

## The Land of Forgotten Music – Jasmine, Year 4, NSW

I banged on the black and ivory keys in frustration. My heart was pounding so fiercely I thought it was going to leap out of my chest. My gaze drifted towards the window. I could see the neighbours' children playing happily in the sunshine, giggling and chatting away. My insides filled with envy. Why did I have to be stuck in here, practising this tedious piece? The ball of rage in the pit of my stomach threatened to explode. I could feel the tension building as my fingers flew angrily across the keys. Chopin's Etude rose to a crescendo, and suddenly, everything went black.

I could hear loud whispering coming from somewhere. My lids felt heavy, but I could just about see two blurry shadows towering over me. I tried to get up, but my body refused to move. As things started coming into focus, I could have sworn there were two violins looking at me. Before I could make sense of what was happening, the instruments took my hand, pulled me up and started walking.

As I looked around, confused, I saw old, crumbling, brick houses and abandoned shops. The air was stale. The paths were paved with broken pebbles that crunched under my feet. I saw a harp walk by, and then a dusty brass trumpet, with a forlorn look on his face. The violins holding my hands were now chatting quietly to a silver flute. Millions of thoughts raced through my mind. There was a hushed silence all around apart from a few soft, sorrowful tunes from a passing instrument. I felt queasy and uneasy as worry began to build. I desperately needed to find a way out of this place. A golden ray of sunlight through a small opening between some bushes caught my eye.

As I started to run across towards this possible way out, a big, caramel coloured cello blocked my path. In a deep soulful voice, he said, "At last, you have come, Katie. We have waited so long for you."

"What do you mean? How do you know my name? Where am I?" I had so many questions.

An old, mahogany viola approached us and shyly asked if we would be more comfortable in her café down the street. I was hesitant and scared, but I wanted answers and I wanted to go home so I nodded.

When we had settled into the red velvet armchairs in the café, with mugs of steaming hot chocolate, the cello and viola began to tell their story. I was in the Land of Forgotten Music and only people who truly loved classical music were able to enter this enchanted land. It used to be a happy place, filled with shiny instruments working together to produce the most magnificent music.

"But the land is slowly disappearing," said the viola, sadly. "Every time a child stops loving classical music, an instrument fades away."

My thoughts drifted back to the crumbling buildings and the look of sorrow on the faces of the instruments we had walked past. I noticed the cracks in the body of the cello. My face grew hot as I remembered the way I had treated my piano.

The cello and the viola told me how once upon a time, classical music filled the streets. The cello described the melodic symphony played by a full orchestra and the joy it brought. The viola chimed in and told us about her happy memories of being part of a string ensemble.

“The sweet melodies of Bach and Vivaldi could be heard from miles away,” she sighed happily.

“Why do children not want to learn classical music anymore?” I asked.

The cello explained that children now preferred pop bands and rock music. It was cooler to play drums and the electrical guitar and being in a rock band made you much more popular than being in a string ensemble.

“And sadly, everyone is starting to forget about us.”

I desperately wanted to help, but I did not know how.

“All you have to do is go back, play your favourite classical pieces and show your friends how beautiful they can be. Hopefully, they will fall in love with the music too.”

I sat back in my chair to take in everything I had just heard. I closed my eyes, and somewhere, a piano started to play. The exquisite tune swirled in the air, and wrapped around me, like a warm hug.

When I opened my eyes, I was sitting at my grand piano. I saw my brother’s race cars, neatly lined up beside the sofa. The delicious smell of dinner wafted through the air; the giggling children were still playing outside. I was home! I hugged my piano in relief and I started to play, but this time with joy in my heart.

I was standing on stage in a grand hall. The thick velvet curtains rose, and Miss Birmingham signalled for me to begin. I stroked the shiny keys and took a deep breath. My heart soared as I began to play. I felt so much love for the music. The heavenly melody went to the most gorgeous places and took me with it.

Before I knew it, I had finished my piece and everyone was clapping. I even heard in the audience, murmurs of, “That was the most beautiful piece of music I’ve ever heard! I want to learn to play like that too!”

I beamed with pride. Mission accomplished. Somewhere, I heard a little viola whisper, “Thank you, Katie.”