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### The Mahogany Violin

Riding with my friends in their car I always wondered how they knew every song on the radio. I hated the feeling of being left out, but thinking back I only listened to classical music. I can remember my mom laying me down when I was crying and putting on this inspiring yet somber sound. The contrast between the violins and cellos made me picture angels and demons fighting in a glorious battle, and it was so beautiful. Most people could not see such attractiveness in classical music. They thought it was dull or for an older audience, but I appreciated it. My passion grew and stayed with me. When the time came I wanted to play one of the five instruments that I heard in the orchestra; the cello was my favorite. It was dark and solemn, yet could sound warm, brilliant, and pure. I wanted to learn the cello; however, my heart lead me to choose the violin. My experience playing the violin was amazing.

It was the week after everyone decided what instruments they wanted to play that I saw my first violin. I remember being so surprised. The violin was so small compared to the cello. The sound too sweet, merry, and elegant. I liked the dark characters that the cello possessed, but the color was so beautiful. Compared to everyone else's, my violin was a dark mahogany—straight-grained wood and dim reddish-brown.

Learning the violin was hard. I felt discouraged because every time I practiced, the notes I played seem to sound off-key. I honestly wanted to quit at that point. Luckily my teacher was paying attention. She came over and told me to play, she looked at my sheet, and automatically

figured-out that I was given viola music instead of violin. She went to her file cabinet and switched my sheet music, and then she gestured for me to play again. This time I nailed it. I was glad that I did not quit because of a difficult obstacle. That was my first time I felt a bond with my violin. I knew that we would be together for a long time.

Every day when school ended, the first thing I did when I got home was practice. Sometimes it would be for thirty minutes, but if I got lost in my music I could play for hours. The longer I practiced the more I noticed that I had a strong connection with my violin. I sensed all my emotions resonating from it: my love, my hate, and my passion. It was strange that my mom could tell what kind of mood I was in when she heard me playing. I knew she was so happy. Playing the violin gave her hope that I would stay out of trouble. She once told me that the reason she made me listen to classical music was because it used to help her stay positive and eventually gave her the mindset to change her life. She saw the same thing for me.

My years of elementary school were amazing. The orchestra allowed me to create lots of memories, like all the performances we had and how I use to be so scared. I recall my first concert. The bright lights on my face, it being so dark where the audience was, knowing they were looking at us, and the sensation I felt when my bow was on the string— just waiting to hear if the first note I played would be on key. Performing on stage was so frightening, but when we started to play all the fear disappeared. Our instruments give us courage and let us know we are not alone. We need one another. Together in one motion, one sound, and one accord. This bond is incredible. When everyone in the orchestra has the same experience that is when you will hear the greatest harmonies and see musicians moving like they are dancing with their instruments.

It was my second year of middle school when my mom decided to put me in private lessons, the music was too easy in orchestra. I was so thankful that she did it because I

discovered a whole new world of techniques and different styles of music. The first thing I picked up on was vibrato. When my instructor played, he emphasized some notes different by changing the pitch—moving his fingers up and down to create a consisting pulsation. The technique was difficult to learn, but in the end, it allowed me to portray more emotions in whatever musical piece I was playing. If I had a more vivid or lively piece, I would not use as much, but if it was slow and romantic my fingers wiggled fast. Just imagine an opera singer using lots of vibrato in a high-pitched tone. It allowed me to make the music own.

I will never forget the day my orchestra teacher pulled me to the side to tell me I was going to play in the state orchestra. The organization was put together with all high school students from ninth grade to twelfth grade. It was competitive, but the scary part was auditioning for our chairs. We had to play all of our scales and arpeggios, perform the prepared etude, and sight-read sheet music. When it was my time to audition my heart beat so fast. I tried to raise the stand so the judges could not see my face, but the stand was broken. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes, and asked my violin to give me strength. All I could think about was how my violin allowed me to overcome obstacles in the past and that I never gave up. I pictured an empty room and imagined that I was filling it with music. The sound I created was like angels singing—perfect pitch and just the right amount of vibrato. When the fast notes came I played them gracefully, and the low notes I emphasized when I had a chance. I played deep within my heart. After my audition, the judges gave me a critique. They told me that I had one of the best performances because I shared my emotions through my violin and it was genuine.

Fives year have gone by since I last played my violin. After graduation, I did not pursue a career as a musician. It was hard to keep playing when I was busy with work and school, but I never took my violin for granted. I was grateful that it kept me out of trouble, allowed me to

meet so many people, and made my mom proud of me. Now and then when I happen to hear classical music I go back to time when I use to ride in my friend's car and smile that I did not know the songs on the radio.