

Henry's Melody

Henry woke up at precisely 6:30 every morning. As the rest of the neighbourhood slept, he took a short walk. When he returned, he made two cups of coffee, one for him, and one for his wife. He sat down and ate his breakfast in silence as the steam from his wife's cup stopped rising. He trudged to the fridge, looking at the stack of prescriptions taped to it. Then he would play his violin.

Henry did this every day, Monday through Sunday. Somedays though, there was a change in the schedule, like doctor's appointments telling him the same thing, like the day his wife disappeared forever. Those days were different, they filled him with a sadness that made him feel empty inside. On those days he would play his violin for hours on end, the enchanting sound of the vibrating strings sending waves of relief through his entire body, like the fluttering wings of a fairy.

When he plays, he forgets everything else, all his problems, all his worries, and he is transported to a warmer place reminding him of when his wife was alive. Though it

has been over a year he's been alone, he still sleeps on his side of the bed, tracing his fingers in circles, trying to find the warmth that was once there. When he stops playing, it feels like a weight is crushed against his chest, snapping him back to reality.

At 1 o'clock, Henry packs his violin case. He usually brings a small fruit for a snack, but never eats it. Today is when he feels it, he knew he would feel it sometime, but he never imagined how heartbreaking it would feel. He steps outside, braced for the autumn wind.

He walks until he meets an entrance to a forest, that is hidden unless you have been shown the way. He strolls until he comes to the clearing where the old building stands alone, peeled paint revealing burnt bricks, windows missing glass and doorways that lead to darkness. The roof is covered with holes and pipes snake their way through the walls. Moss has grown on them, as well as dangling vines.

The area in which Henry stands used to be beautiful. He remembers it with a smile, it was the place where he met his wife. It was a party in 1940, all the high-schoolers had come and decked out the place, music blasting. Now, weeds and tall grass have taken over, making it impossible to see the tile flooring. In the middle of the small courtyard stands a single chair, rusted and broken. The wood that used to be the seat has risen into layers, destroyed by years of rainfall . He trudges over to the chair, laying his case down gently onto the ground. He sits down, hearing the familiar crunch of the wood beneath him.

“This chair is as old as me,” he jokes bittersweetly.

He bends down and unclips the case, revealing his violin, wincing as he straightens again. Reaching into his pocket, he pulls out the orange and places it near a patch of tall grass. He sits back and picks up his instrument, his hands moulded to the shape of it.

He looks down at his hands, grateful that they're stable today. Fixing the violin between his chin and neck, he picks up the bow, takes a deep breath, and begins to play. The melancholy melody glides through the silence. He glances to the grass, then to the vines waving on the brick wall, his eyes darting to and fro. He feels the familiar hum of excitement tremble in his gut, like this was his first time here.

From the corner of his eye, he sees it. The faint glimmer that one would mistake for a glint of sunlight, but Henry knew better. He starts to see the glimmers all over, and the rustles of the grass.

They had come.

A slight smile tickles across his face as he remains still, playing his violin. From his peripheral vision, he sees the first fairy come up to the orange, its black eyes hungry for the sweet taste of it. The fairy snaps its fingers, and the orange is surrounded by a yellow glow, and levitates off the ground. The fairy smiles mischievously and slips

behind the grass, the orange trailing along behind it as the other fairies start to appear.

Henry had seen the fairies before. It was a week before his wife passed and he was on his usual morning walk when he felt a tug on his ear. Curious, he followed the direction of the tugging, confused by the humming sound he couldn't swat away. Soon enough he was led to the courtyard, and had been playing for the fairy folk ever since.

He always makes sure to pack a fruit, as fairies have a keen taste for them. Henry has learned many things about fairies. He once called them pixies, which aggravated them very much. They said that pixies have a full royal court with a King and Queen, and are quite the mean pranksters, while fairies tend to live in garden towns, and are more mischievous. They are rarely seen by humans, only to those who are worthy, Henry learned. He spends much time talking to them, though it is mainly one sided, even though fairies are mischievous they are also shy creatures, their pointed ears perked in curiosity.

All too soon, Henry's melody finishes and as the last note drifts in the air, a somber wind blows, scattering old leaves across the courtyard where the fairies stand.

As the last note becomes inaudible, Henry wears a sad smile.

“My friends,” he begins. “I’m afraid my time has come.” He takes a deep breath. “This was my last time playing for you.”

Hushed tones of high-pitched concern ripples through the crowd of fairies. Henry doesn't know what else to say. He had been to many doctors appointments, telling him that his immune system had been failing for some time. Henry sits there, his violin straddled between his legs, strumming the hairs of the bow reluctantly. He thinks of how much he would miss playing, but he believes he will see his wife again, he was starting to forget her, and that made him very angry with himself.

“ It has been a pleasure playing for you,” he said sadly as he got up to leave. He was

starting to pack up his violin when he heard a call from behind.

“Wait!”

Henry turns around and sees a male fairy about the size of his index finger.

“You don’t have to stop playing for us,” the fairy says. Henry chuckles wistfully.

“I’m not sure you understand, little one,” he responds. “ My time here...” he gestures around him. “... is up”

The fairy stands looking up at him.

“You can come with us. We want to keep hearing you play,” he offers, motioning to the colony of fairies around him. Henry hesitates.

“ That’s alluring, but I wish to see my wife again.”

“Your wife?” The fairy asks. Henry nods in grief.

The fairy looks behind him. He gestures quietly to the crowd and they part. A young beautiful fairy, wearing a flower petal wrapped around her, pink wings glittering in the sunlight, walks toward him.

Something about this fairy seems strangely familiar. Suddenly, it hit him. For a moment, Henry stands there, in denial. It can't be her. He drops to his knees, ignoring the jolt of pain.

“Christianna, ” he whispers, choking back tears. “Is that really you?”

“It is. It's me Henry,” she replies, smiling. Suddenly he remembers he's seen her before, but not really seen her. When he played he would see her smiling, sometimes swinging from a vine. He would see her sitting cross-legged, listening in amazement, but he never really saw her... until now.

“Chrissy, oh my God...” he says in shock. Memories flood his mind of her standing across the dance floor, twirling her gorgeous brunette hair.

Her cheeks flush red as she looks at him passionately. Henry looks up at the fairy who had made the offer and smiles. He was finally with his wife again, and she was more beautiful than he had ever remembered her to be.

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The police officer was searching the woods for a reported missing man. Pushing aside a branch, he walks into a clearing, to an abandoned courtyard, with no signs of life other than the overgrown vegetation. In the middle, stood a chair.

And on the chair, along with a neatly-folded stack of clothes, was a violin.