PIANO • VOCAL • GUITAR

SIMPLE PLEASURES

BOBBY McFERRIN

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BOBBY McFERRIN

Bobby McFerrin is a busy man. Since the release of his 1986 solo album, *Spontaneous Inventions*, he's been heard every week across America doing the Cosby Show theme; singing the Levi's 501 blues; teaching kids the Alphabet Song on Sesame Street; even managing to inspire a hushed stadium full of Giants fans with the Star Spangled Banner, at the start of a National League playoff game. Most importantly, McFerrin has been treating audiences across the country to his one man show—a show that's never the same show twice: an amazing grab bag of musical styles, comedy, dance and performance art.

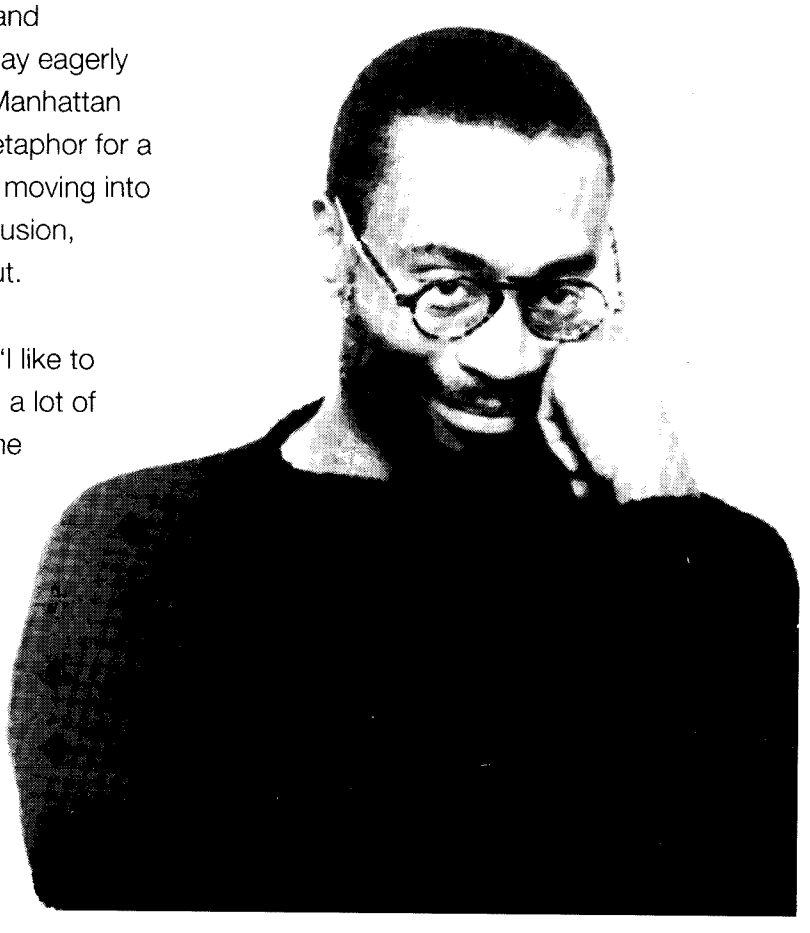
The audience has been doing their best to keep up with McFerrin. In the last few years they've sent him home with 5 Grammy Awards (out of 6 nominations), and he's been at the top of the Down Beat Readers' Poll four times in a row. Three of those Grammys were for "Best Jazz Vocalist, Male" and somewhat understandably, those who must pigeon hole artists tend to see Bobby in the neat category of "jazz".

Now *Simple Pleasures* arrives on the scene to confuse and confound the categorizers. Music business watchers may eagerly note the switch in record labels from Blue Note to EMI/Manhattan and those who look for symbolism may see this as a metaphor for a McFerrin "transformation"—the hitherto pure jazz singer moving into the worlds of pop, rock and soul. To come to this conclusion, though, is really to miss what Bobby McFerrin is all about.

"To be labeled as a jazz singer is limiting," says Bobby. "I like to think of myself as one who has simply been infused with a lot of music." Indeed, a list of all-time McFerrin favorites (off the top of his head, of course) includes "Gershwin, Bach, Joe Williams, Sergio Mendes, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Blind Faith, Keith Jarrett, Miles Davis and Joni Mitchell." And let's not forget The Beatles. "Drive My Car" on *Simple Pleasures* continues an unplanned tradition of Bobby covering a Beatles' song on each new album.

The approach on this entire album, however, is a completely new one for McFerrin. This time the high-wire solo approach has been left behind, in favor of an all-McFerrin body-electric orchestra. Now Bobby is using the studio to its fullest, but we don't hear drum machines or digital sampling here. What we get are tracks and tracks of Bobby McFerrin, singing bass lines and harmonies, thumping out percussion, filling the tracks with his uncanny spirit but always leaving plenty of air.

"Last summer I started thinking about all the music that I liked and all the things I used to listen to," says Bobby. "I decided I wanted to pay homage to the music that I grew up with in the 60's. And I had been thinking for the past couple of years about putting a vocal group together. This was a way for me



BIOGRAPHY

to begin that process of writing choral music; by going into the studio and overdubbing to see what type of stuff I could come up with." The result, *Simple Pleasures*, is really just the latest snapshot of Bobby's ever changing musical life.

Bobby McFerrin was born in New York City to Robert and Sara McFerrin, both classical singers. Bobby began studying music theory at six. His father was a baritone with the Metropolitan Opera, and moved the family to Los Angeles in 1958, where, among his other accomplishments, he dubbed Sidney Poitier's singing voice in the film "Porgy and Bess." His mother, a soprano, currently chairs the voice department at Fullerton College, and his sister Brenda is a pop singer and vocal coach working in L.A.

In high school, McFerrin concentrated on piano and formed a quartet that played faithful imitations of tunes by Sergio Mendes and Henry Mancini. In 1970, his musical direction took an extreme left turn when he heard Miles Davis' seminal fusion album, *Bitches Brew*. Later, seeing Davis in performance, he was particularly impressed with keyboardist Keith Jarrett, and traces his decision to do spontaneous solo vocal concerts in part to Jarrett's similarly conceived piano concerts.

Music studies at Sacramento State University and Cerritos College led to several years as a journeyman keyboardist, working with the Ice Follies and a succession of lounge bands, occasionally singing a few tunes. It wasn't until July 1977 that he distinctly heard a voice inside him that told him he was a singer. He immediately got a job as a singer/pianist at the Salt Lake City Hilton piano bar. He and Debbie, his wife since 1975, moved first to New Orleans, eventually settling in San Francisco, where the McFerrins still reside.

In 1979 Jon Hendricks, the legendary jazz vocalist, invited Bobby to join his group. Linda Goldstein, a former jazz singer, became his manager and has subsequently produced all four of McFerrin's albums. Bill Cosby also heard Bobby and helped to get him bookings in Las Vegas and at the 1980 Playboy Jazz Festival in L.A.

His eponymous debut album in 1982, with instrumental accompaniment and a duet with Phoebe Show, proved to be an auspicious and eclectic introduction to steners around the world. That summer he toured Europe with a cast of jazz uminaries, and widespread radio and TV exposure brought McFerrin far greater ttention than he had yet achieved in the U.S. The German critics took to calling m "Stimmwunder"—or "Wonder Voice". He also toured the U.S. with an all-star and comprised of Dizzy Gillespie, Herbie Hancock and George Benson.

All the while, Bobby was toying with the idea of doing solo concerts. In 1983, Bobby gave it a try in Ashland, Oregon, and there was no turning back. McFerrin sisted on doing his upcoming European tour alone, and those promoters who ared to go through with it wound up with an overwhelming reception. Bolstered the positive response, he recorded his second album, *The Voice*, live and a appella.

Continued

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This album brought him critical acclaim and enthusiastic fans that led to a fascinating variety of projects, from singing the leads in an arrangement of Bach's *Magnificat*, appearing on Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion", and collaborating with Joe Zawinul, the Manhattan Transfer, Meredith Monk, Robin Williams and others. Among numerous TV appearances were The Tonight Show, The Jimmy Stewart Christmas Special, The Max Headroom Show and Sesame Street.

McFerrin has done more than his share of children's projects. In fact, The New Yorker called Bobby "a funny, magical child's dream of a jazz singer." He's been on Sesame Street, co-starred with Kelly McGillis in *Santabear* and did the Grammy Award winning soundtrack for Rudyard Kipling's *The Elephant's Child,* as well as *How The Camel Got Its Hump* and *How The Rhino Got Its Skin*, all three featuring narration by Jack Nicholson. "Still," says Bobby, "I don't perform for kids. They don't need me. I'd be an adult teaching kids to be kids, and wouldn't that be silly."

Spontaneous Inventions in 1986 was followed by Bobby's Grammy winning contribution on the soundtrack of *Around Midnight*. The LP's companion live video *Spontaneous Inventions* was released on HBO Home Video and Pioneer LaserDisc, garnering both Grammy and ACE Award nominations and playing on the Bravo cable channel. And, of course, there was the never ending series of concerts in the U.S. and overseas.

The only consistent feature of the live shows is Bobby—no band, and only the barest of plans. "What you're hearing is me thinking out loud." The role of the audience is crucial, and somehow he seems to coax wonders out of even the most reserved. "Most performers don't encourage a crowd to participate," McFerrin says. He sees his mission as "getting a mature audience to be childlike and spontaneous again for a little while. I think that the true musician's goal is to bring light into people's hearts. If I can bring joy into the world, if I can get people to stop thinking about their pain for a moment, or the fact that tomorrow morning they're going to get up and tell their boss off or write a nasty note to their girlfriend or something; if I can delay that for a moment and bring a little joy into that spot and help them to see things a little bit differently, then I'll be successful."

"Bobby McFerrin is an artist of extraordinary breadth. His art is beyond modern, as old as the human voice and as new as the next moment."

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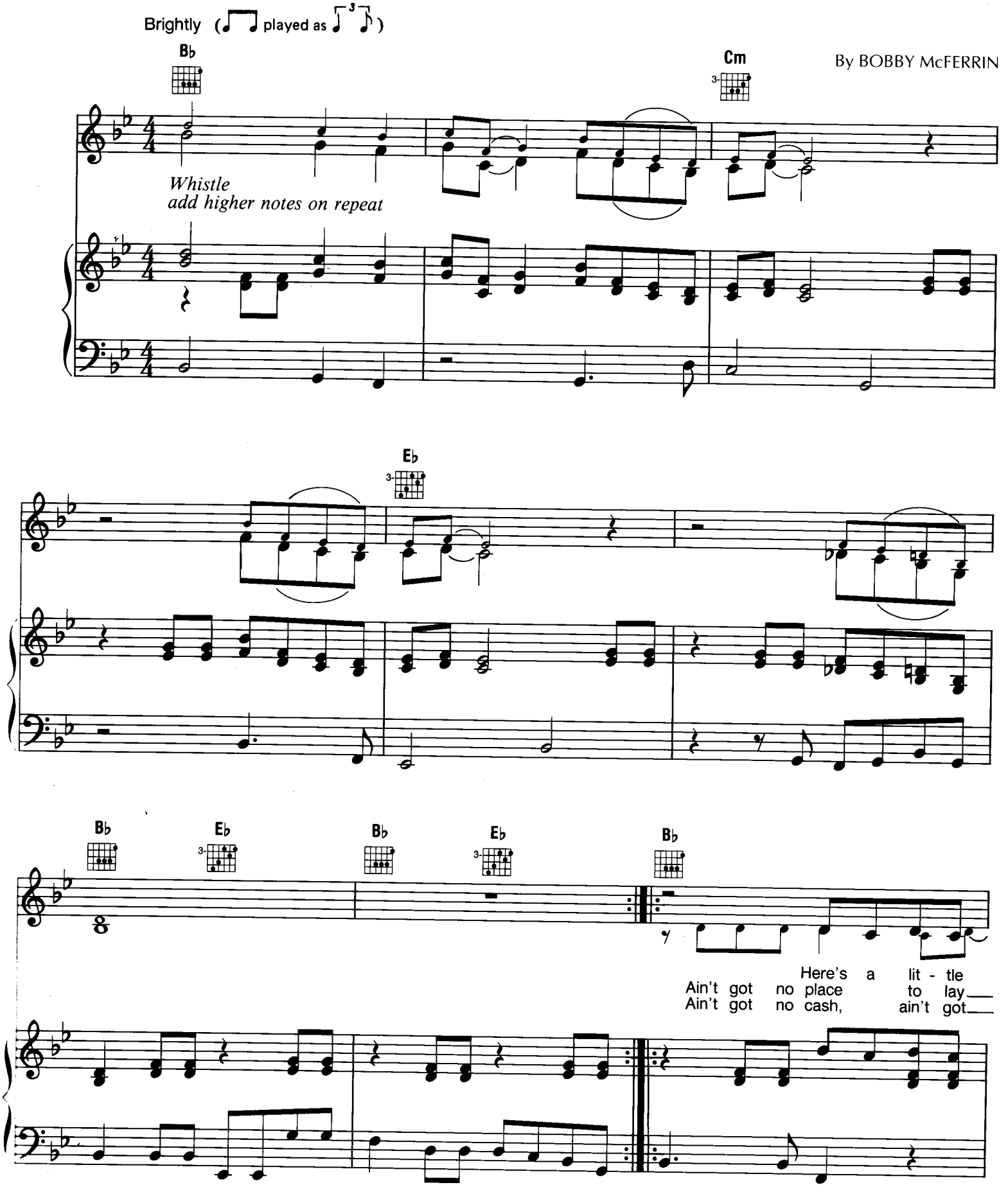
DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY



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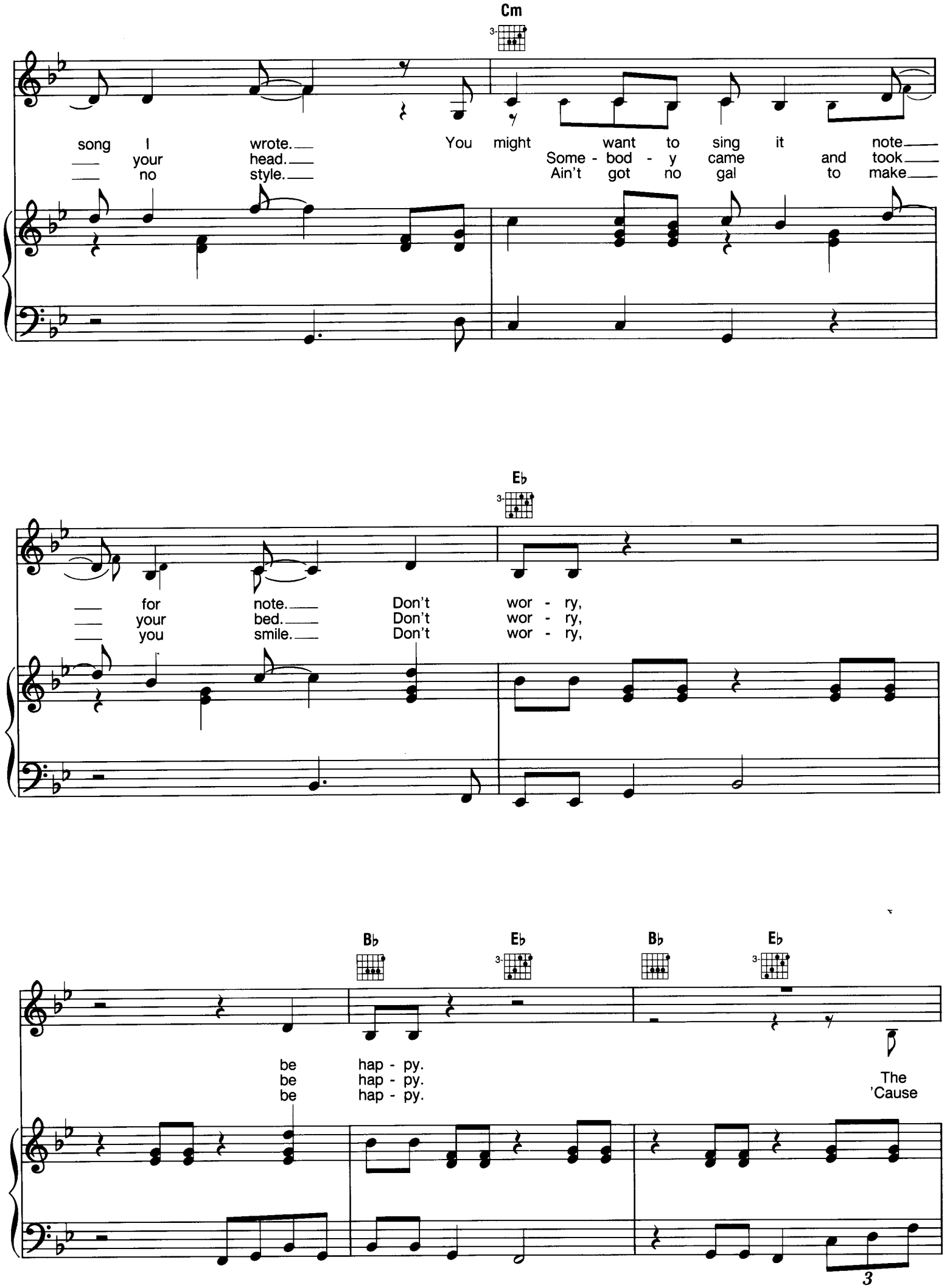

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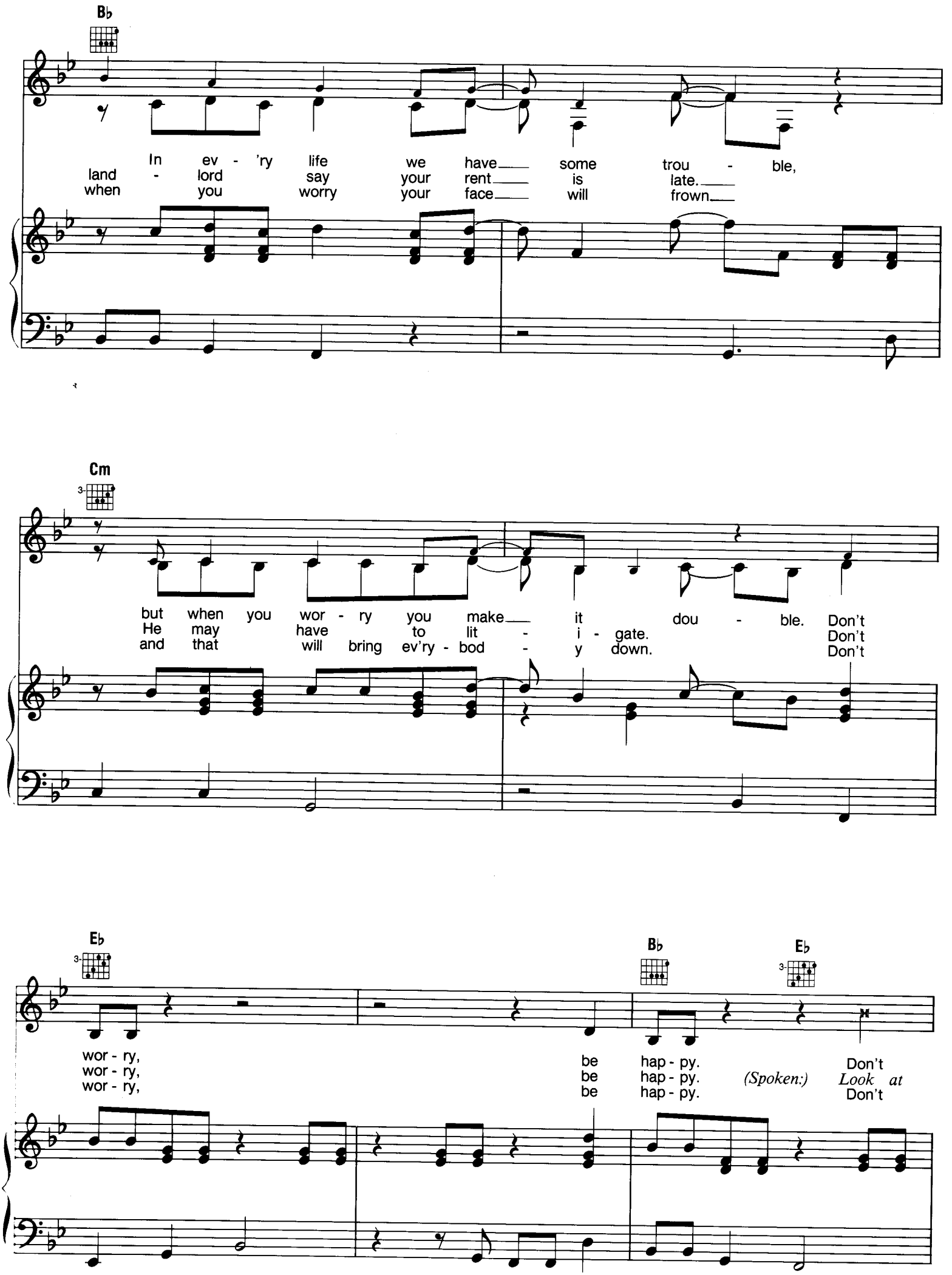

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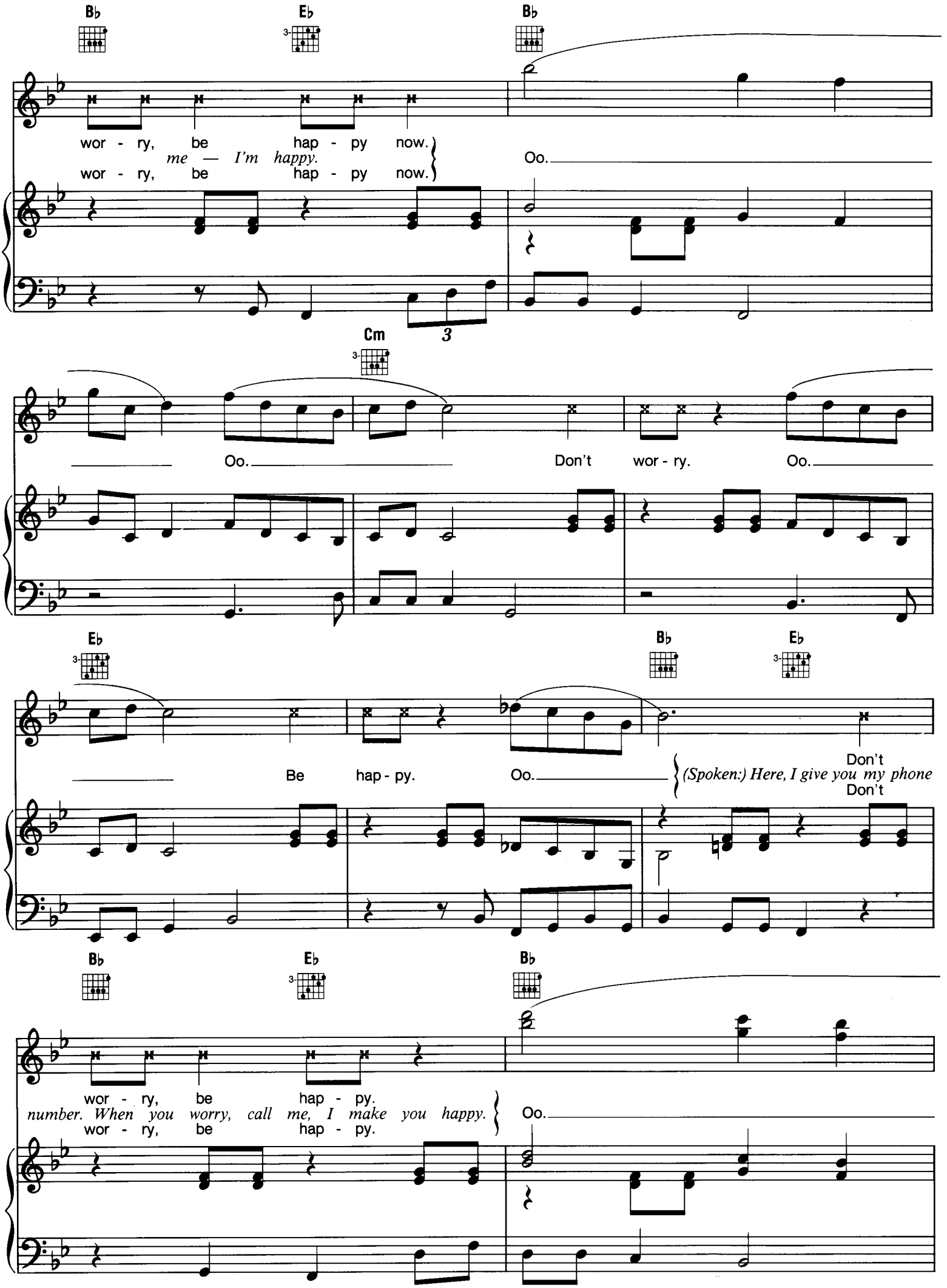

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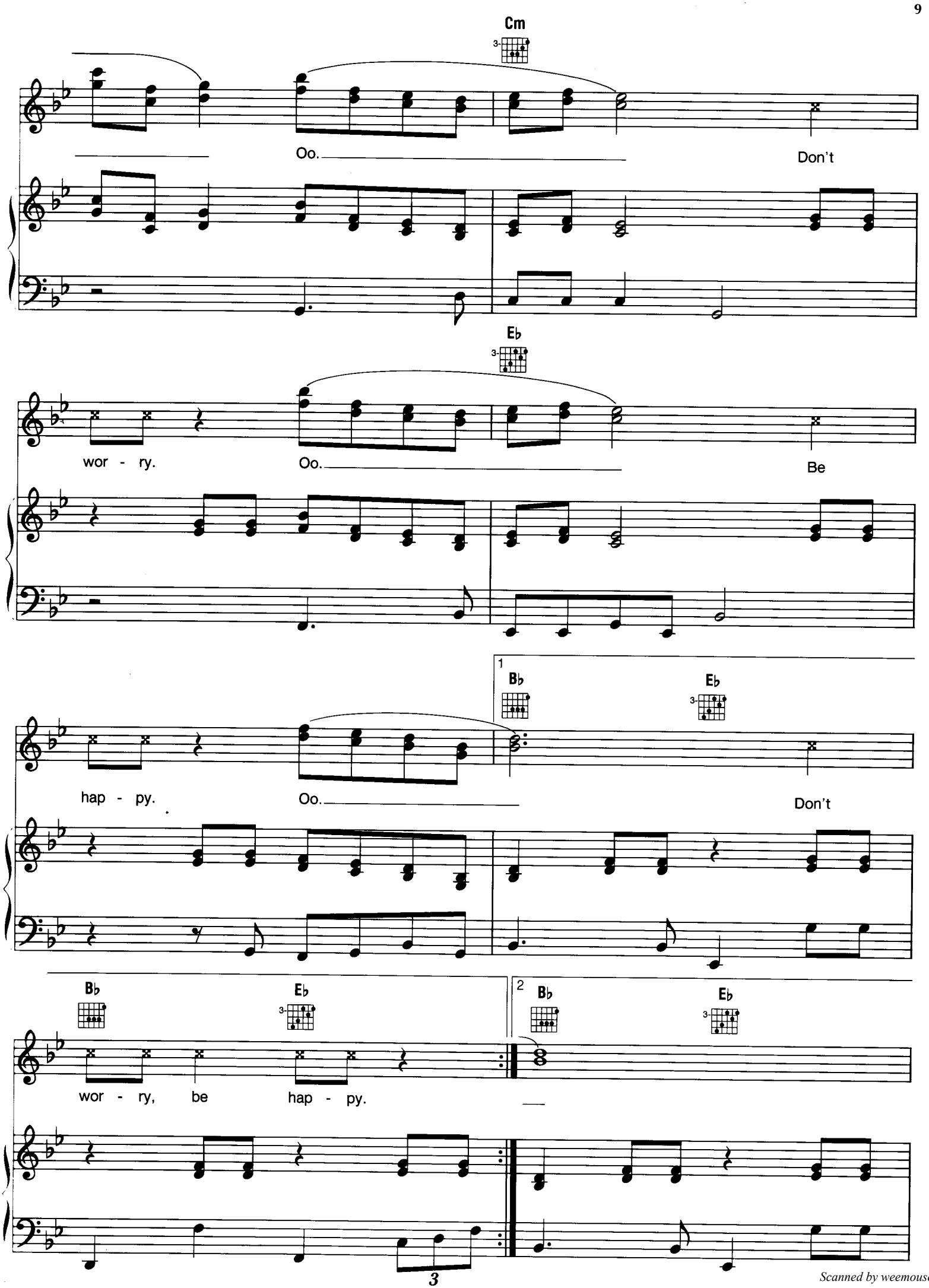

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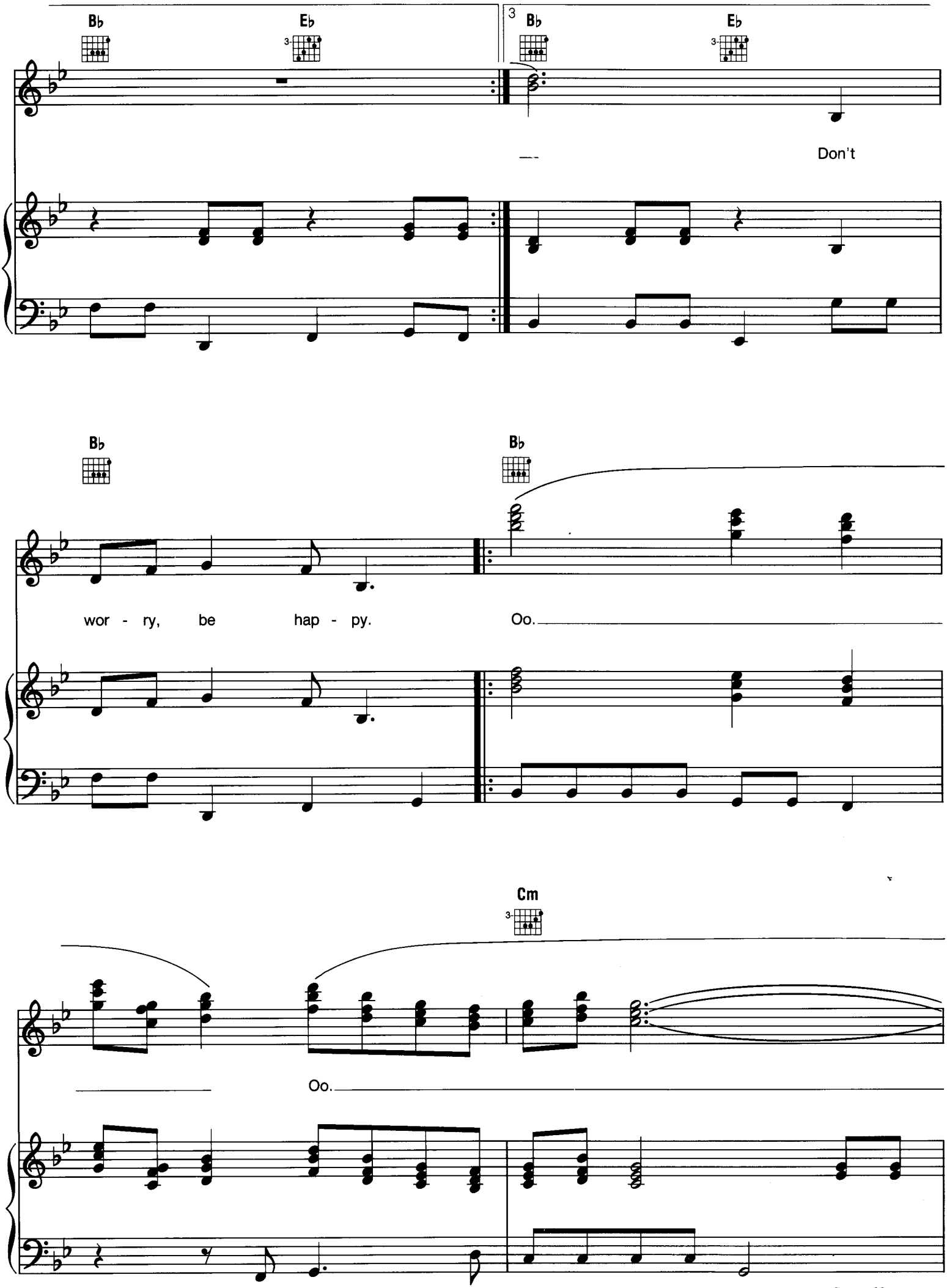

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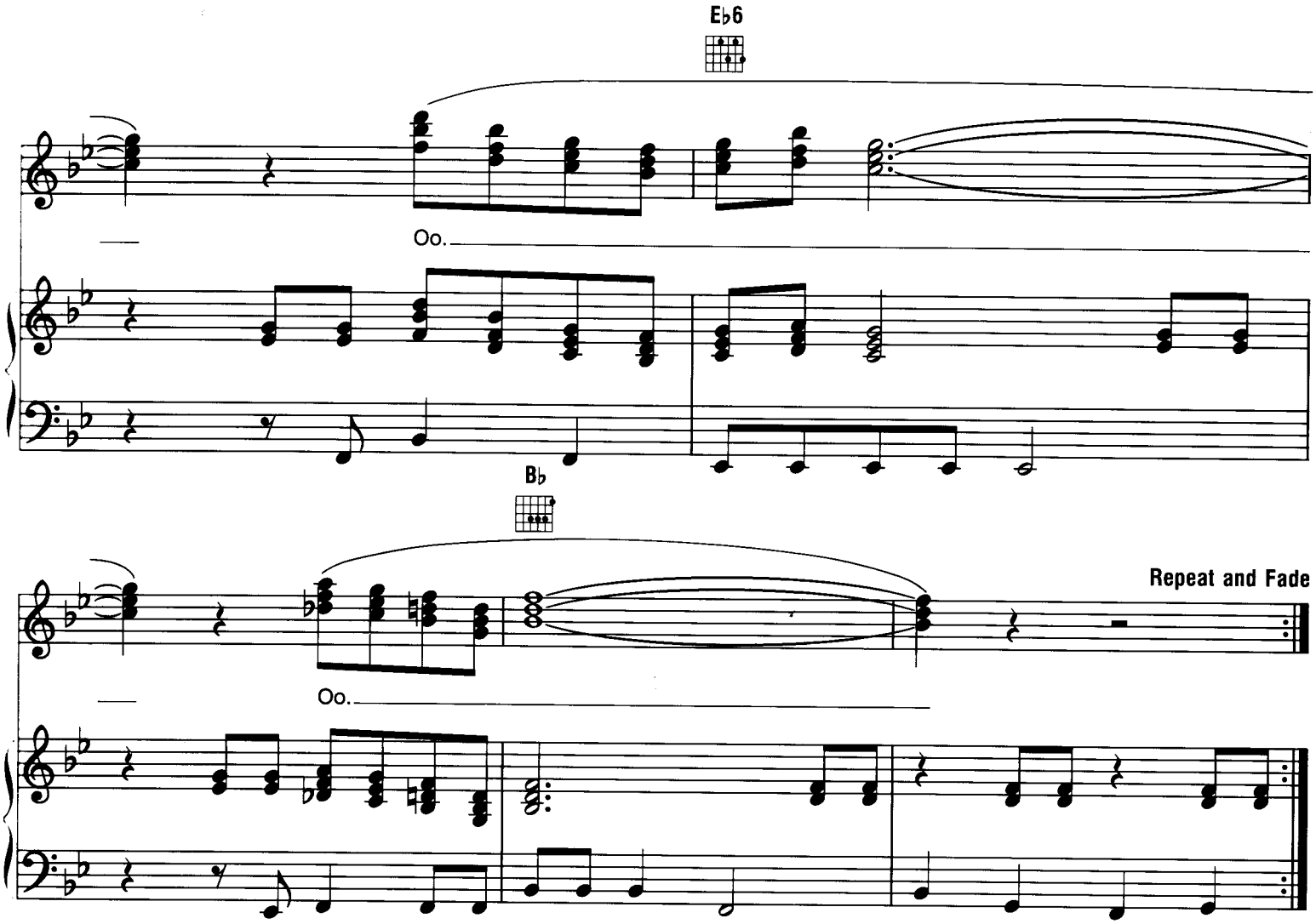

Spoken Ad Lib. Over Repeat and Fade:

Don't worry. Don't worry. Don't do it.
Be happy. Put a smile on your face.
Don't bring everybody down. Don't
worry. It will soon pass, whatever it is.
Don't worry. Be happy. I'm not worried.

I'm happy.

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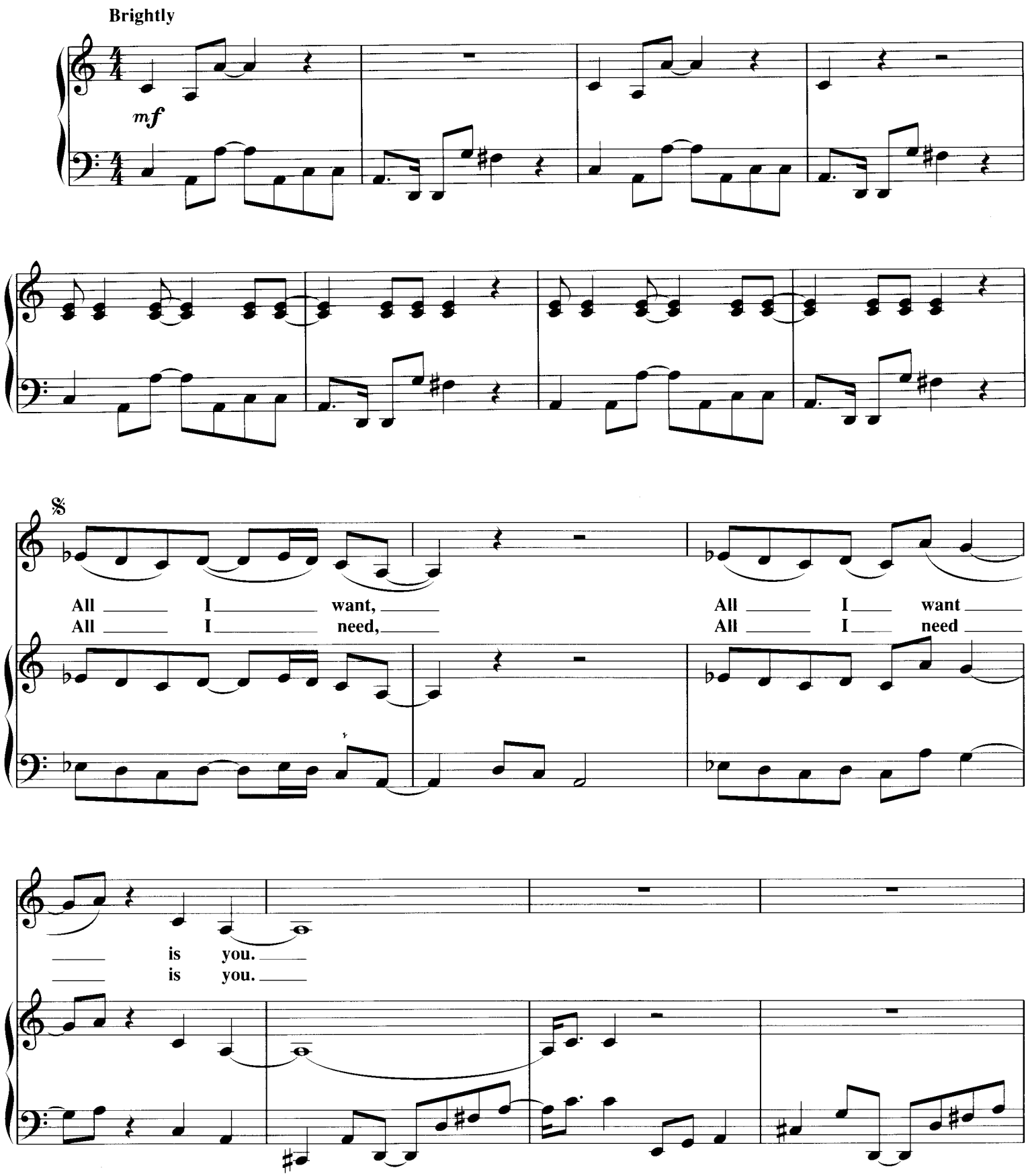
ALL I WANT

By BOBBY McFERRIN



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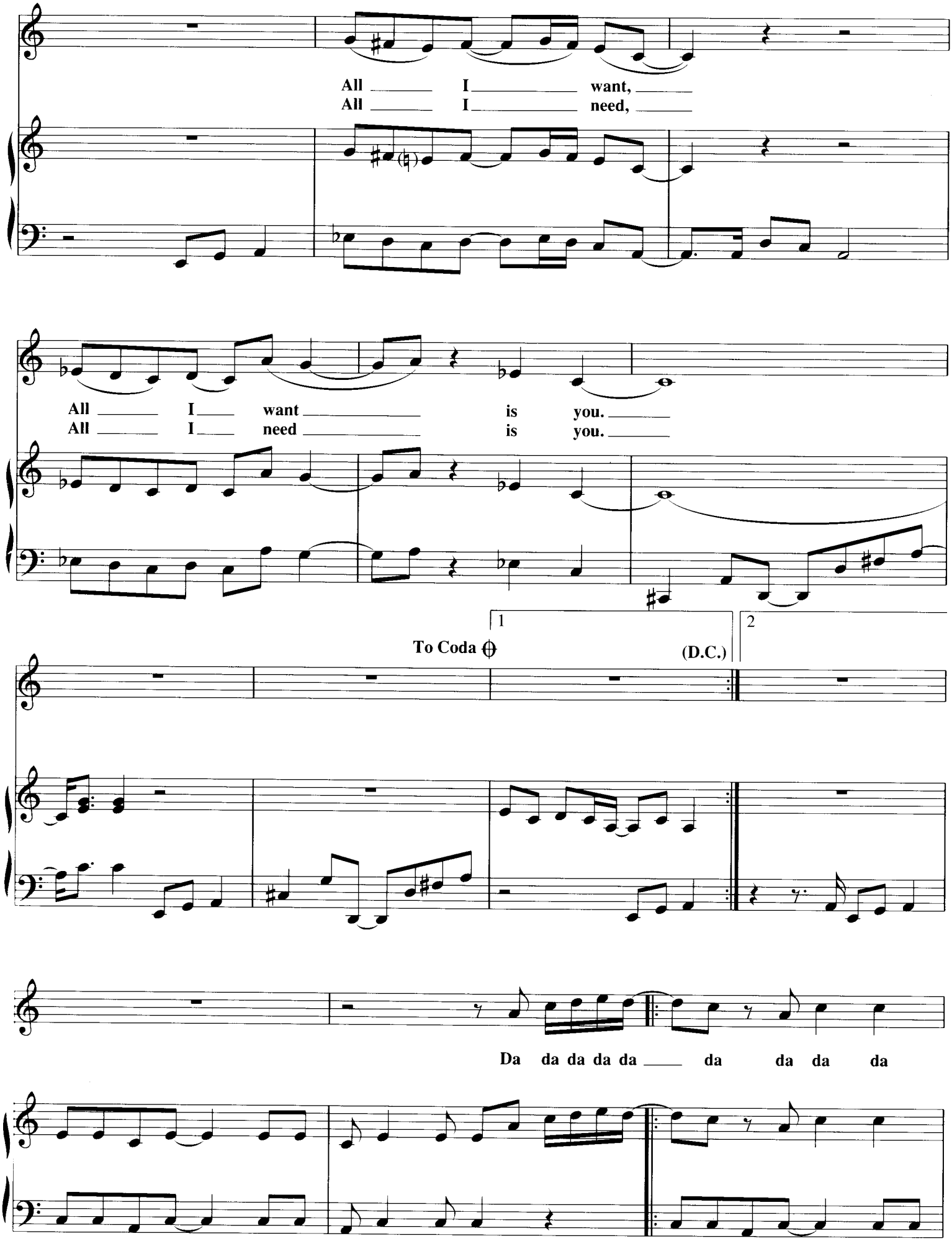

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Play 6 times ad lib.

D.S. al Coda

da. Da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da da.

CODA

Loo da da da da

da. Oo oo oo.

Play 3 times

Loo da da da da da.

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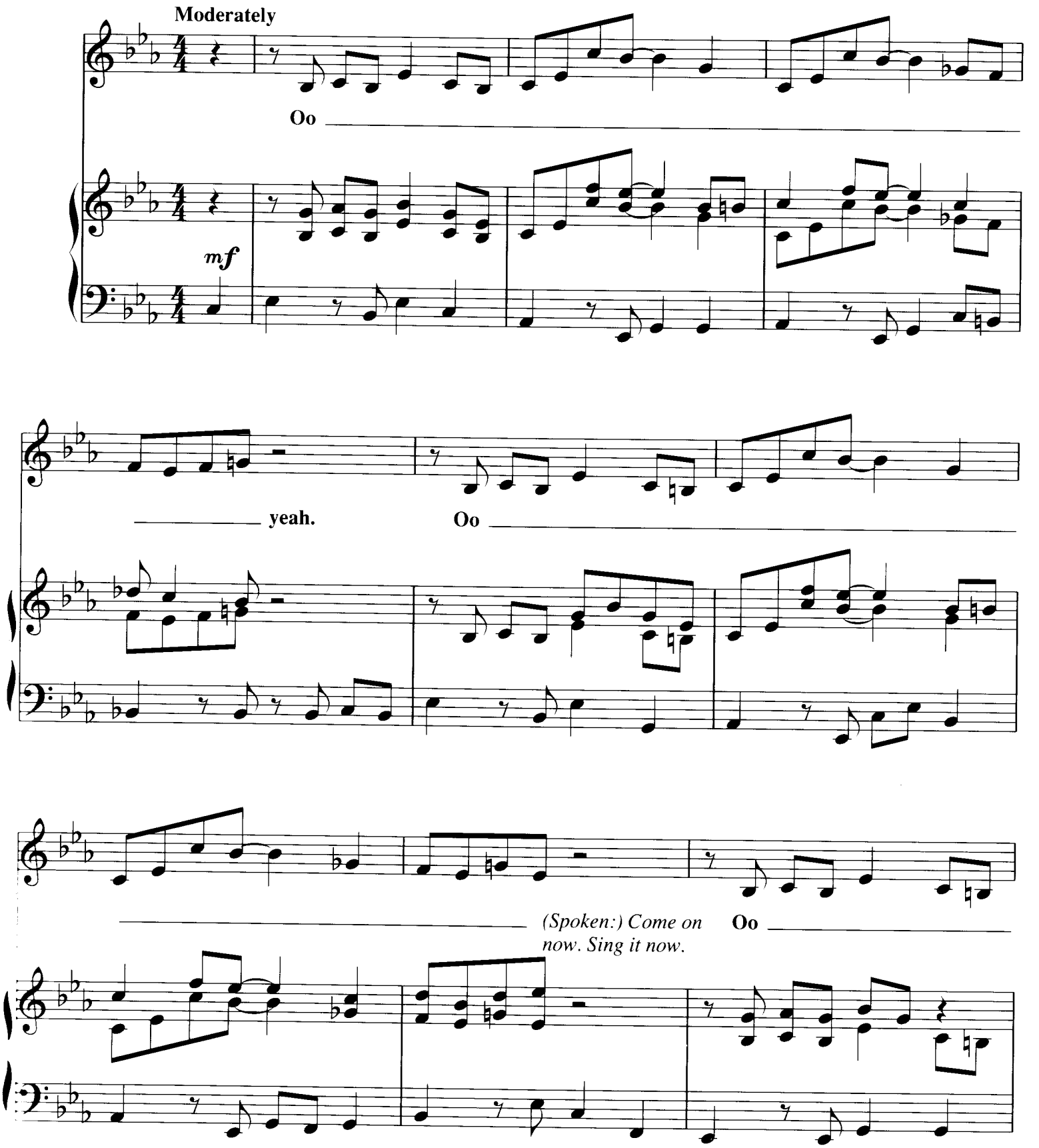
SIMPLE PLEASURES

By BOBBY McFERRIN



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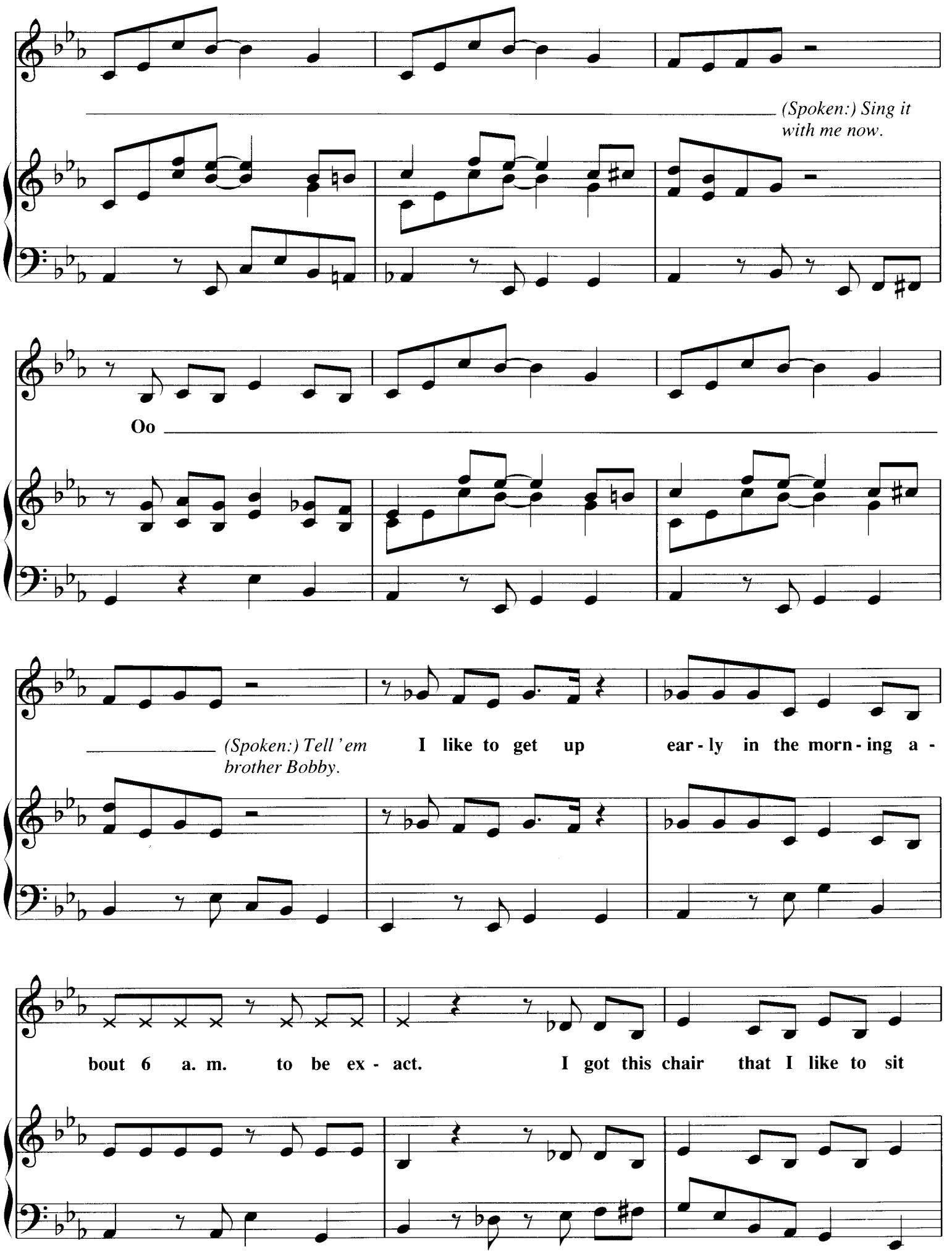

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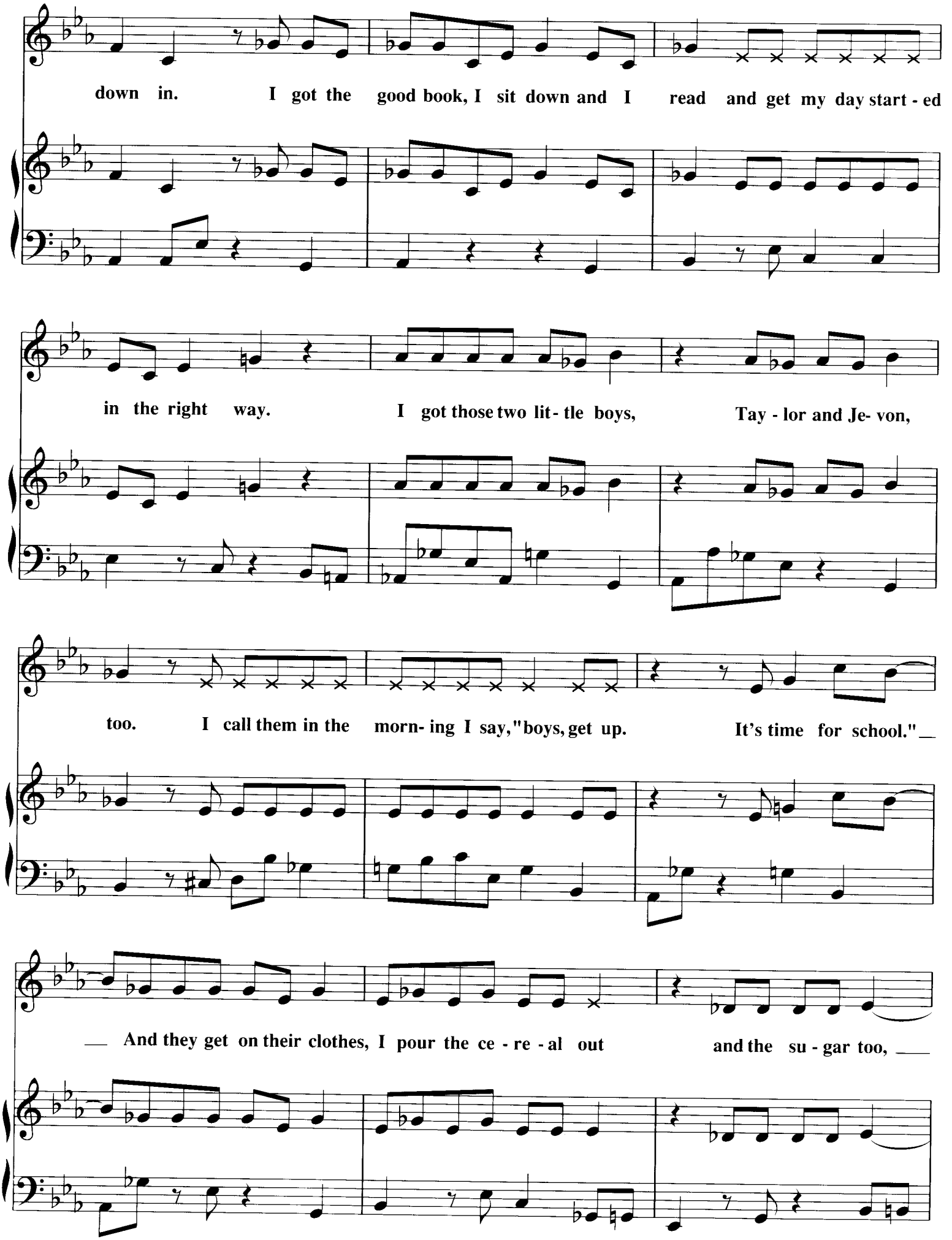

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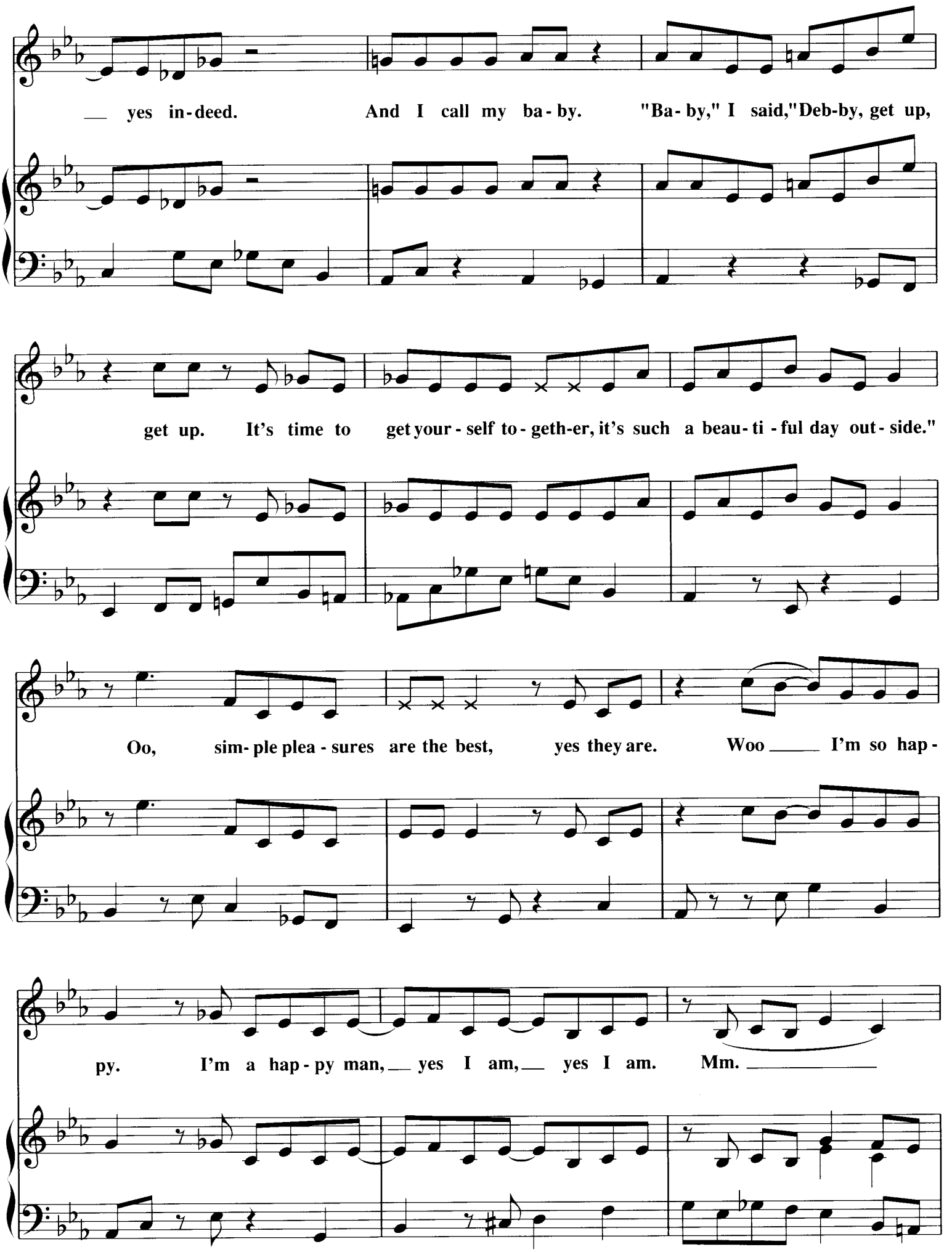

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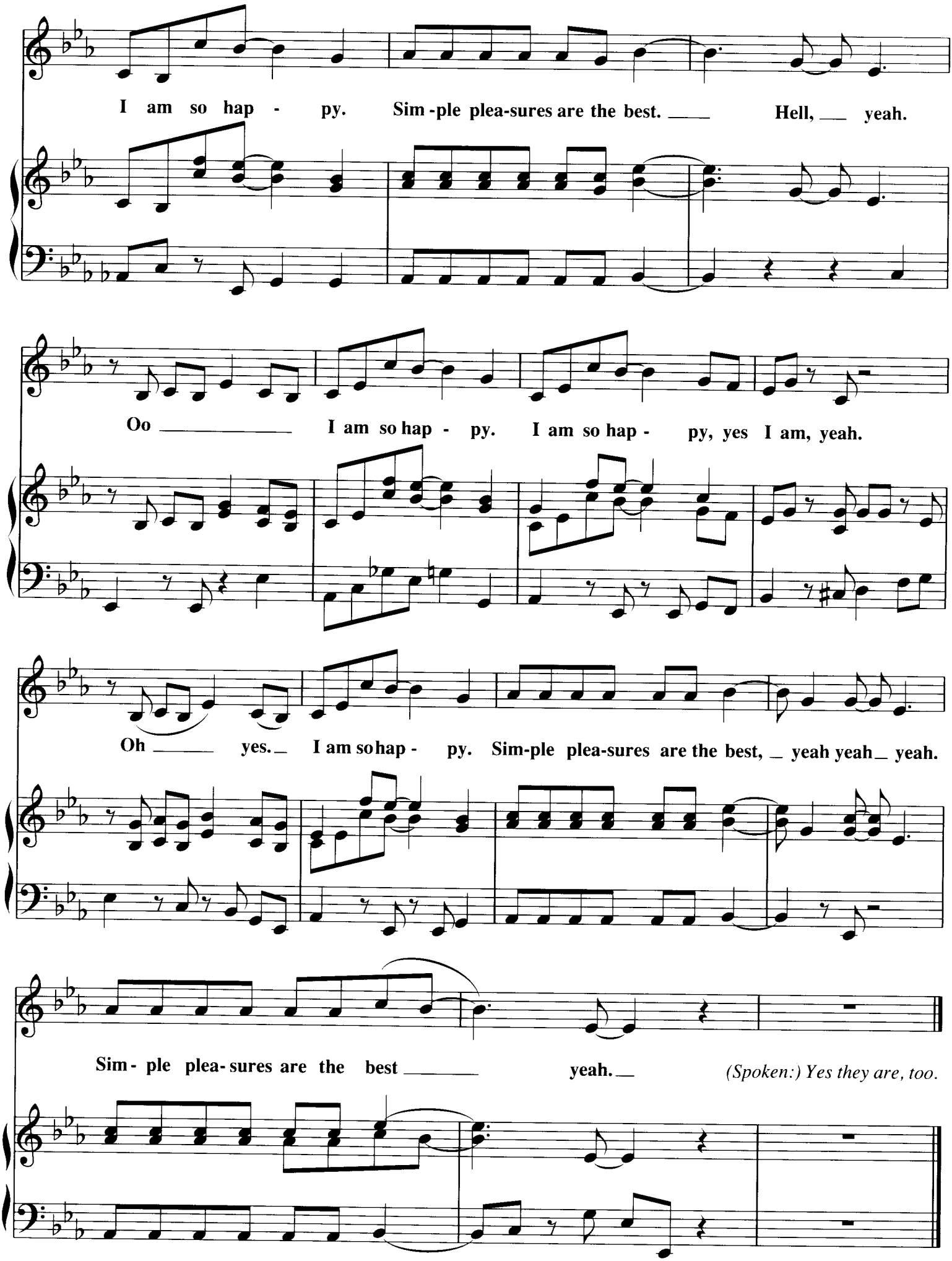

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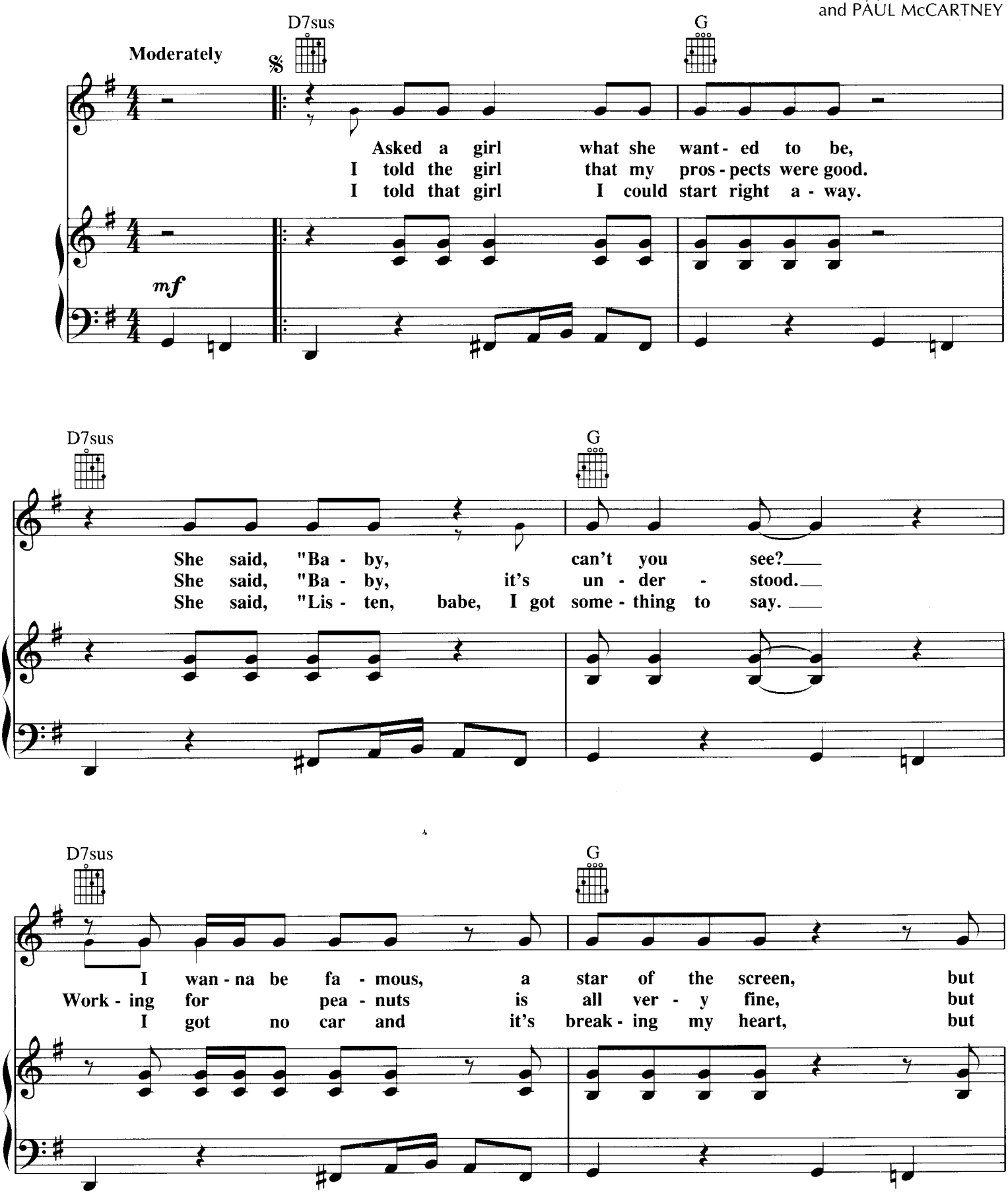
DRIVE MY CAR

Words and Music by JOHN LENNON
and PAUL McCARTNEY



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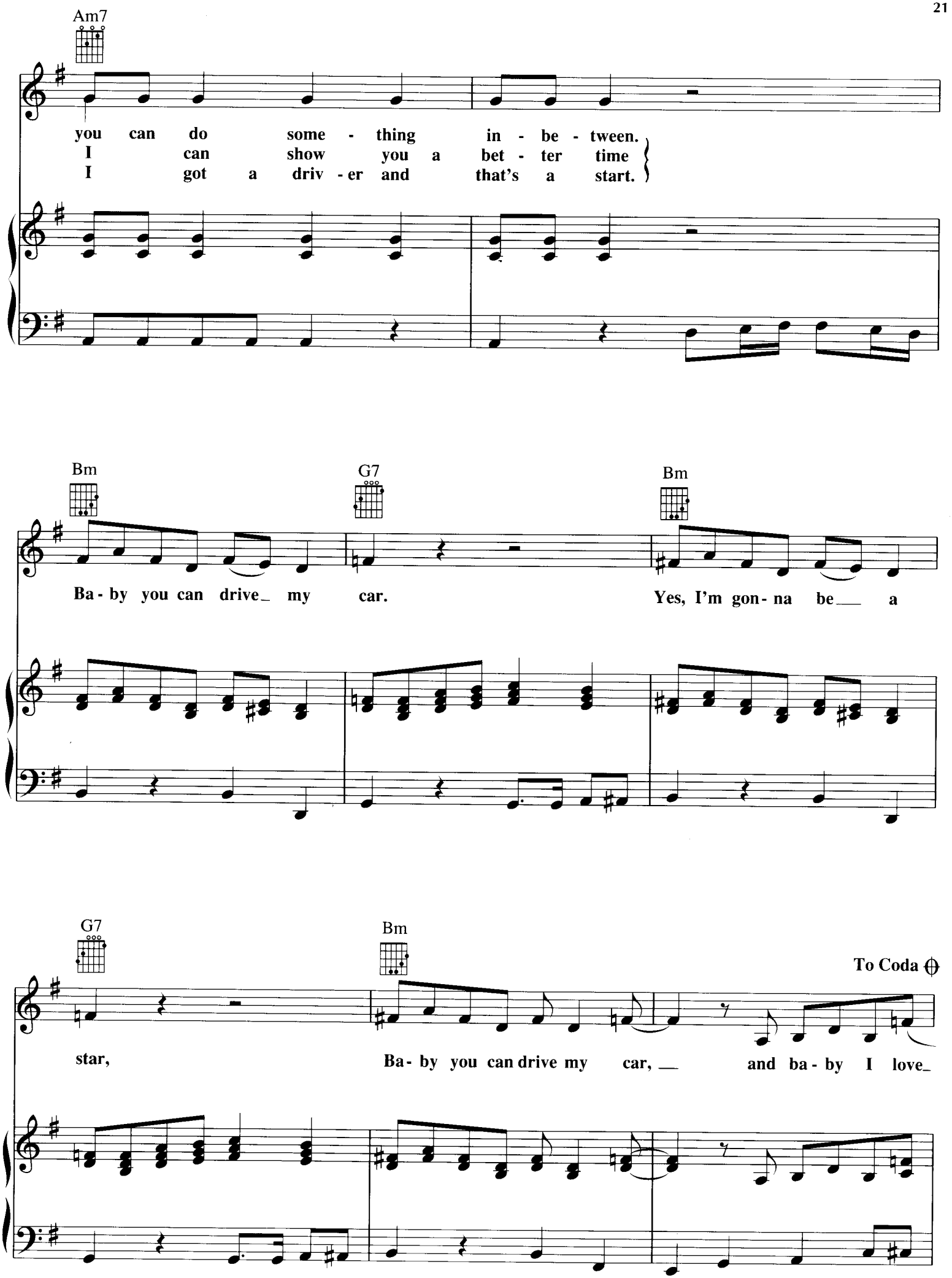

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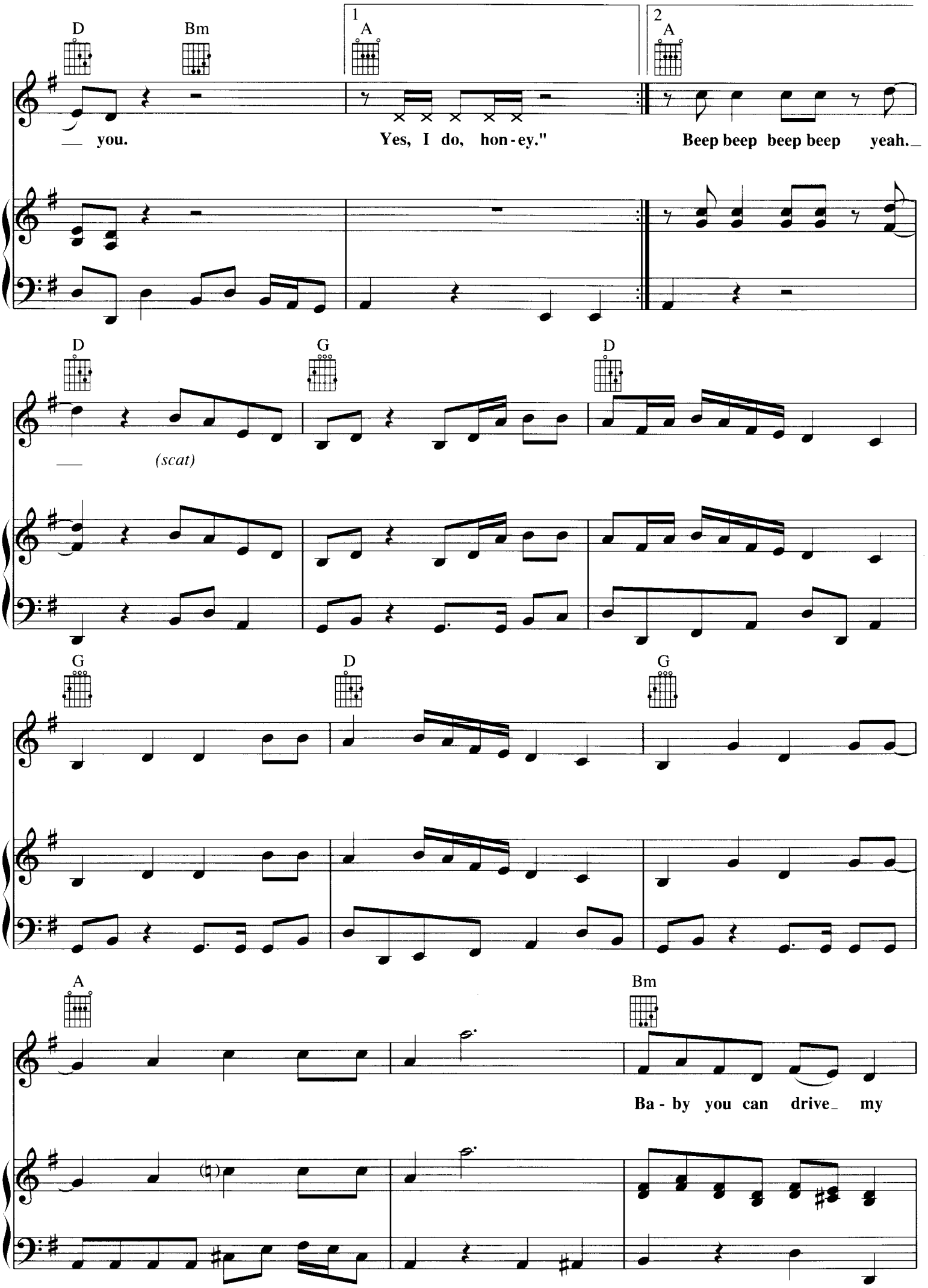

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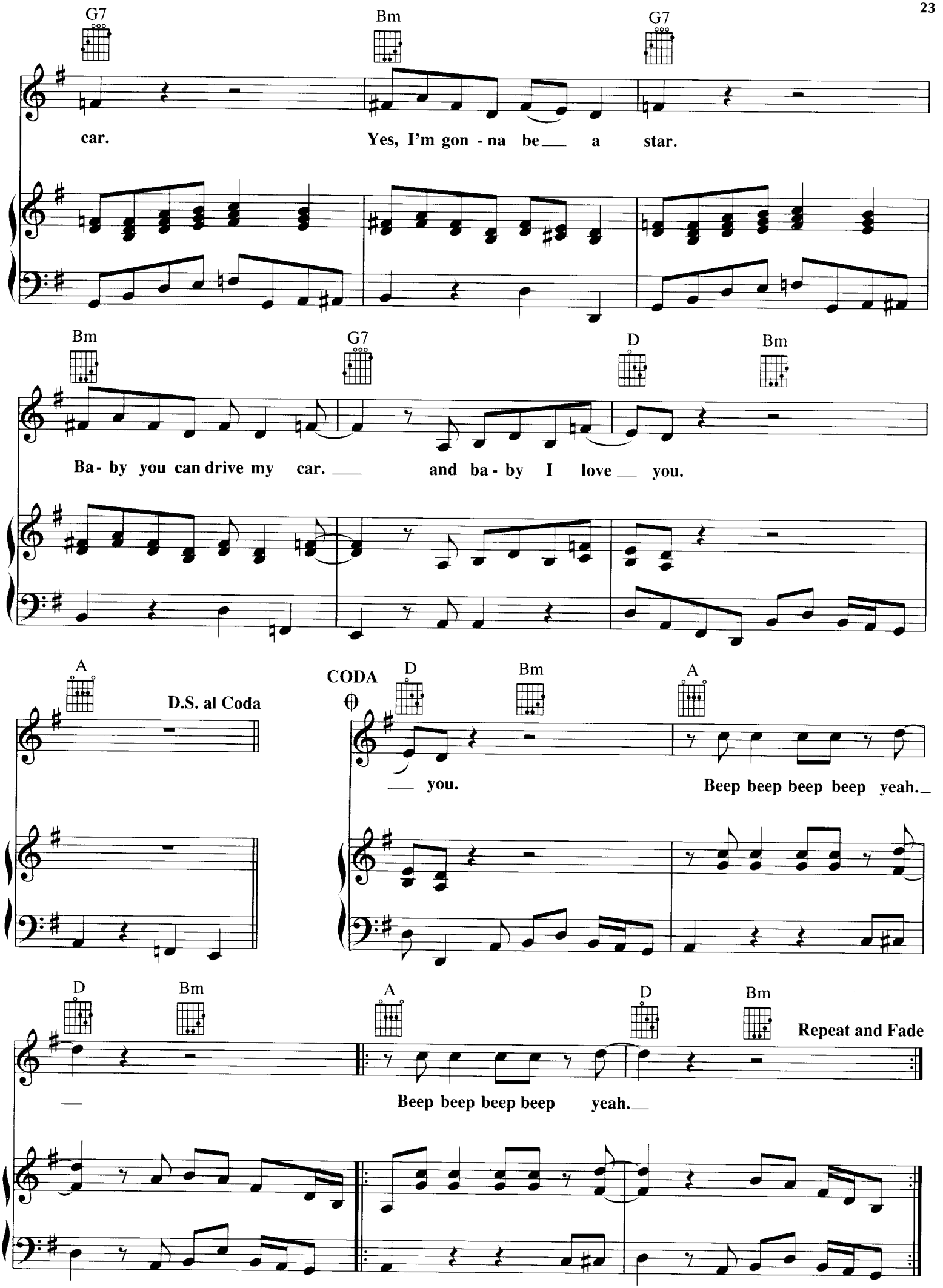

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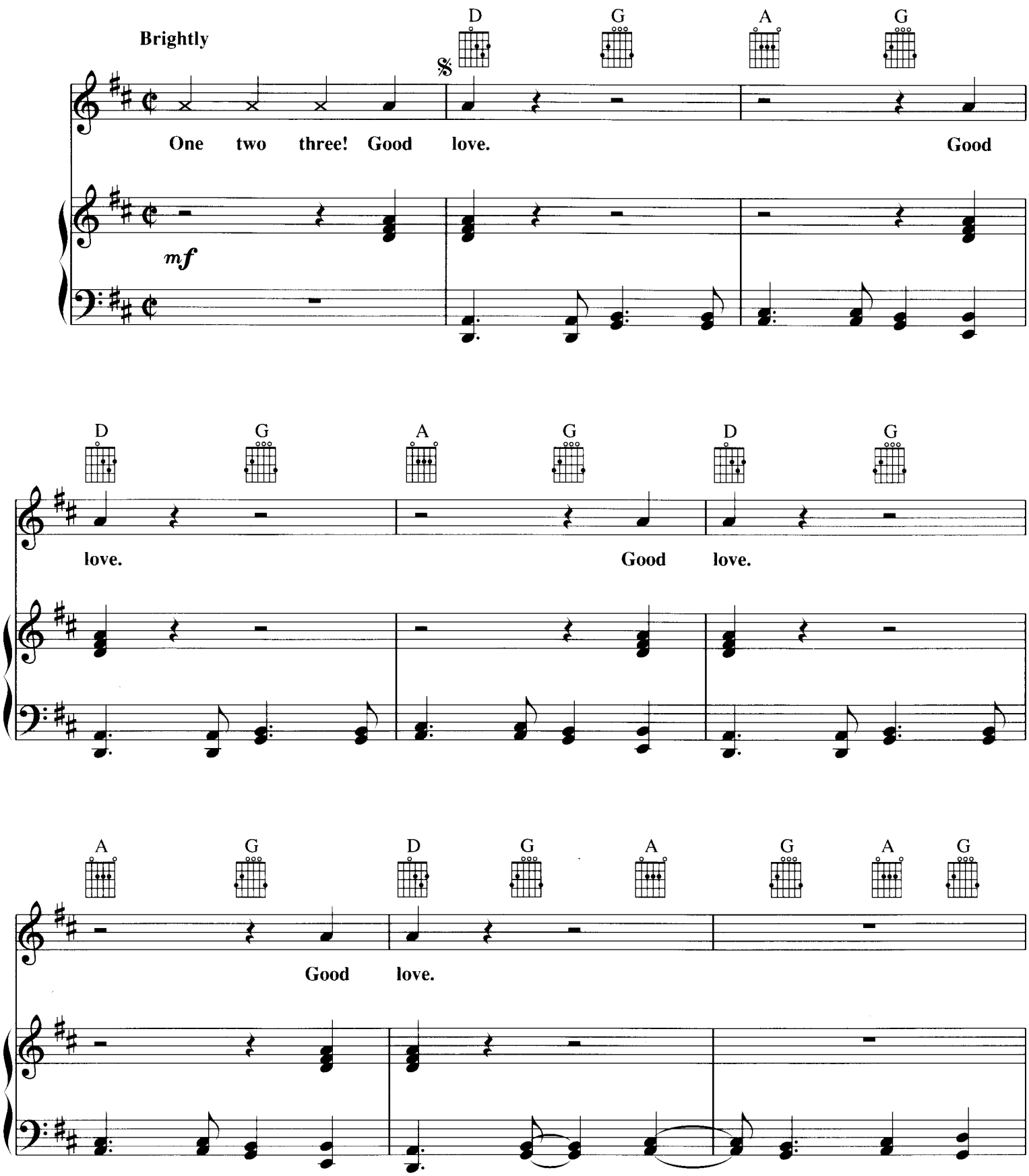
GOOD LOVIN'

Words and Music by RUDY CLARK
and ART RESNICK



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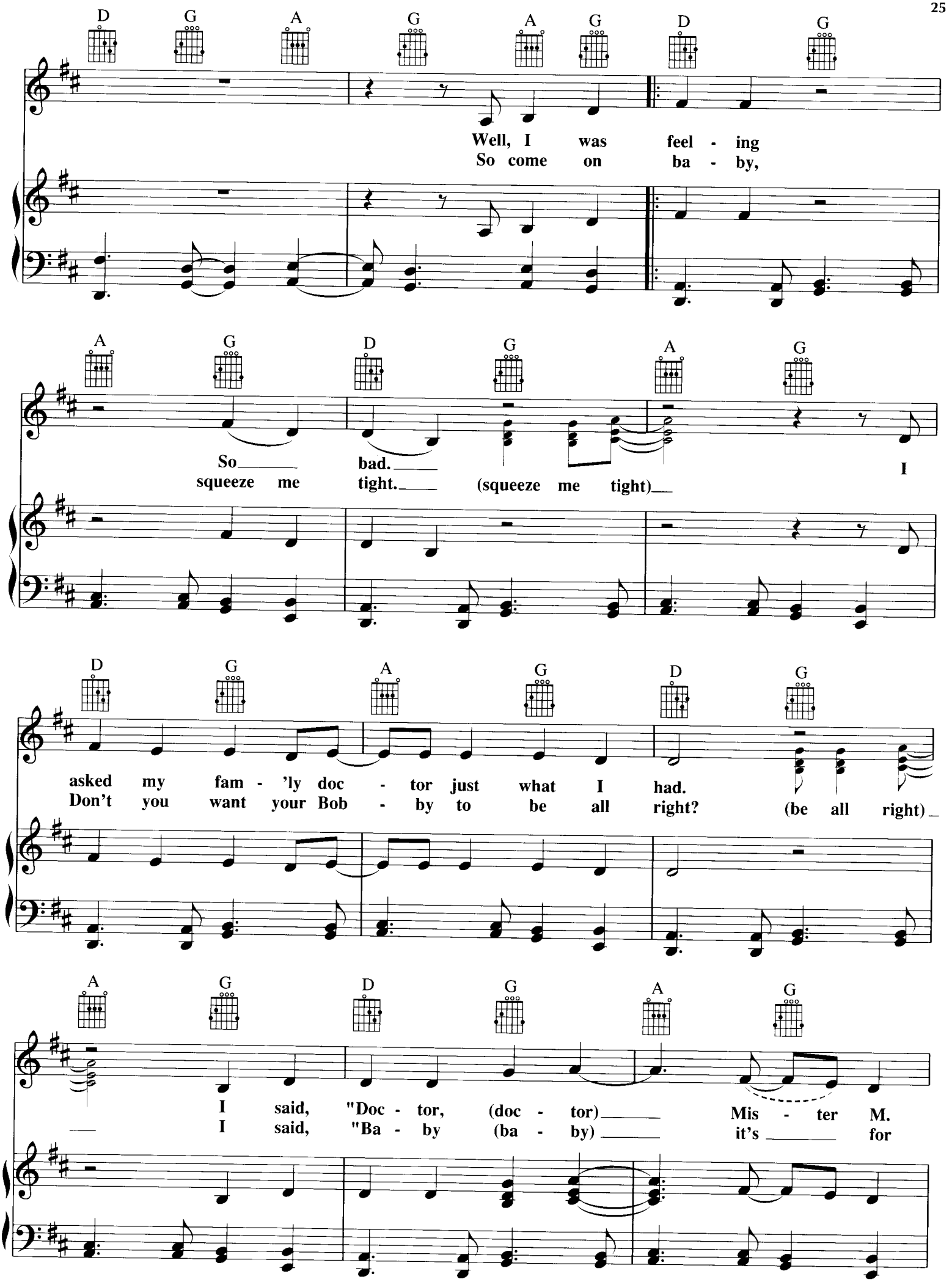

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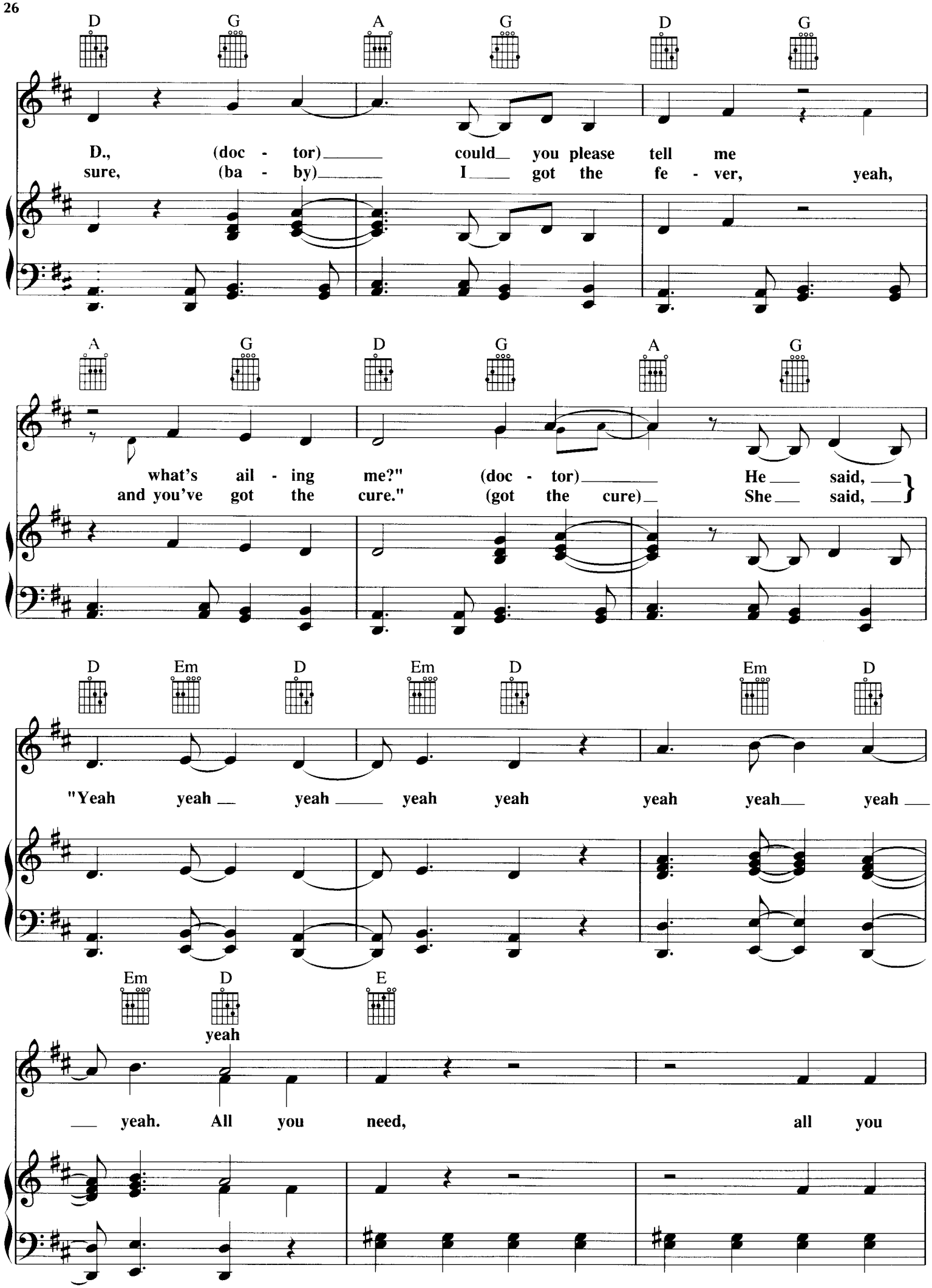

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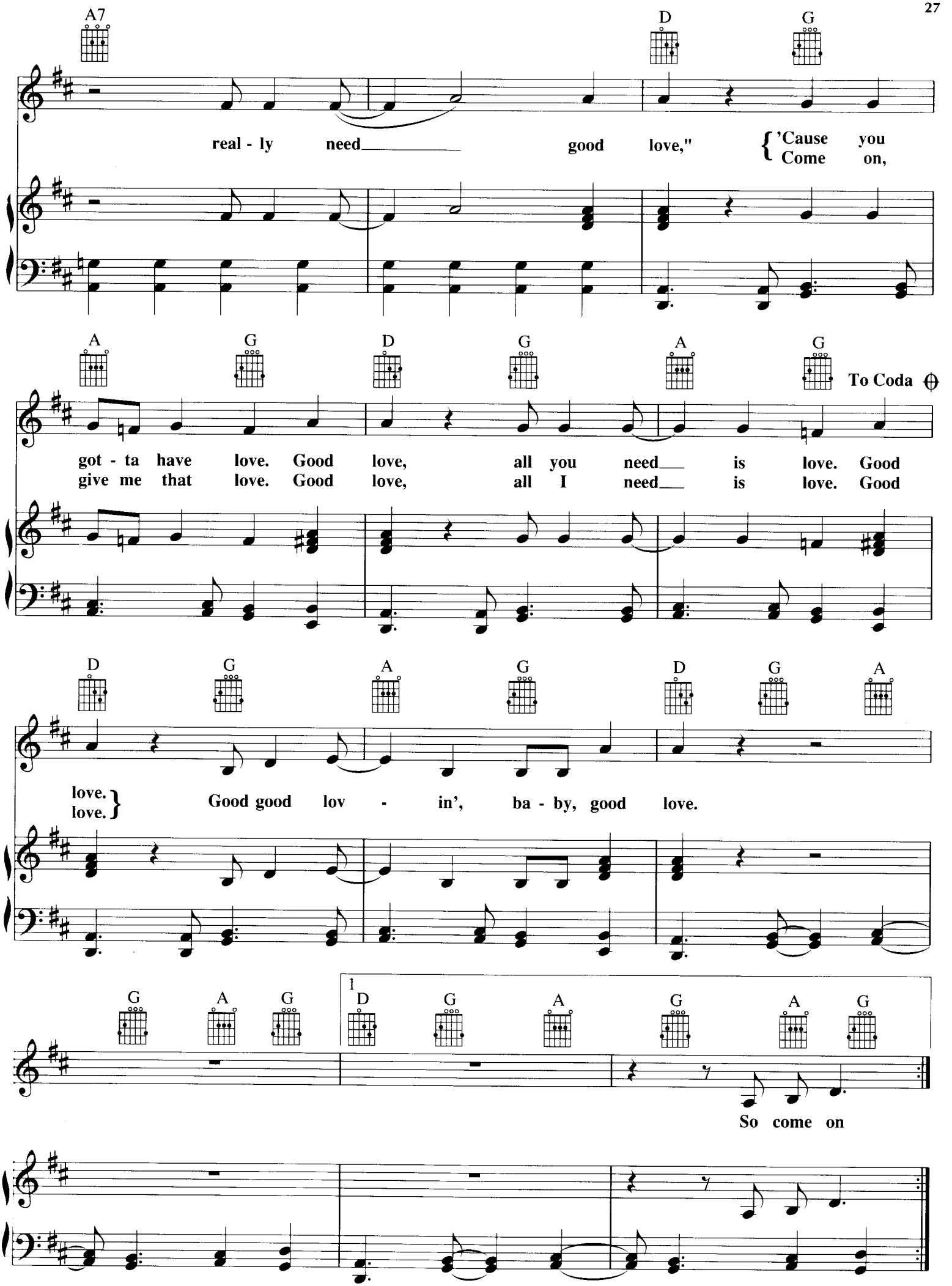

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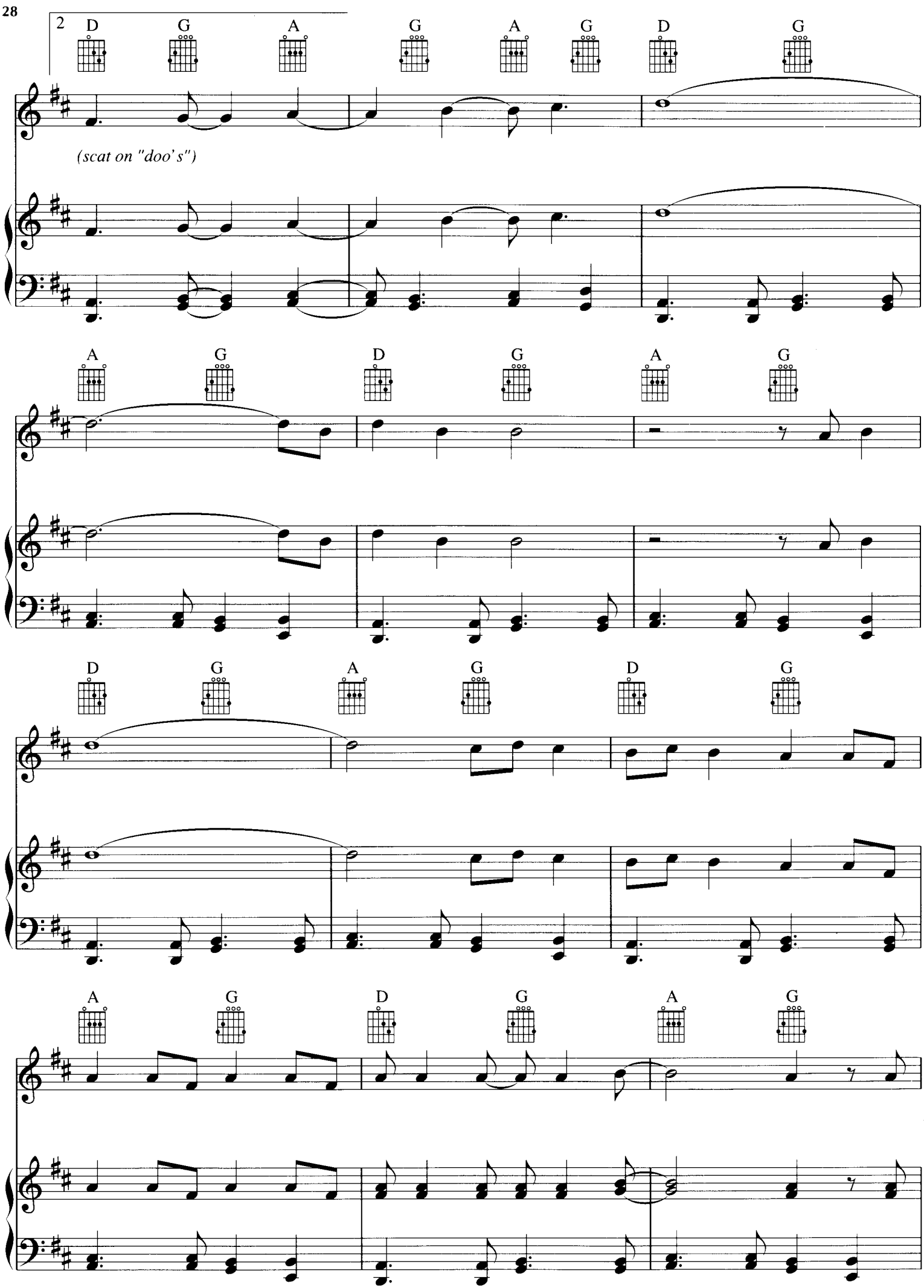

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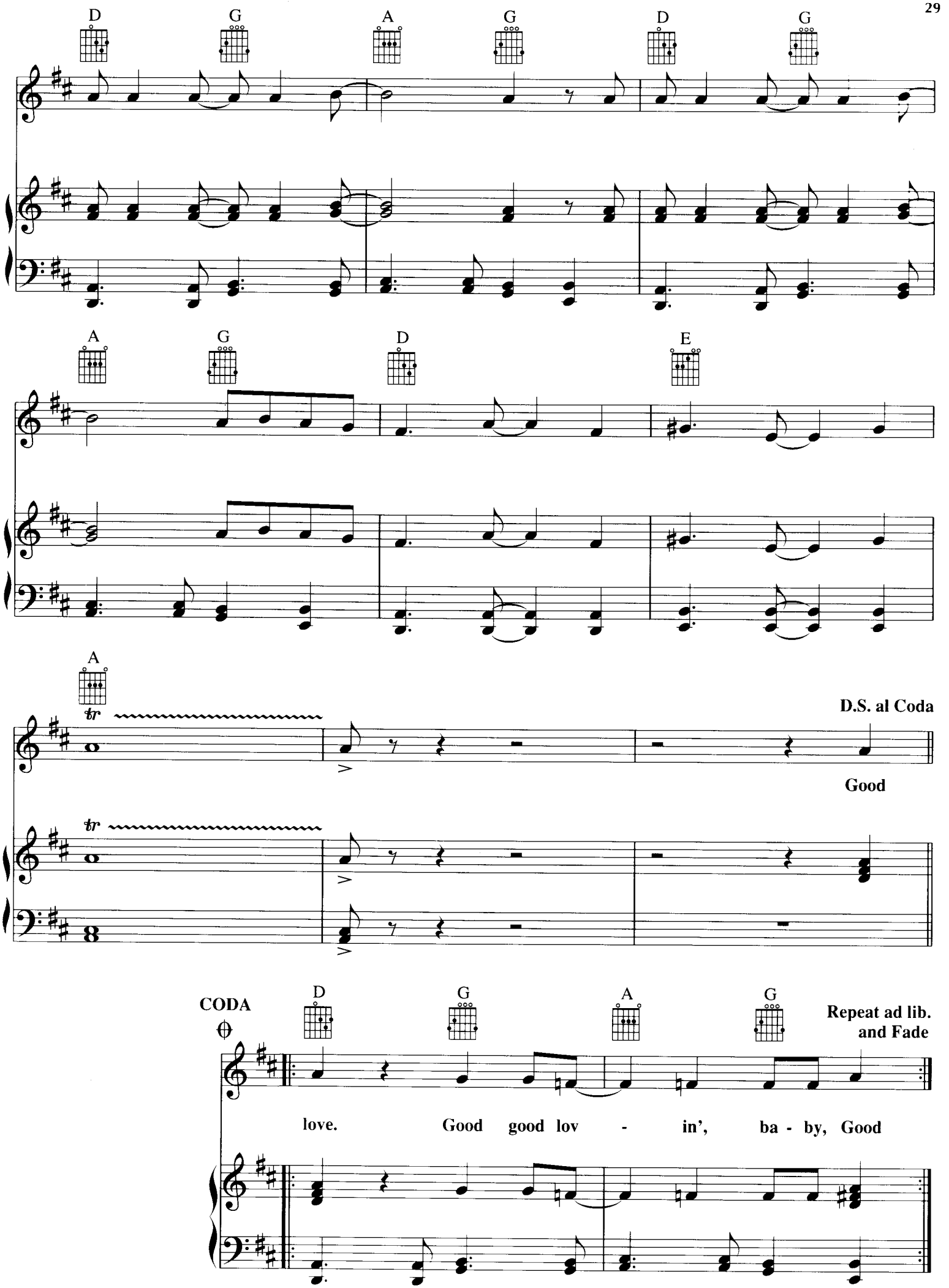

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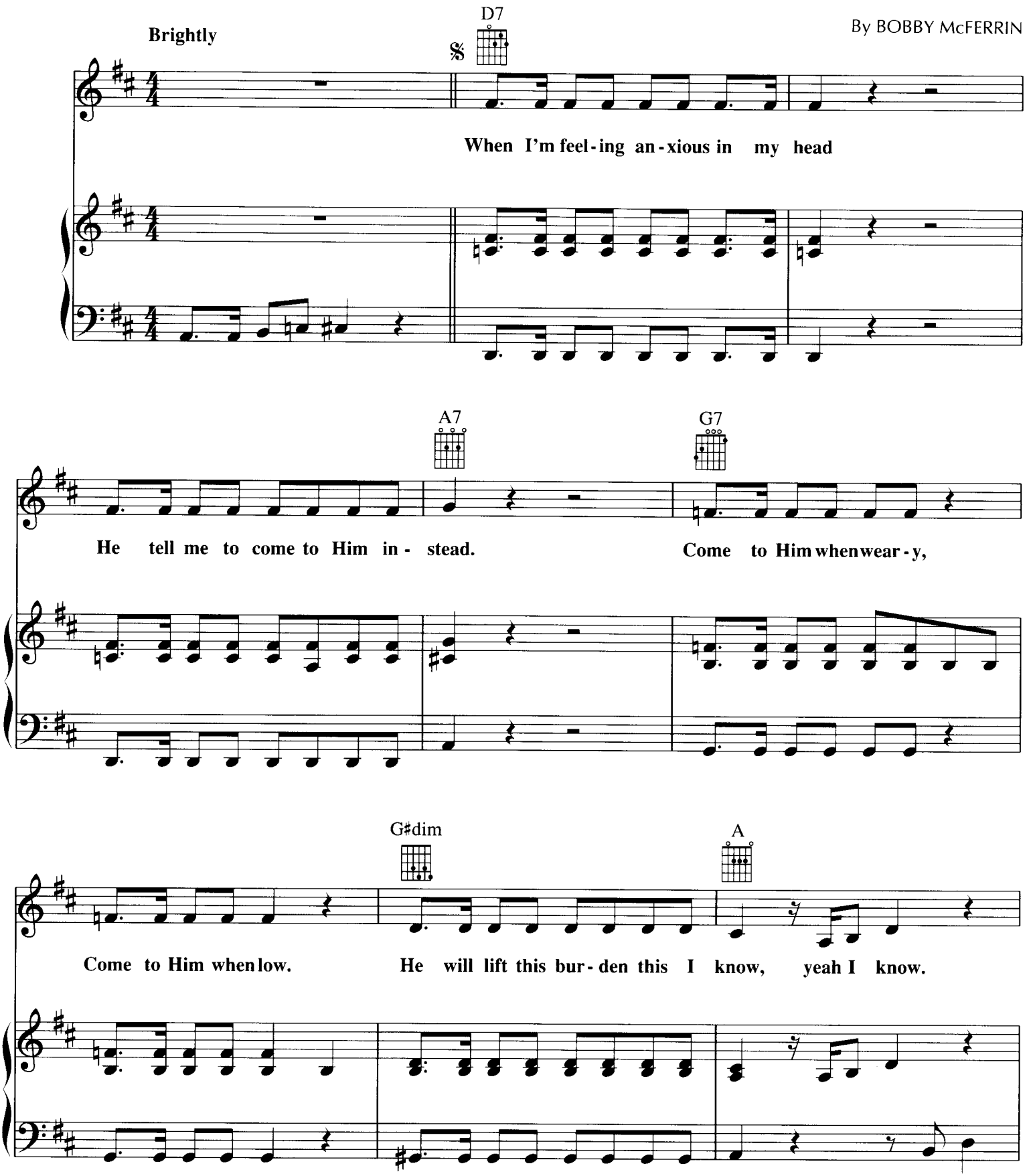
COME TO ME



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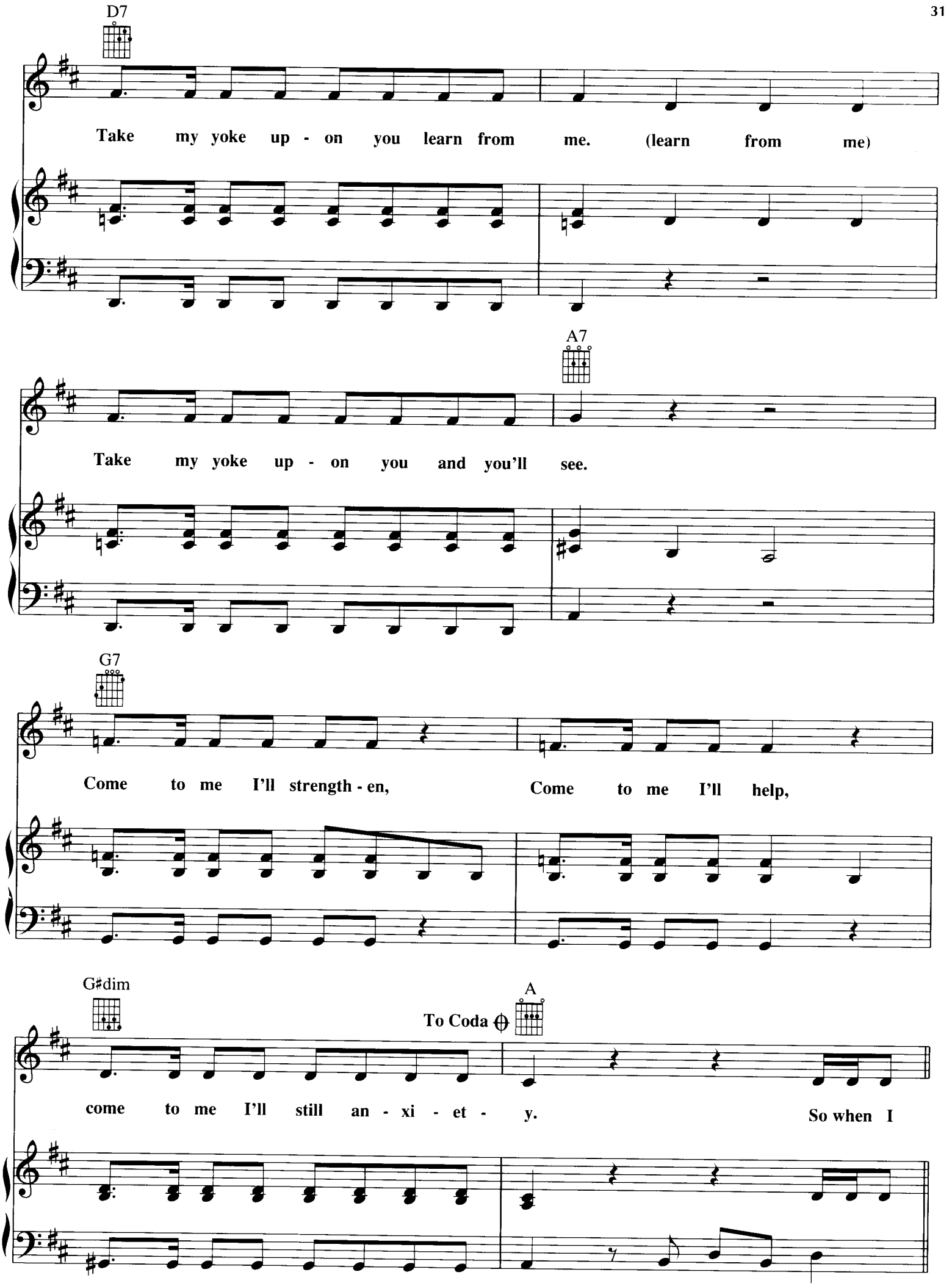

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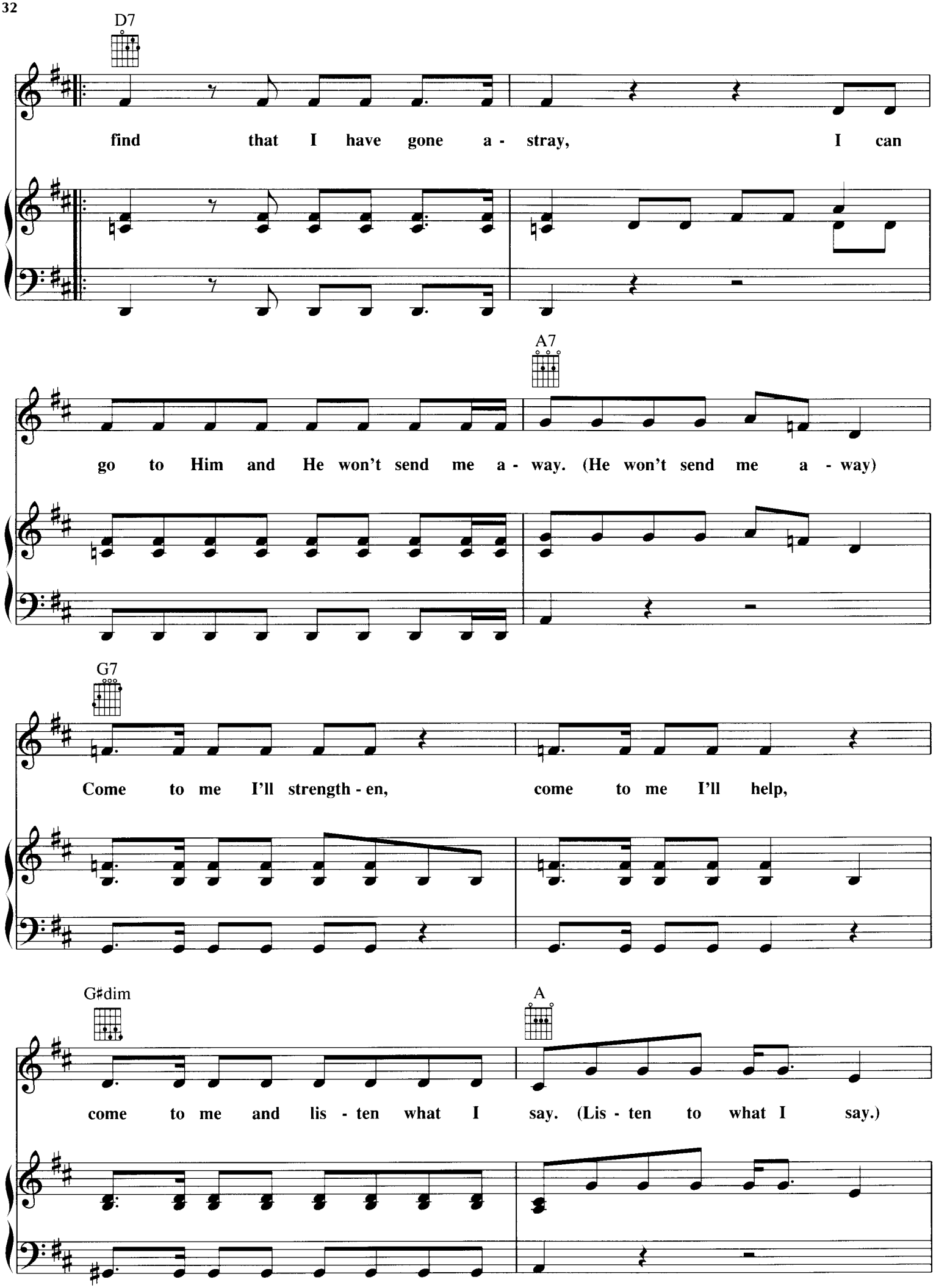

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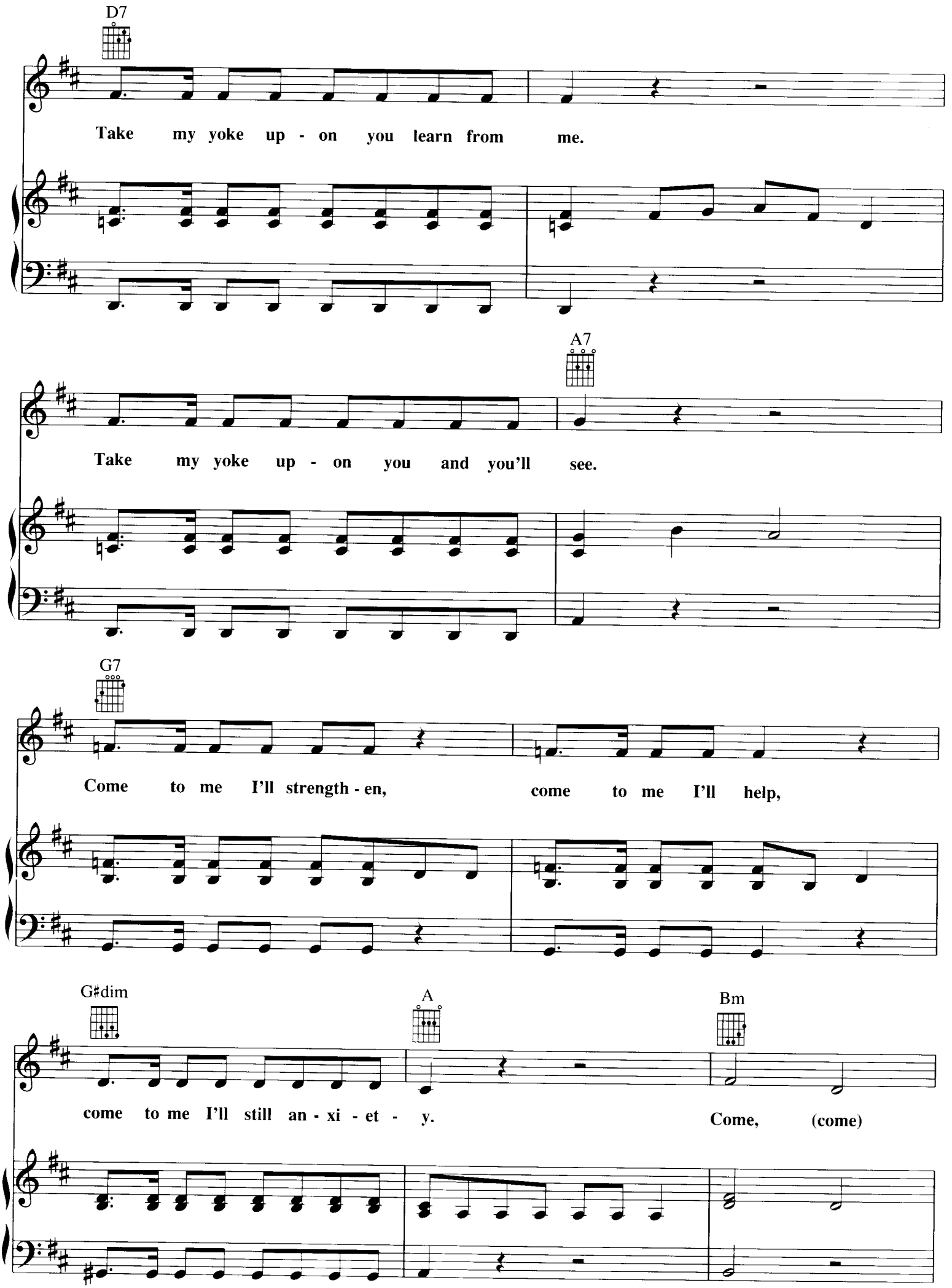

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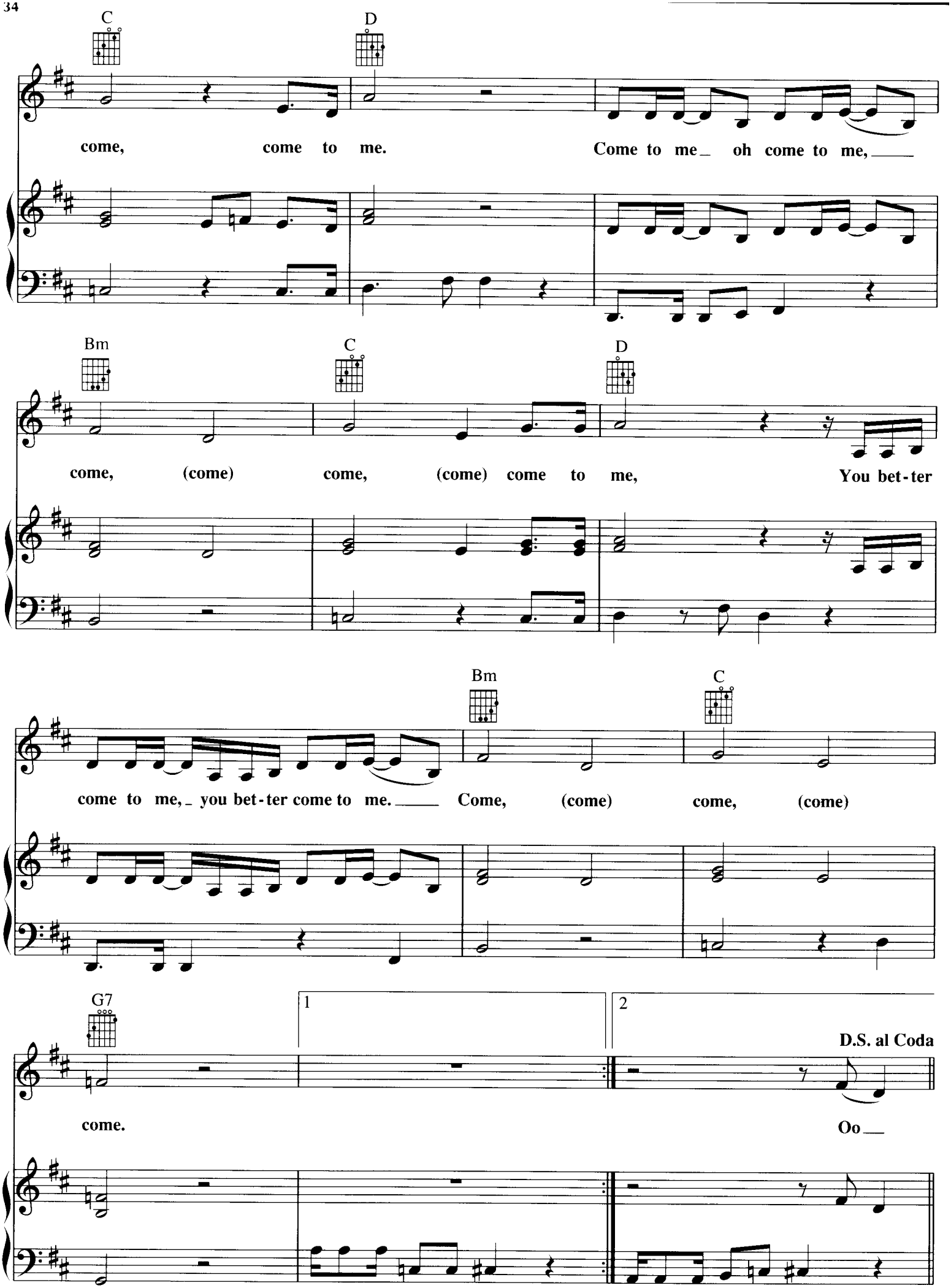

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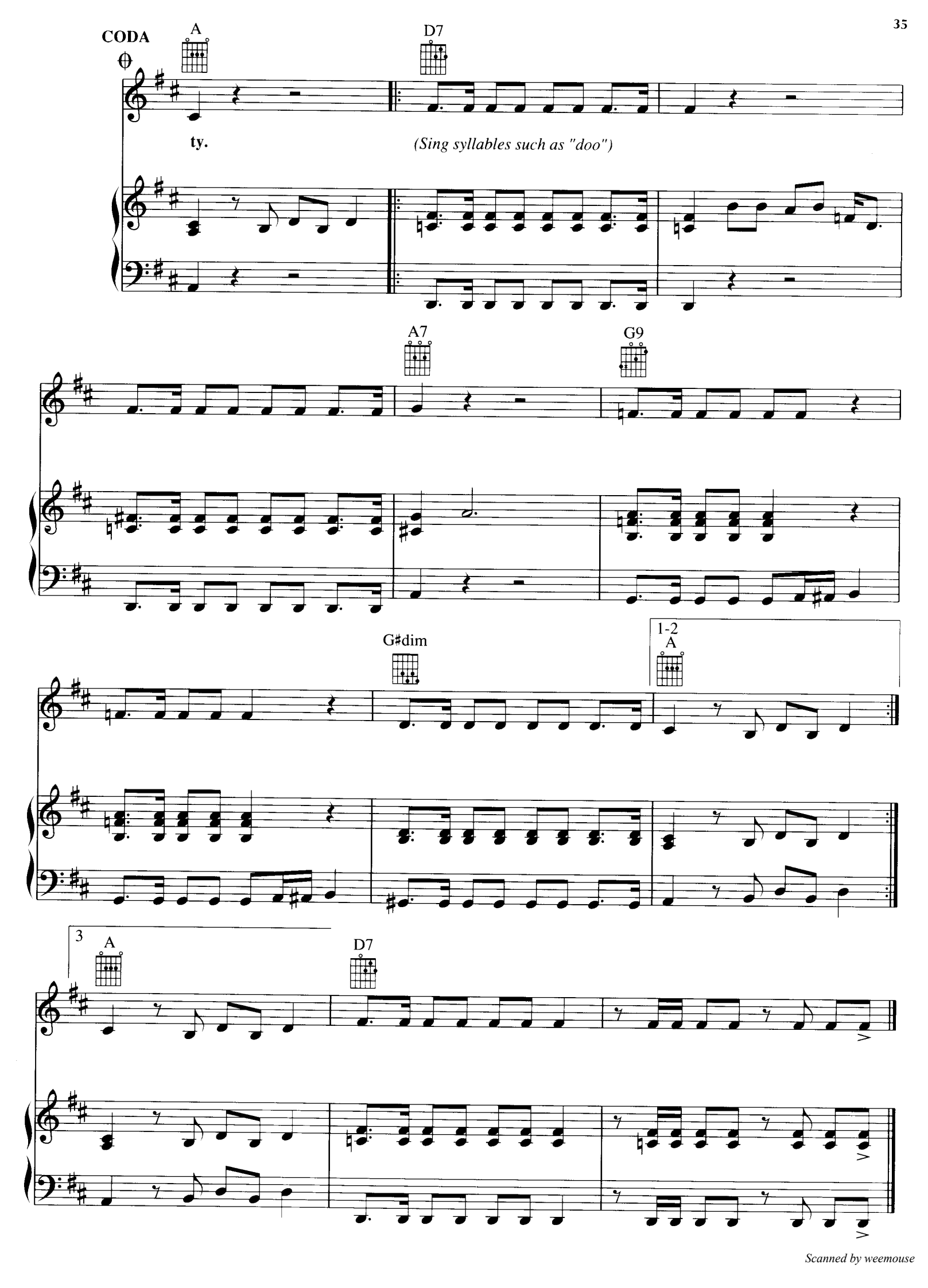

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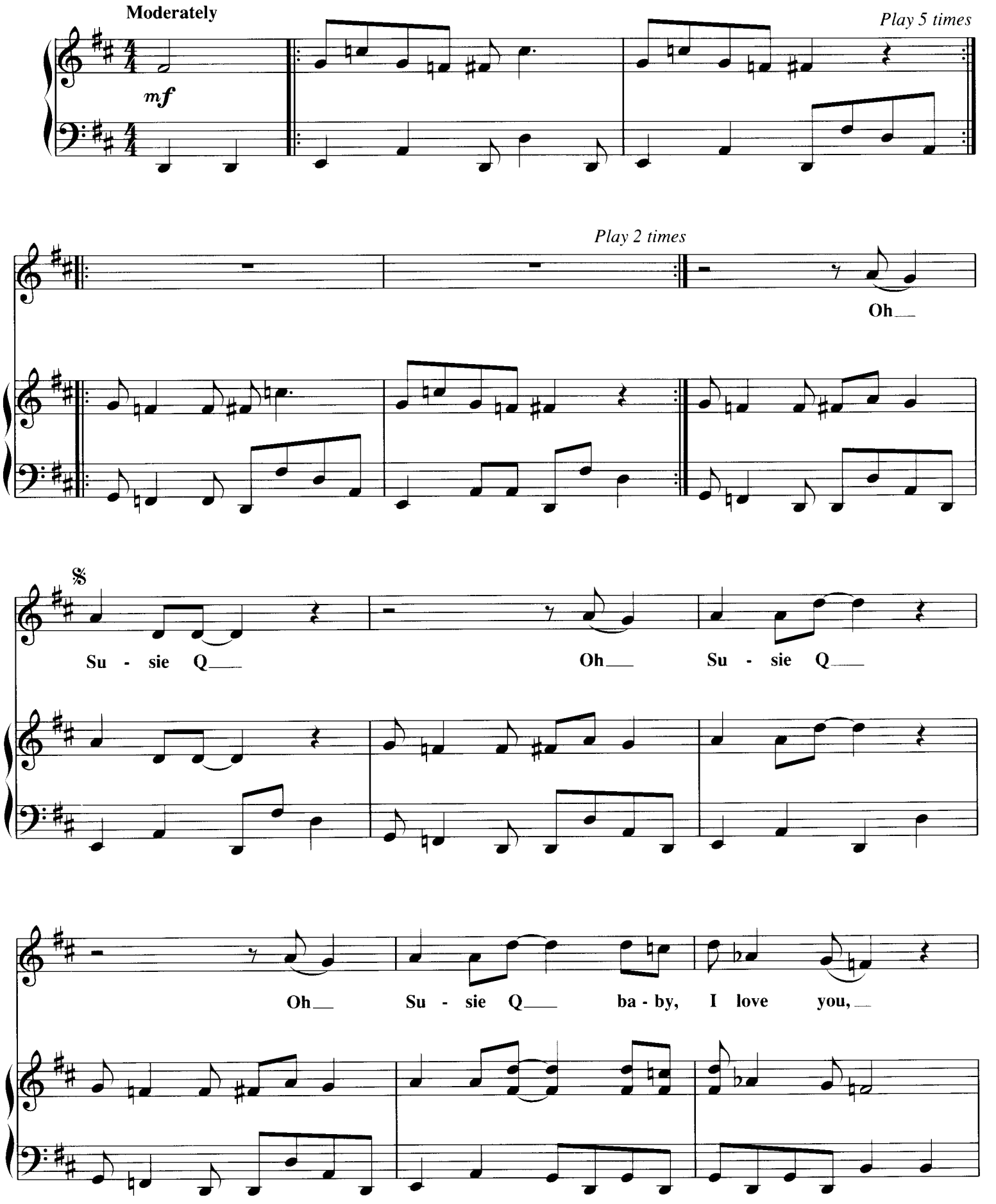
SUSIE-Q

Words and Music by D. HAWKINS,
S.J. LEWIS and F. BROADWATER



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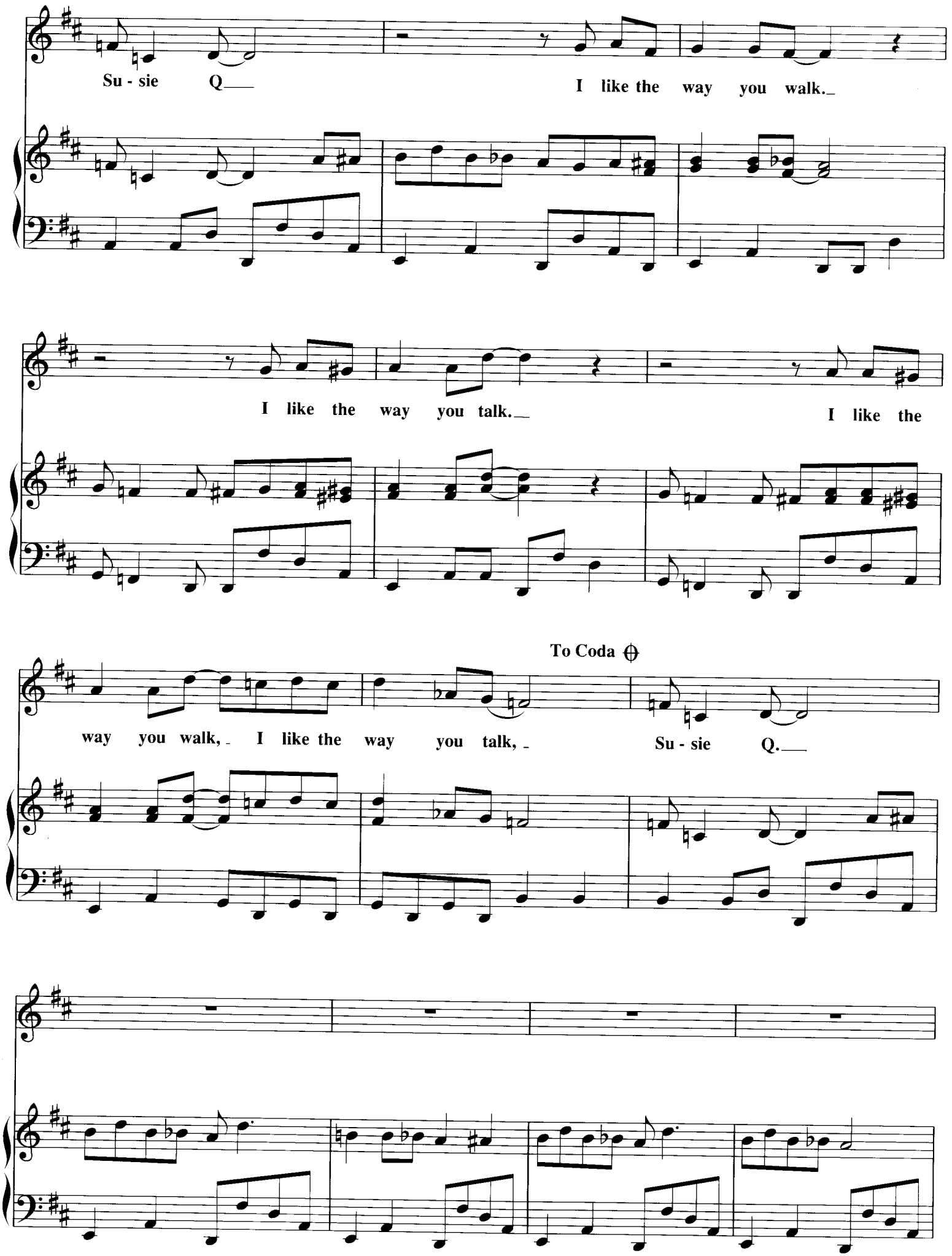

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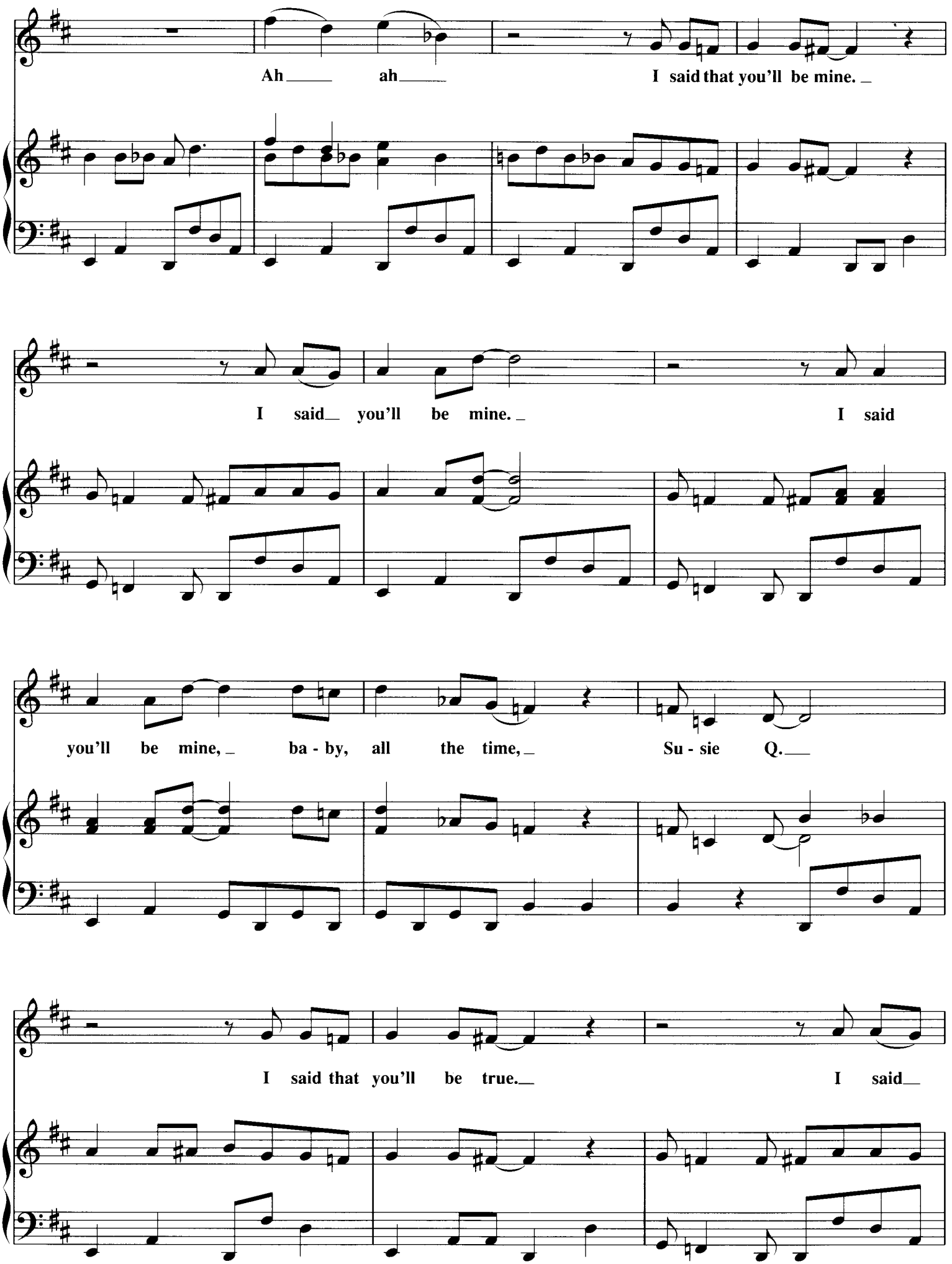

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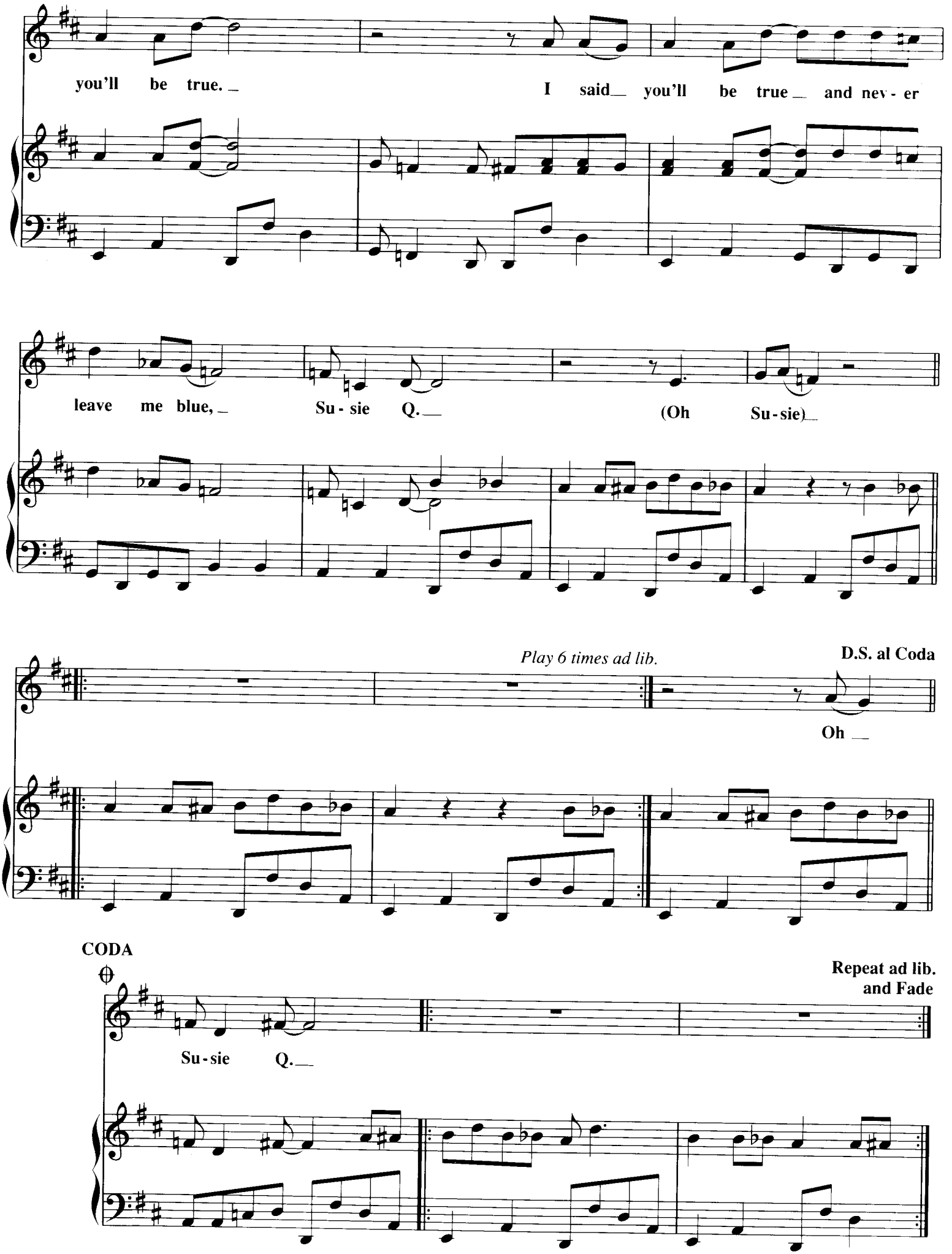

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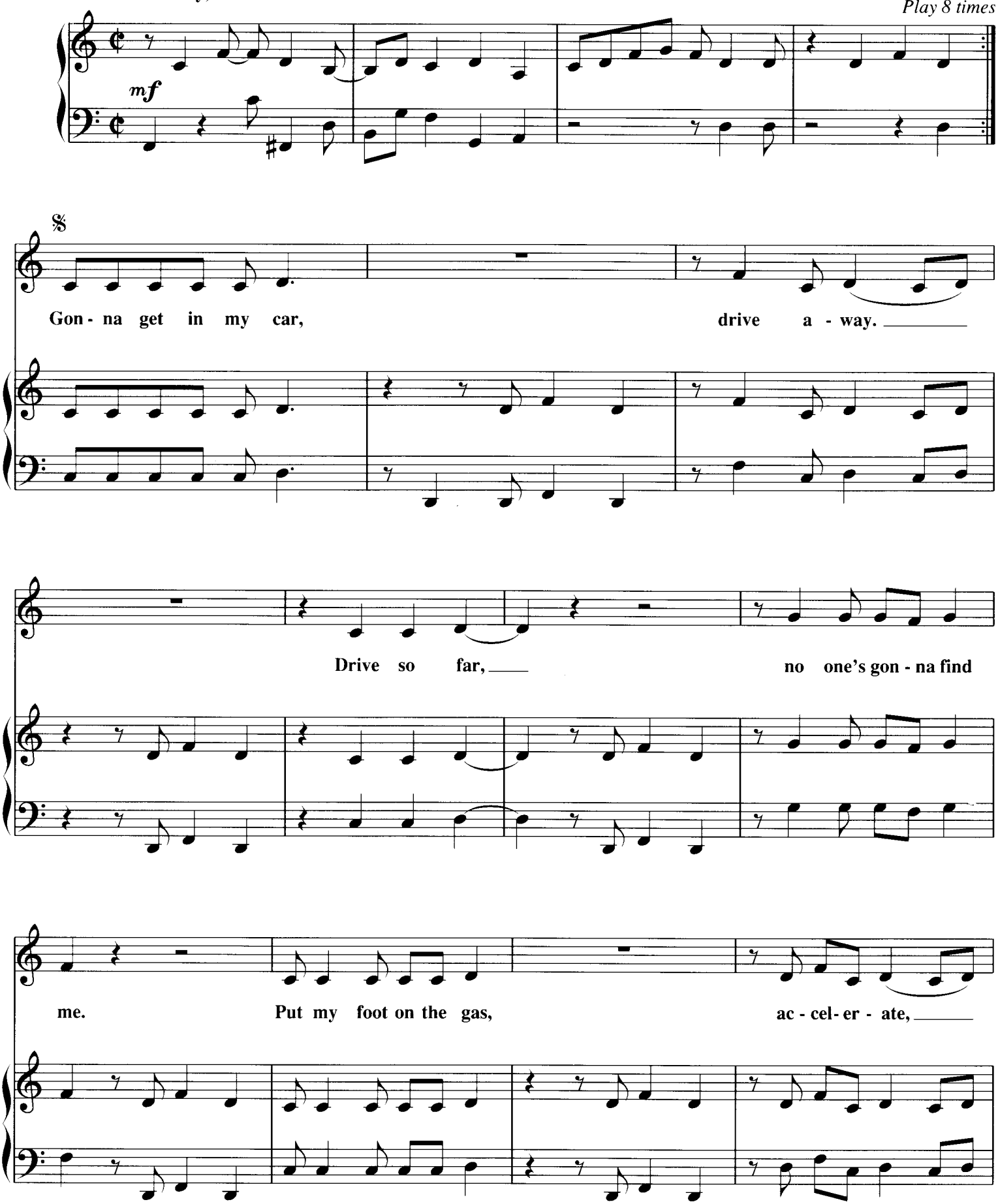
DRIVE

By BOBBY McFERRIN

Play 8 times

Moderately, in 2



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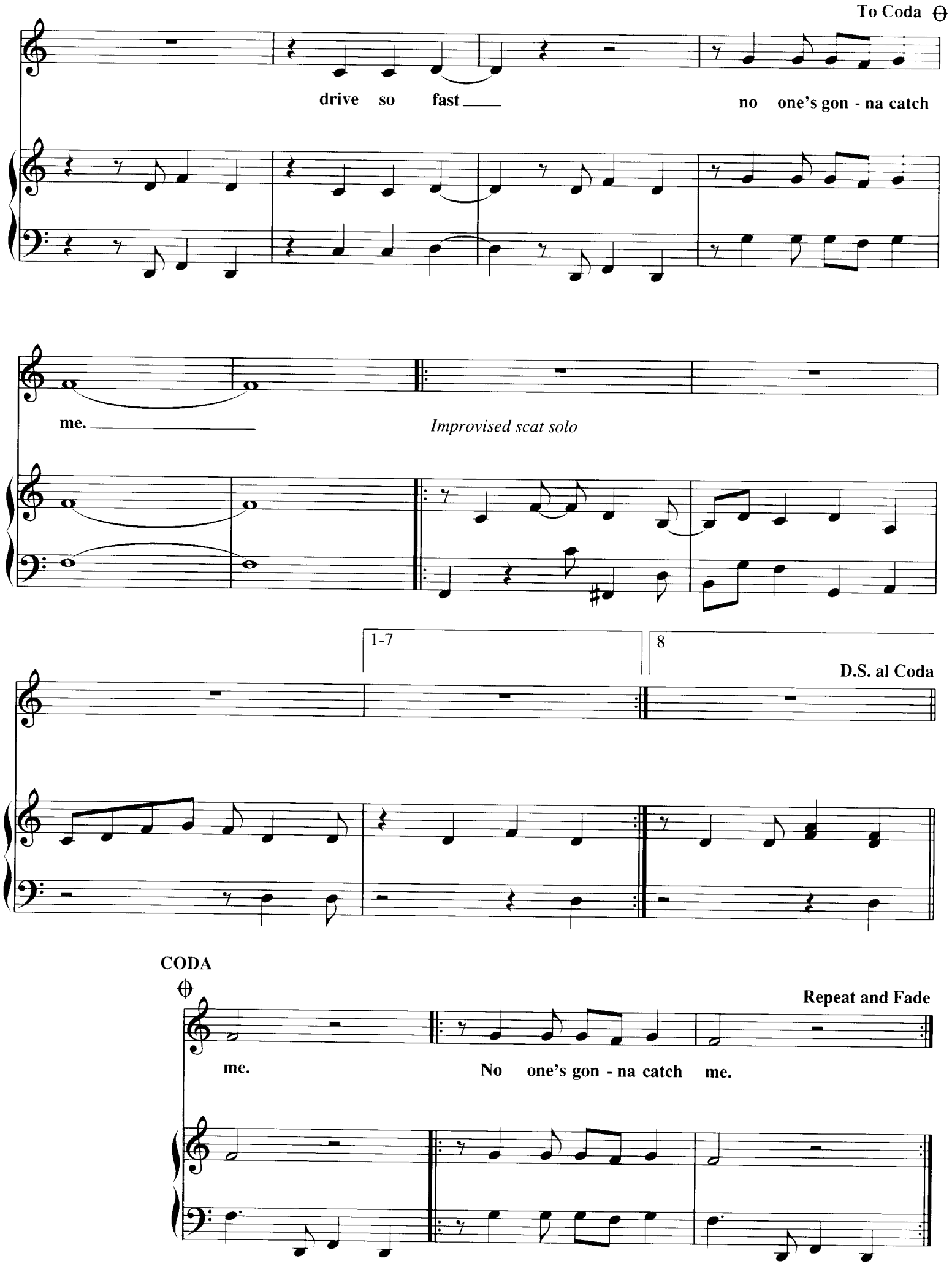

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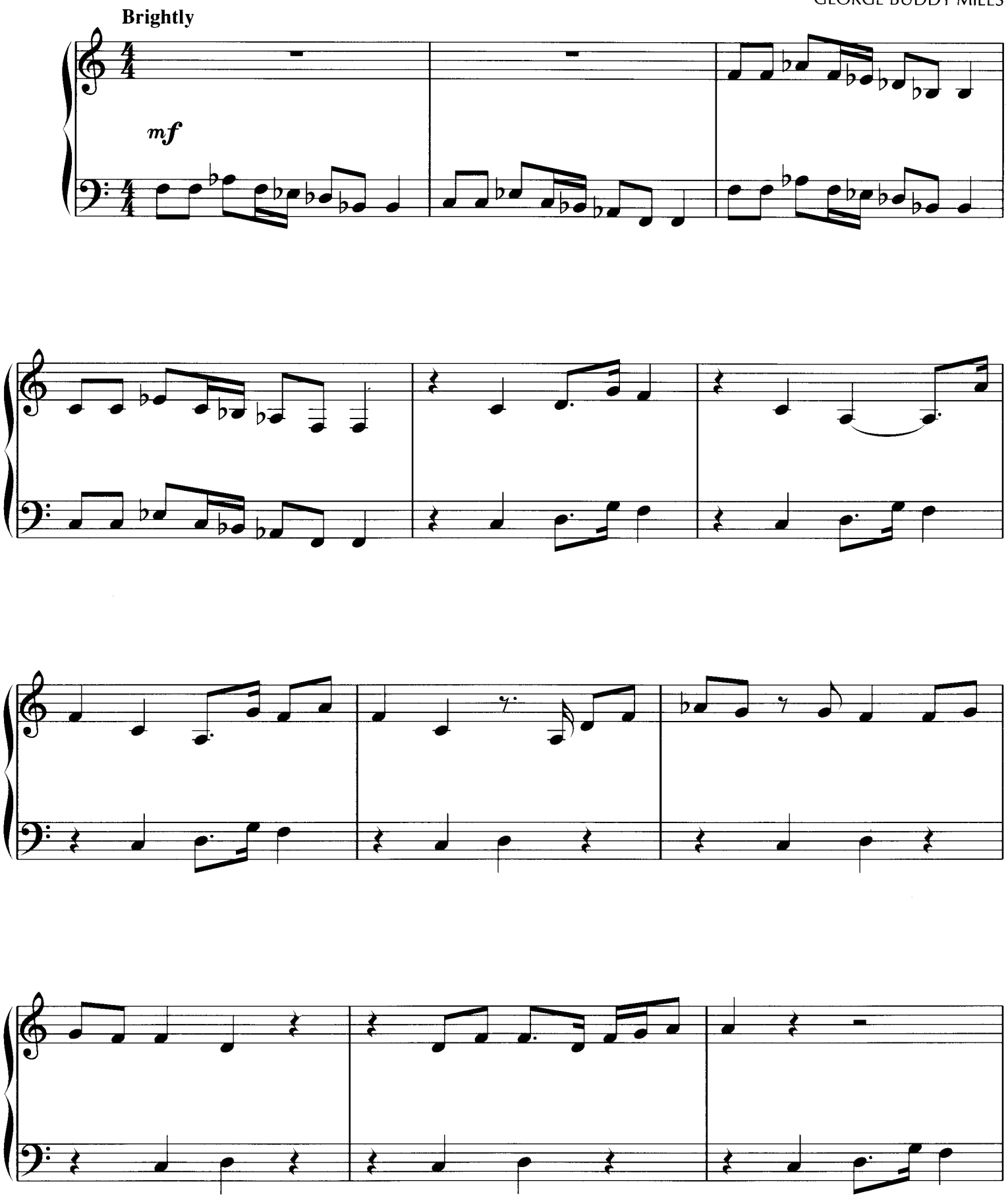

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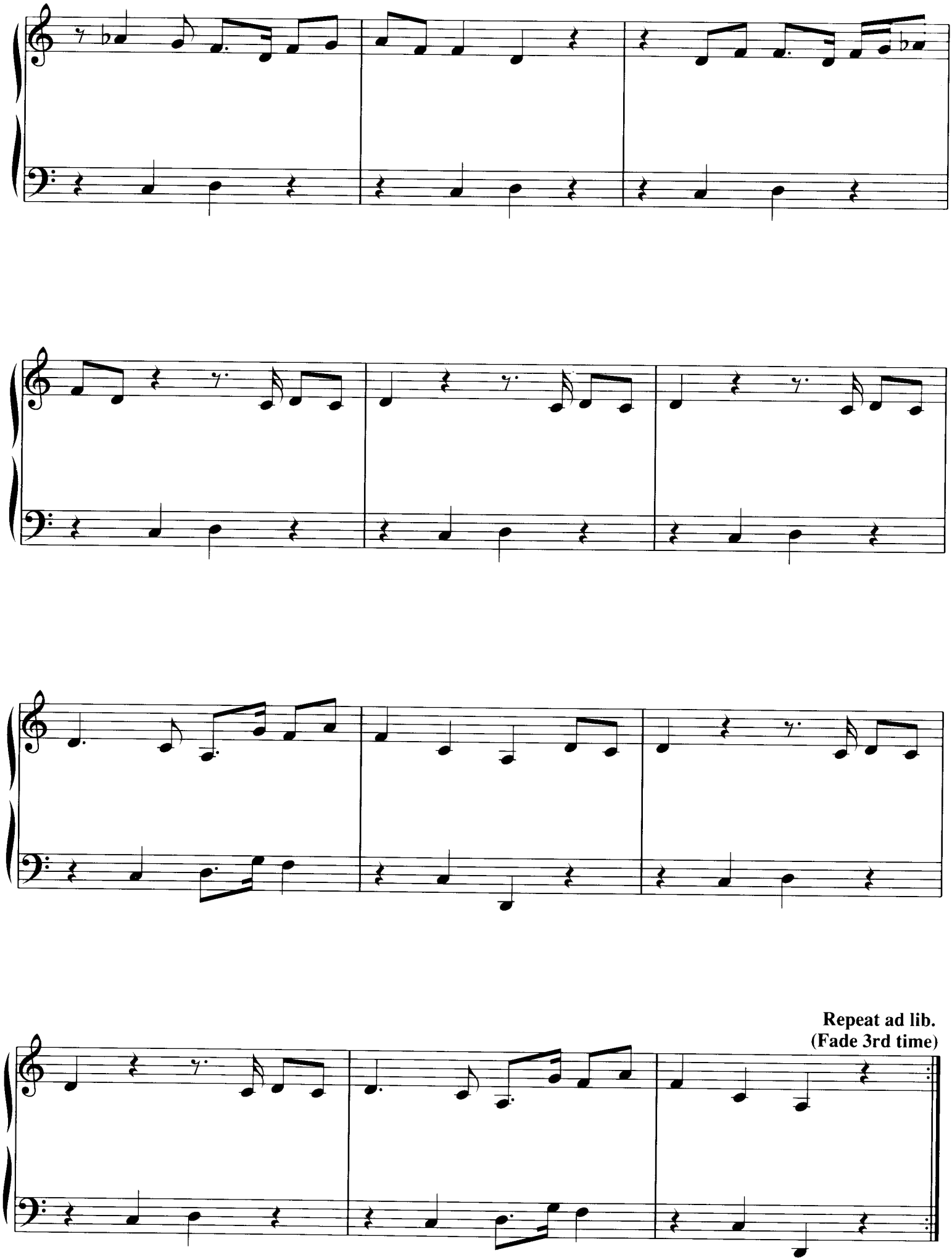

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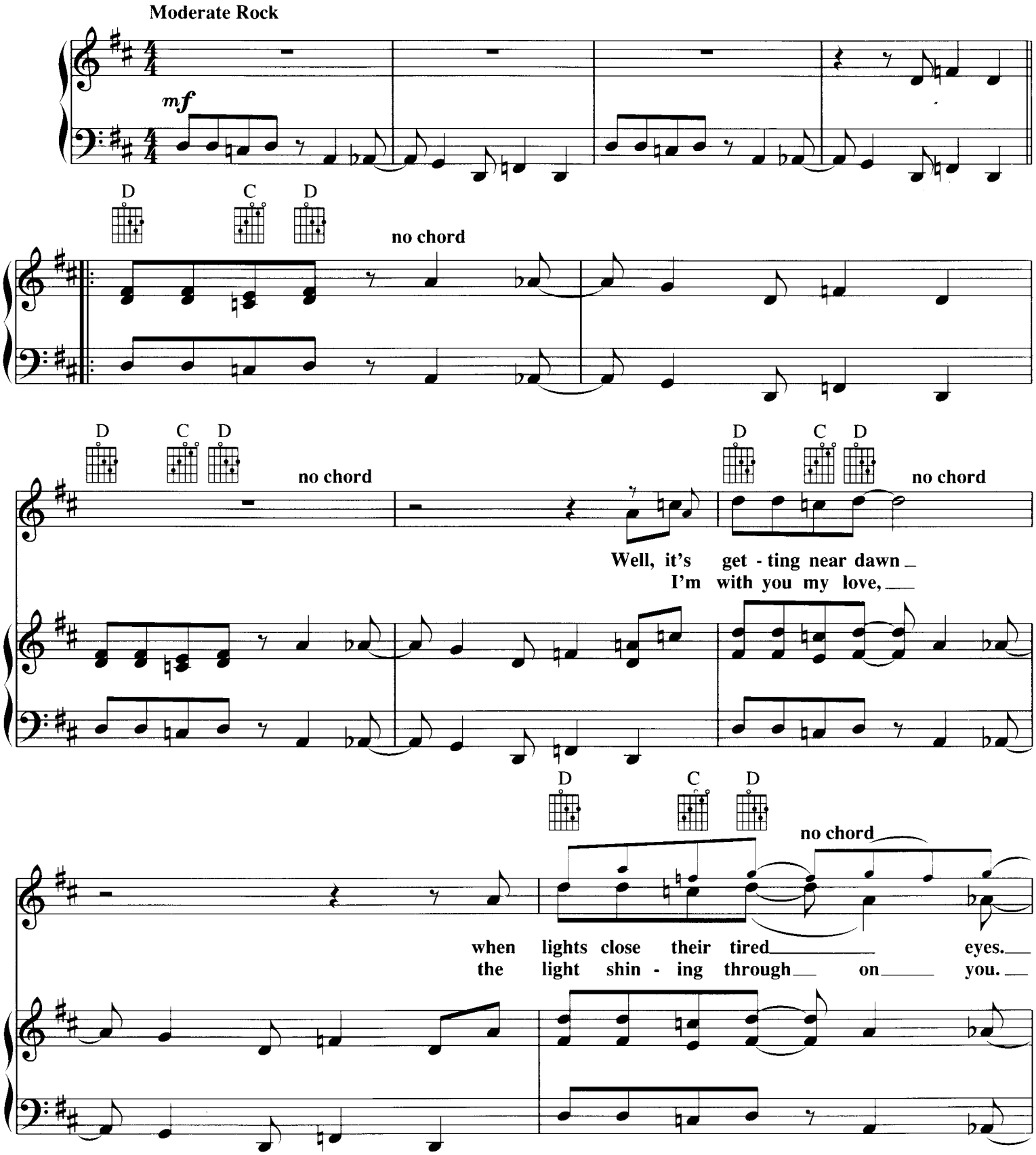

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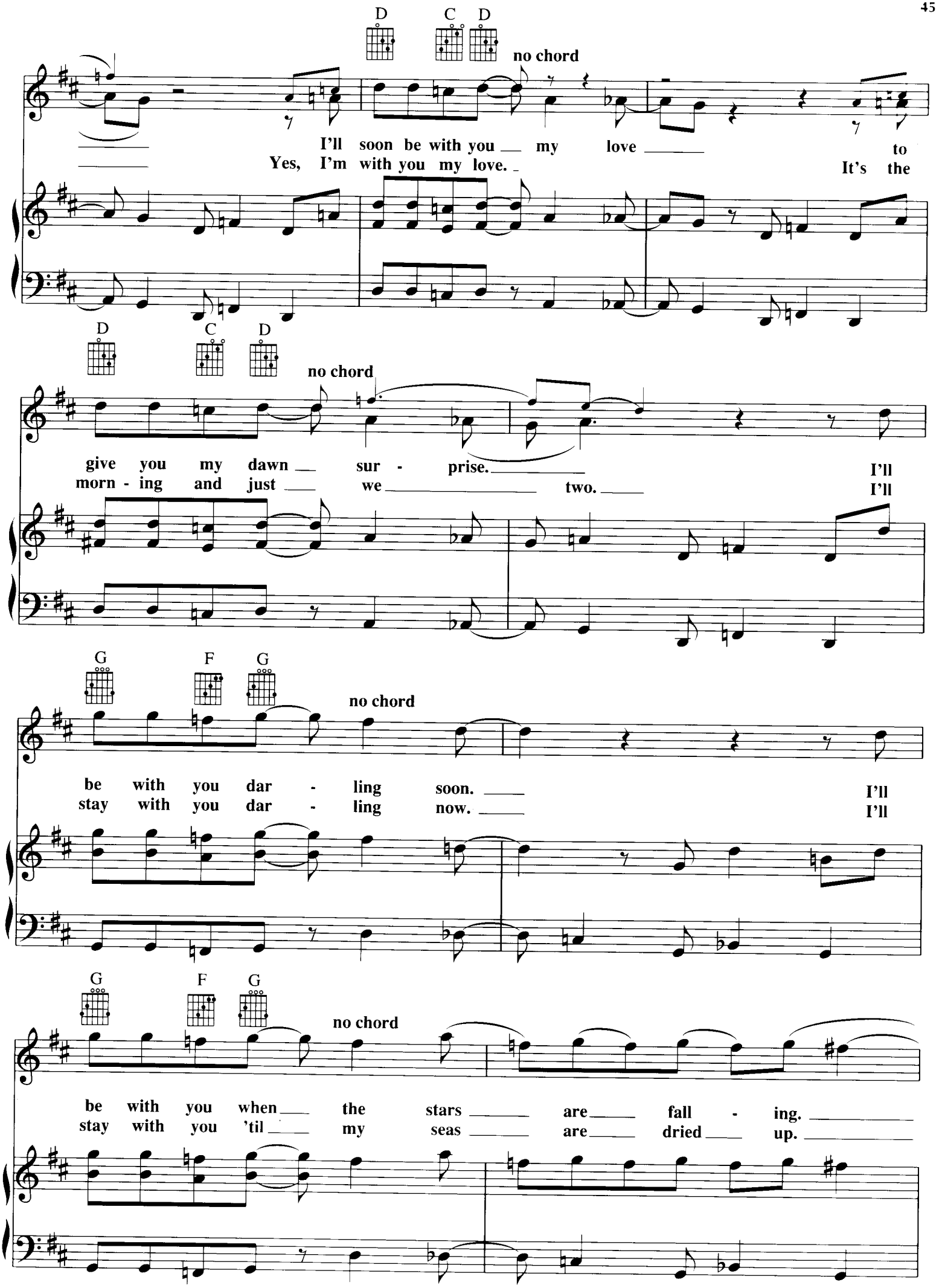

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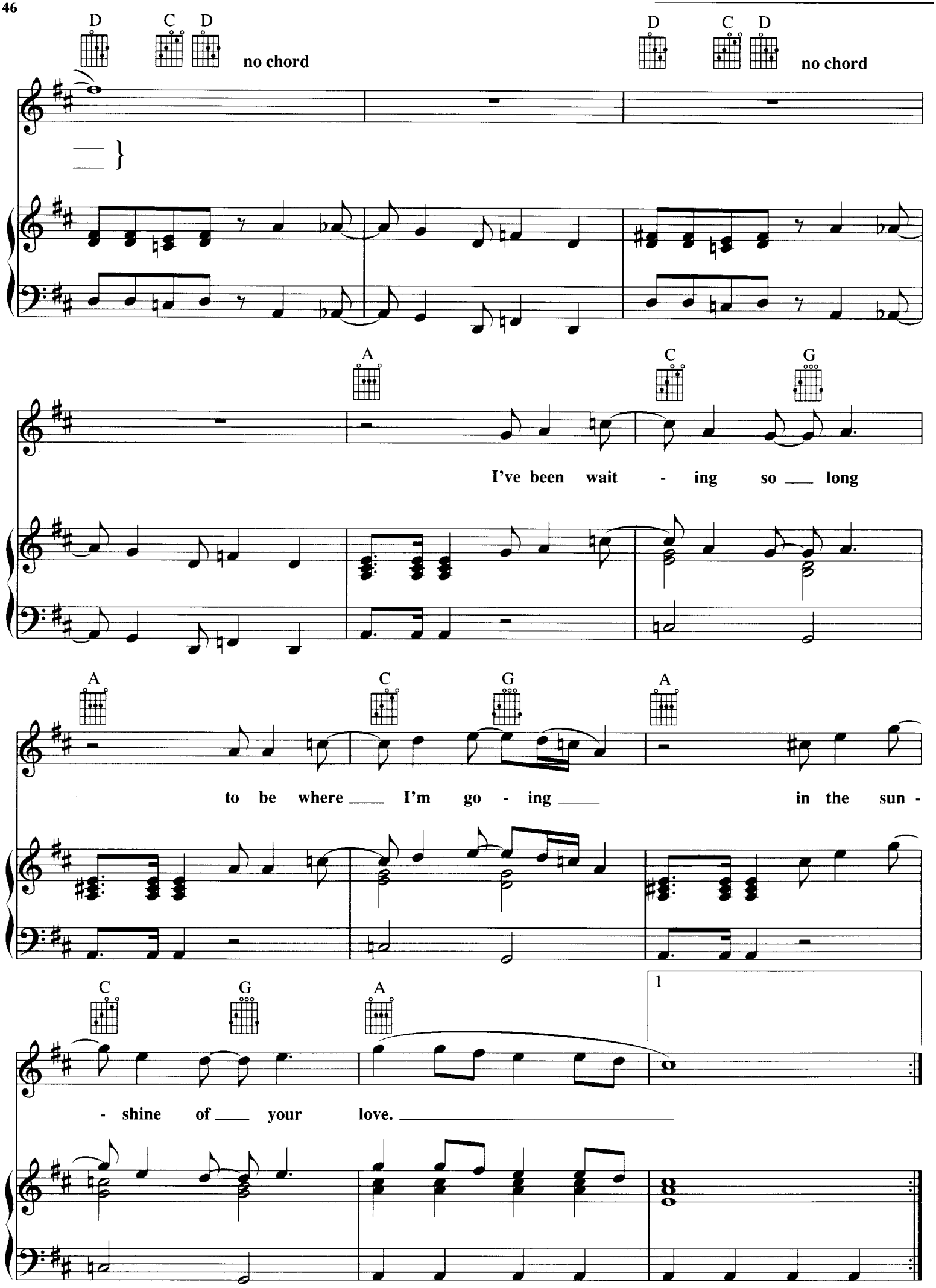

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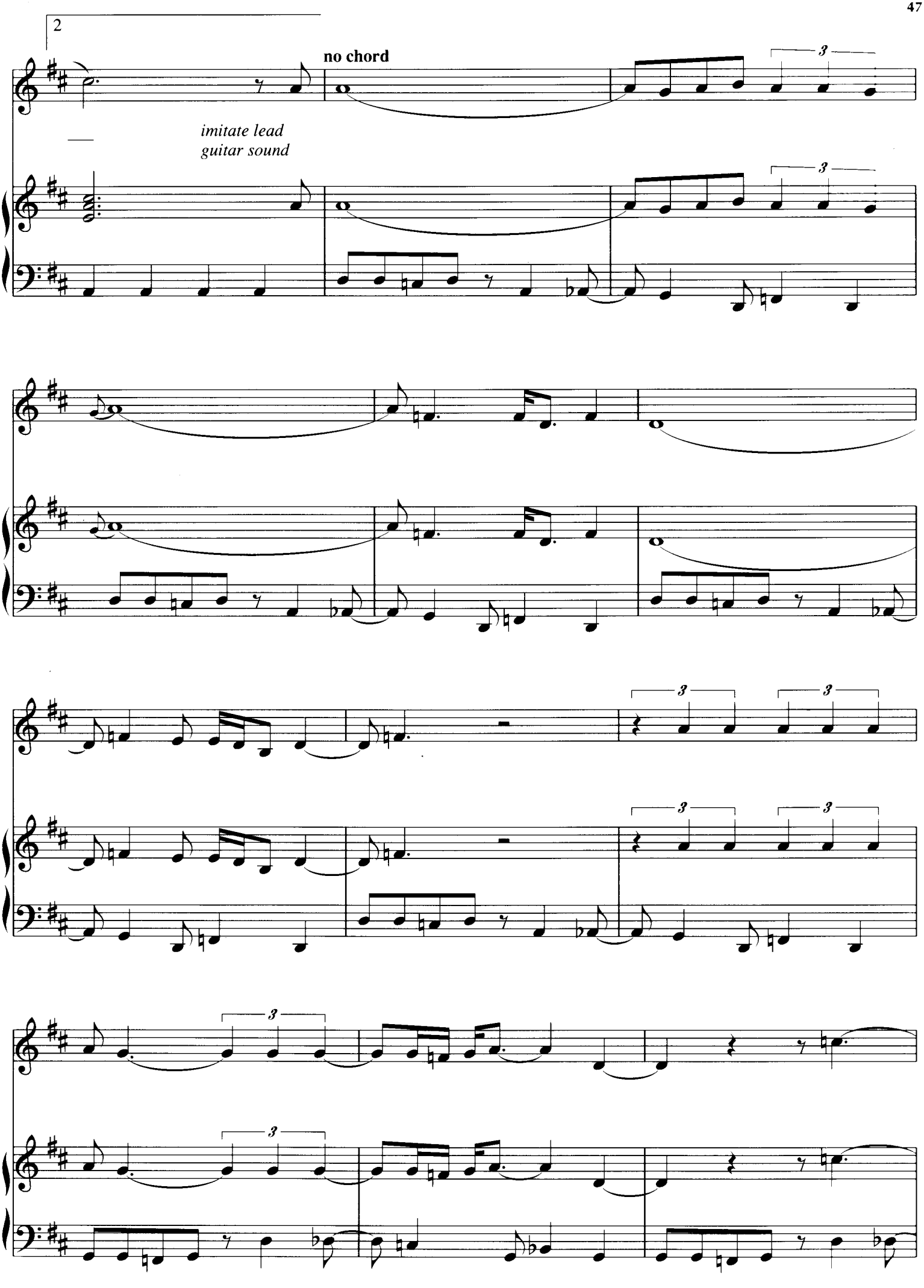

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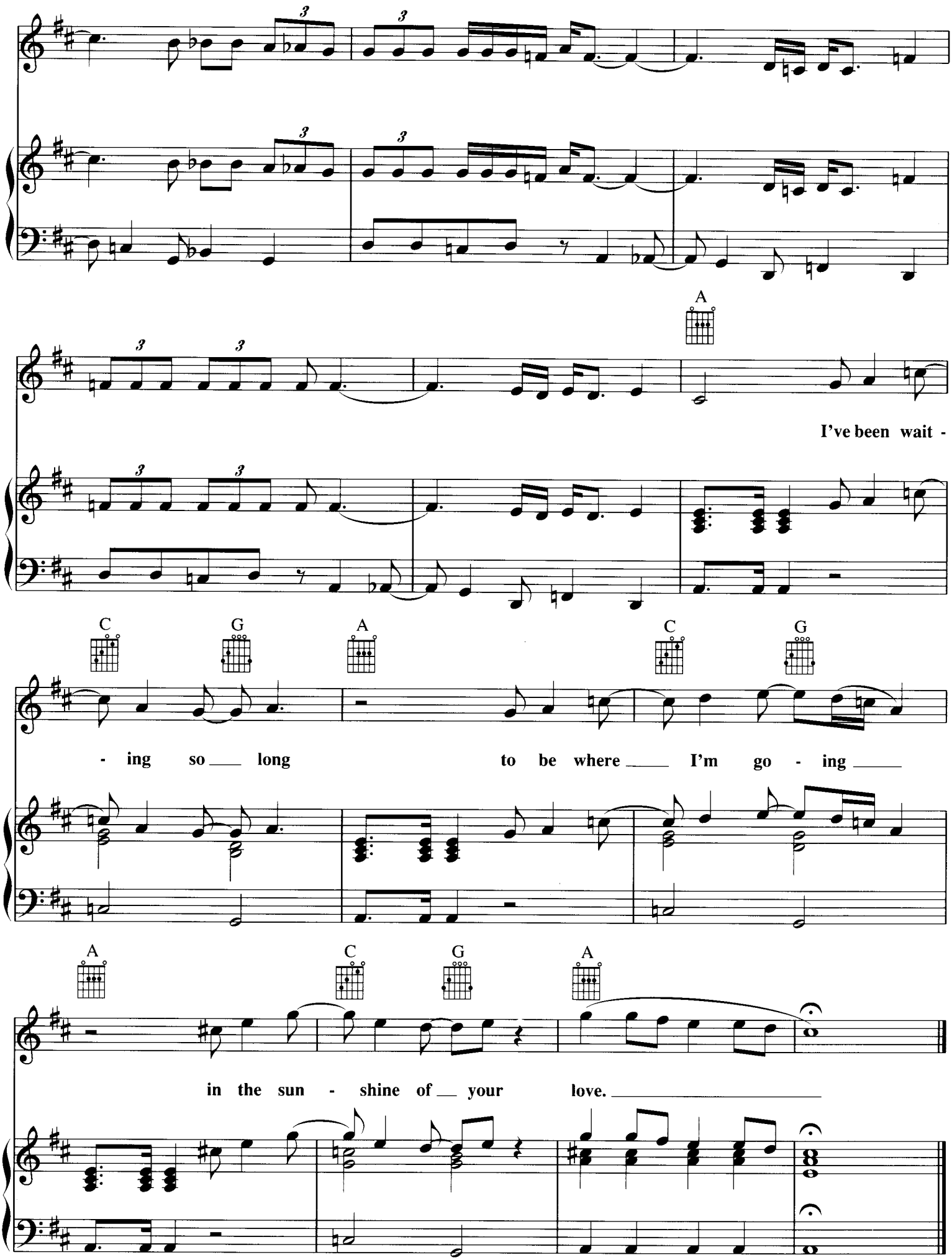

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