



As Published in:
ISSUE 4

Thin Skin

SHOWCASING OLDER WRITERS

CATEGORIES

Short Stories

FLASH FICTION

<https://thin-skin.com/flash-fiction/the-violin/>

Page 1 of 4



The Violin

by Marc Simon

Every night at sunset, violin music played from the abandoned low-rise apartment building at the end of our cul-de-sac. It was a solo violin, and it seemed that as the music swelled and dipped, the patchy clouds swelled and dipped in rhythm.

Of course, we were curious. The afternoon after we heard the music a group of us—myself, Tina, Tina's boyfriend Max, and two other couples, the Campbells and the Vaughns—decided to investigate the building. I should mention, we're all that's left in the neighborhood since the foreclosure epidemic. We called ourselves the survivors. Truth was, we couldn't afford to go anywhere else.

It felt eerie inside the empty building. Kind of scary like you'd expect some vagrant or lunatic to jump out at you any second from behind a wall. Chunks of concrete and piles of stained, broken wallboard littered the floor. The closet doors were off their hinges and strings of wiring hung from the bulbless overhead fixtures. We had to watch our step around the broken window glass.

Max kept shouting hello, but all that came back was his echo. There were no signs that anybody had ever lived there—no discarded furniture, no clothing, no appliances, not even any graffiti. Just some PCV piping, pink insulation, and rat droppings. Tina tugged at Max's shoulder, pulling him toward the outside. Our footsteps crunched on the cracked tile floor as we left.

The next night, the violin music began again. It sounded familiar, but I couldn't place it. My husband Joe, who'd been confined to a wheelchair since our motorcycle accident, said it was the theme music from the movie *Schindler's List*. It brought a lump to my throat. I looked over at Tina. Her arm was looped around Max's waist. She's twice divorced and tough as nails. Her eyeliner ran down her face.

After the accident, Joe and I went through our troubles. He told me it wasn't just his legs that were useless. It was pretty much everything else. We were

coming home from the beach that night. I was on the back of the cycle when we were hit from the rear by a six-passenger golf cart overloaded with teenagers. I lucked out with just a dislocated elbow. The survivor's guilt came later. It never goes away. Joe has told me to get over it, it wasn't your fault, it happened.

A few days later the neighbors came to our house, all excited. They wanted to call the newspaper and the TV stations, tell them all about it, but I convinced them not to. Why tell the world? Why not keep this miracle for ourselves? Maybe the music was a reward for riding it out in the neighborhood. A blessing. We promised each other—no outsiders.

The next night, the setting sun pasted a pastel palette against the sky. The violin music began again, this time a waltz. I think it was The Blue Danube. Tina and Max, the Vaughns and the Campbells danced and twirled on the concrete driveway, like it was Vienna in the sub-tropics. Joe's eyes were closed. It must have been too painful to watch. Or maybe he was giving himself over to the music. When Max asked me to dance, I declined, afraid of offending my husband, afraid to touch another man's hand for what I might feel. Max didn't press me on it. He must have understood.

Two nights later, around sunset, a storm blew in. The dog shook so much it looked as if his tail was plugged into an outlet. Storms like this make me nervous, and God knows why, sexually aroused. I called for Joe to come into the bedroom and let me love him.

He didn't answer, which wasn't like him. I went from room to room with no sign of him until I discovered the front door was wide open and the wind and the rain were whipping in. I grabbed an umbrella and started running up and down the street, shoeless, calling his name against the thunder.

I found him parked at the cul-de-sac, in front of the abandoned building. The violin played Ave Maria. The purity of it stunned me. I came around in front of Joe. The rain had flattened his hair against his forehead. His shirt was unbuttoned and the rain was beading up over his heart tattoo. He rolled a set of rosary beads back and forth in his hands.

I touched his shoulder. "Joe? Honey?"

He pressed his forearms against the arms of the wheelchair so hard I could see strands of muscle twitch with the effort. A second late he rose half way

out of the chair but just as quickly he fell forward. He twisted his neck and shoulders until he ended up on his back. Blood ran down the side of his nose, and the way his arms were splayed out, all I could think of was Christ on the Cross. I knelt beside him and turned my face up to the sky. Rain mixed with my tears.

We stayed that way until the rain stopped. The violin played on and on.

Marc Simon's short fiction has appeared in over fifteen literary magazines. Five of his one-act plays have been winners in new works contests. His debut novel, *The Leap Year Boy*, was published in December 2012. His novella, *According to Isaac*, is now published on Amazon.com.

See more at <https://marcsimonwriter.com>

© 2025 Thin Skin