

The group's singing was improving. The choir had expanded and been joined by some good singers. Over the last year they had progressed from blues and simple gospel hymns to Schubert and Handel. There was talk of them singing Handel's Messiah at Christmas, and tonight they had another go at the Hallelujah chorus. Lucy knew she'd sung it better, many times, with David, but it still had the power to exalt. It is singer-proof, she thought. The most untrained school choir would enjoy doing it, and even if they did it badly, something sublime would get through.

They sang carefully at first, all eyes on Nelson, but as the tempo increased and hallelujah piled on hallelujah, Nelson loosened the reins a bit, and the singers began to lose themselves in the sound. It was the first time they'd sung the chorus right through and Lucy realised that Nelson, for once, was letting them just enjoy it unchecked.

After the last note there was a tiny moment of complete silence, everyone still lost in the glory of the music, reluctant to return to earth.