

THE FORSAKEN MELODY

I never thought I would ever come back here. It's been a while since I haven't been back in town. I took the exact same bus that, decades ago, drove me back home from school. I effortlessly broke the lock of the garden gate. We always struggled to open this door, its mechanism had been replaced many times but rust kept growing inside. The stone path is covered in mud and fallen leaves, which left me no choice but to pass under the apple tree. We weren't allowed to go under that tree, but since nothing will ever grow from it anymore, I guess it's okay for this time. Looking at these forlorn trees reminds me of her.

Here I stand awkwardly on the threshold. I haven't been standing here for decades. I was then just a boy leaving my home in order to become the composer I now am. I knew she lied encouraging me, no smile could have fooled me. Not even I thought I could make it, but here I am. I always replied to those asking why I didn't come back saying that I had no time to do so. But now that time has passed far beyond any return, I must confess that I was afraid. I've been gone for far too long, and I knew that she wouldn't even recognise me. It may sound funny, but I'm now afraid I am the one that won't recognise a thing. After holding the handle for far too long, I spotted a neighbor from the other side of the road. Embarrassed, since he must have seen me standing for an eternity on the threshold, I decided to finally open the door.

Once inside, it's just as I imagined it would be, dusty and gloomy. I barely recognise my living room, and I'm quite convinced that this cupboard wasn't here either. It smells like old people, Like the one you can smell when visiting your grandparents. There's a missing pillow on the couch and the seat is definitively closer to the television. I open the windows in order to ventilate the dust that flies with each of my steps. While doing so, I struggled with a weird feeling. I know that sound, the one of the wood from the blind creaking. I'm not the one that used to open this window. After a bit of cleaning, it still doesn't completely feel like home. There's something missing.

Shortly after I left, she was diagnosed with alzheimer. I was so afraid things wouldn't be the same I didn't come back. Would she even have remembered my name?

I didn't remember that this window was overlooking the apple tree. It looks better from this angle. While going upstairs, I once again noticed a sound I recognised. The wood of the stairs creaking under my feet on the 4th step, it sounds exactly as I remember. I had no idea I could remember it. The sunset shining through the blind makes it look less gloomy upstairs. Yet, all I see are closed doors. It's so quiet it looks like everyone is sleeping. Intuitively, I walk on tiptoe to make as little noise as possible. It's so quiet here there's no car nor crowd, only the birds chirping, the house creaking and the wind blowing. I didn't notice the birds earlier.

Instinctively, I head directly toward my bedroom. I grasp the handle but the door won't open. Maybe it's locked, but I don't want to force it. I bend down in order to look through the keyhole, and to my surprise, it looks just as I remember it. It's a bit dustier, but it seems like no one has come here since I left. There's something lying on my bed. It's a small red thing I can't see very well through the keyhole. It's barely the size of a small fruit. I didn't place it there, maybe it was her?

She was caring, as much with her children as with her garden. I guess that, somehow, her garden was a way to keep watching and caring about something when we weren't there. I thought that, by the time I would come back here, I would have forgotten her, but it seems I didn't.

Yet I did forget what this red thing is. How much time has it been lying still? It puzzles me. I want to know. But I know what it implies. If my door is locked, the key must be in her room. It's the one place where I didn't want to go. I didn't even dare to look at her door once. But I know myself, and I must find an answer. In a dash, breathless, I enter her room and grab the keys where they've always been. I tried not to see, but I saw that it did not remain preserved in time as mine did. White shrouds envelop most of her room.

Here I stand awkwardly, once again, on the threshold of a door. But this time I'm quite excited somehow. It reminds me of how it felt while coming back home after school and getting that intimacy back in my room, a deliverance compelled with the great pleasure that comes along getting back to your true self at home.

Once the door opened, I realize how much of my life this room testifies. It compiles lots of artifacts from various times that tell my childhood. Yet, there's one story I can't remember, the one from the red thing. It lies here, on my sofa, but I have no clue on what it could be. As I approach, I realize that it's the shape of a small wooden box. After I opened the window on my way, I sat by its side and grabbed it. As the wind comes in my room, I smell that it's full of her nose-taking perfume, even years after. When I finally dare to open it, a short music plays. I don't remember this music box, but I do know this melody. It looks a lot like the one I composed years ago for the philharmonic orchestra. What is this song? Where does it come from? Since she had no memory left, who placed it here? Could it be her?

I knew I wouldn't get those answers, but instead I understood how, even though I left decades ago, those times never left. As tears rolled down, music played and wind came in, I felt those forsaken times. Every single memory I have, even though I can't put all of them into words, lies here within and orchestrate as a symphony.

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