

CANON PERPETUUS

Legato

The violinist picked up the bow, tightening the screw on the end and testing the hair tautness with her thumb. Holding the instrument in her left hand, she then used her right to repeatedly draw the sweet, sticky, amber rosin in long strokes from the tip to the frog. Flicking the bow hair, she noticed a puff of powder -sufficient for playing - cling to the air above her, so then laid it down.

Next she lifted the violin, plucking the strings with the fingers of her left hand testing the tension and tuning – a habit honed from years of this ritual. The strings felt cool, the wood warm, and the weight of the instrument familiar. Preparation for practice had become a mechanical process, as ingrained and automated as getting out of bed in the mornings.

As she raised the violin, she was again reminded that a small crack in the neck of the instrument needed her attention. The violin had been damaged after an incident involving her family's lodgers and she made another mental note to address this. This mental note sat stacked on top of those previously made. Perhaps she should make a literal reminder instead; the preparations for her wedding were uppermost in her mind and memory lapses about things *not* to do with the day, were becoming common. Her parent's imminent move was another reason for her chaotic thoughts. Plans had been

progressing for over two years but it was only now – with her own approaching marriage – that her parents had committed to the move. She found herself wondering what it would be like to leave this apartment; its happy memories tempered with devastation.

Turning back to the violin, she lifted the bow and started tuning the instrument. She bounced the cold metal tuning iron against a chair and drew the bow across the A string. With her left hand she reached down and adjusted the appropriate peg, continuing her playing as she did so in order to correctly judge the sound. When the pitch was as it should be, she then moved the bow over the A and the E strings together to ascertain the interval between the two. The same principle was followed with the lower strings until the instrument sang in harmony.

Following the traumatic demise of her brother, the violinist found this practice strangely comforting. He hadn't appreciated her music when he'd been well, but in his disassociated fugue state of not quite dead, not quite alive, he seemed drawn to her playing; perhaps finding some comfort in the predictability of her evening recitals and maybe even some relief in the sensitive renditions. When the music flowed easily, she found solace in the idea that perhaps she had made his last days a little easier.

For this reason, practice now took place in his room. The furniture that had been removed during his illness had now been replaced and his bed stripped, the mattress removed, leaving only the timber base. The wooden frame of the couch was visible

through the torn fabric but – as it was rarely used – it remained in the corner where it had always sat. The violin was stored on the pockmarked writing desk and her timeworn mahogany music stand stood in front of his window. Sheet music covered the empty surface of the chest of drawers and this papered chaos reminded her of her brother's random fabric samples. She knew the acoustics might improve if the furniture was removed again - but these pieces had inhabited her healthy brother's space, held his weight, stored his precious belongings and now they seemed crucial evidence of life.

She warmed up with a few repeated scales and arpeggios and then started to play.

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col legno

The vibration down the gut strings and across the body of the violin made the insect stir. The phrasing and lyrical sound caused it to tremor and reposition itself. Having hatched two years earlier in the perfect conditions held within this wooden piece, it had created an internal web of tunnels and burrows filling itself with the wonderfully nutritious mix of cellulose and lignin.

The brother's fetid room had offered the perfect haven for the pregnant *Anobium punctatum* beetle to lay her precious eggs. After a rather frantic coupling on the sticky glass of an old picture frame that her male seemed particularly drawn to, she had a

plentiful selection of suitable places in which to lay her eggs. However, despite the wide choice of damaged furnishings, split wooden walls and broken floorboards, she had chosen a slight crack in the neck of this cossetted instrument as the birthplace for her babies. Twenty-five had hatched and they now called the violin their home.

Gradually, the little larvae had grown - filling their bellies daily with the insides of the wooden instrument. Some had gnawed their way through tunnels in the neck of the violin and others found sustenance in the wood surrounding the hollow body. Our particular insect - the one stirred by the music that day - was situated in the scroll in a deftly fashioned pupal chamber.

This day, its nerve endings twitched and a palpable sense of strength engulfed it. No longer a soft malleable form but instead, a foreign sensation of potent rigidity and purpose. Protrusions beneath its body wriggled in an incongruous manner and as time went by, the pulsating vibrato from the music seemed to charm and draw it forward in a decisive manner.

The wood that had protected it and provided sustenance for so long, seemed now to incarcerate it. It began to eat with renewed vigour, chewing its way through the decorative, ligneous volute. The chamber was now enlarged and the insect, sensing a way to break free from the claustrophobic tightness of its home, slowly chewed, digested,

defecated, chewed, digested, defecated ... repeating the process, over and over ... until it emerged.

Da Capo

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996 words