus on your hands
   Focus on your hands
   Focus on your hands
   Focus on your hands
   Focus on your hands

There’s something about looking towards a sky that you can’t reach
You can’t reach
So you let go

You float up to the surface and you throw up on the beach
You wonder where you are
You don’t know

And you’ll never get to ask him
If that was how he felt

MADELINE/DR. KENTON

And you focus on your hands
And you focus on your hands
And you focus on your hands

(Madeline stares at her hands.
Elsewhere, Dr. Kenton stares at her hands.
At once, we see the girl Madeline Kenton was, and the woman she becomes.)