

The Power of the Unconscious

The lively atmosphere of the concert hall intensifying with every fine sound produced by the professional orchestra was hardly to be described by words. To the whole of the community collected in that space, the music felt like a smile on a rainy day, like a moment of trust shared by the closest of friends.

The intensity of the lingering, though ever-changing harmonies and vibrations, captured their attention in an instant, creating an intoxicating impression of heavenly composure. The audience listened with bated breath as the musicians made their way through the concerto, the passion in their interpretation bringing the musicality to a whole new level.

At the very moment every soul in the hall was convinced that the extraordinary performance was not possible to become any better, something in the air began to change. At first, it was subtle. Only classically trained musicians could spot that what once was marvellous art had in a matter of seconds disintegrated into chaos.

If anyone were to trace the origin of the turmoil, they would most certainly discover the trembling hands of the soloist. The violinist had been trying to overcome a strange sensation of disarray that emerged out of nowhere and sent shivers down his spine.

Despite Victor's feeble attempts to compose himself, something just did not feel right as he struggled to play through the final progression of arpeggios at the very end of the concerto. The orchestra was beginning to sound confused, as if the conductor had disappeared, though he was still standing on his podium, the baton in his hands doing its best to put everything back in order.

Victor continued to play in a manner that no longer resembled the original piece of music, the frightening realisation of how badly he shredded the finale of one of the most iconic violin concertos in the whole world striking him like a bolt of lightning. He felt as if he had blacked out for a minute, his mind torpid once he came back to his senses.

The last few bars seemed like an explosion of something that could only be labelled as noise, no longer music. Victor felt swallowed by the sudden

uneasiness that clouded his senses, not allowing him to make out a clear thought.

Right after the concert officially ended, he rushed down the stairs and out of the building, still not being able to put his mind to ease, anxiously clutching the handle of his violin case.

“Vic! Vic, wait!” he heard a voice calling to him in the distance. He stopped his hurried steps, shook his head and turned around to face Joshua, an old friend of his, whom he had invited to see him perform tonight. “What happened?”

“I... I don’t... I can’t remember,” Victor uttered, flustered. “I messed up. But I don’t know how or why that happened.” He couldn’t help but sigh at his own incompetence. “Sorry for leaving... I don’t know what’s gotten into me.”

“There’s been a slight... error.” *To put it lightly.* “But, hey, you’re not a robot, man; it’s human to make mistakes.” Despite his words sounding comforting and calm, Joshua’s gaze held worry.

As Victor failed to respond, still lost within his internal struggle, Joshua tried to lighten the mood. “Look, it’s not like the higher-ups are going to be too sharp about it, right?”

“No. Maybe yes. I don’t know... But you don’t get it – I don’t care about the consequences.” He wasn’t sure if he should voice the thought that seemed to be hammering into his skull until it made his head burst into pain. *He was not feeling himself.*

“What’s the matter then?” A concerned frown settled on Joshua’s face.

“I have no idea.” Yet another failed attempt to escape the daze. “There’s just... *something* there. I’m sorry, Josh. I know I promised you dinner, but...”

“It’s okay. Just go home and get some rest. We can go some other time.”

“I’m so sorry...” He was.

The two of them parted, but not before Joshua broke the silence for one last time. “Victor?”

“Yeah?”

“For what it’s worth, I do think you were wonderful tonight.”

Thirty-five minutes after leaving the concert hall, Victor was still restless. He was not feeling very optimistic. His brain seemed to be overheating from the constant flow of his scrambled thoughts as he was plodding through the streets downtown. He endeavoured to push the unflagging frustration out of his mind, only to experience quite the opposite – nerve-wracking tension had now accumulated within the whole sense of his existence.

He felt like screaming, yelling, crying, whimpering, howling, anything that would allow him to let go of the dismay taking over him.

He was now running, feeling the cold of the autumn night hit his head with the force of the truculent wind, stinging his cheeks and making his dark hair dance in different directions. He kept sprinting, not for a second slowing down his untamed, furious pace.

To other citizens strolling down the streets he must have looked like a madman. People were cautiously avoiding him, not wanting to have anything to do with such a feral creature, seemingly ready to be devoured by his own psyche.

He did not care what any of them thought of him – he needed it. He needed the release. He needed to feel in control. He needed to shake off the burden of a mind in a perfect instance of unrest.

Victor only noticed he was feeling dead on his feet when he stopped at the front door of his house. He didn’t even manage to open it as his limbs were more than ready to give up and seek relief in a moment of malfunction, getting completely numb and letting him drop to the ground like a wounded doe. His breathing was flat and heavy, as if he had run a marathon, which he probably had in a sense.

He was stunned to realise that even having pushed himself to the extremes of his physical abilities had not in the slightest helped to lift his spirit. On the contrary, a new sensation forced him to his feet, completely careless to the fatigue of his body. Victor was not able to comprehend what was happening to him, but he felt that his violin was no longer on him, spotting the glimpse of its case jerked open down the porch stairs.

The dreadful imprint of the unfamiliar angst embracing his sinking heart was beginning to subside until vanishing completely. Little did he know that what

had been in control of his mind now stood tall not more than three metres from him, tilting its head in curiosity.

He suddenly flinched, hearing a crack as the silhouette stepped directly onto the fingerboard of the violin, crushing the instrument into two halves. He glanced at the figure, albeit very briefly, for what he saw made his whole body tremor in disbelief.

“This can’t be...” he cried, refusing to take in the irrationality, the impossible materialising right before his eyes. His heart was palpating with dread. “No way...”

Victor hesitantly lifted his gaze again to meet the eyes of the figure, the... *thing* looking back at him.

Staring in the eyes of a flawless replica of him, into his own irises, he was left completely dumbfounded. He couldn’t move a muscle to defend himself as hands identical to his own elevated him by his neck, slamming him against the door with unearthly force.

Victor was dazed and helpless as the calloused fingers gripping tightly at his neck reduced his intake of oxygen more quickly than anyone would expect. His eyes went wide as he repeatedly failed to inhale. His vision was becoming a blur.

Was he dying? Most certainly. Was he able to get away? Most certainly not. Everything was spinning and he could hardly understand anything happening outside of his mind.

After what seemed like eternity, he felt his body abruptly drop to the ground, but still alive as opposed to anticipated.

“Are you okay?”

He was inhaling heavily, the stuffy air almost never being enough to fill the entirety of his lungs. It was extremely demanding for him to force his eyelids to open, but when he did, relief began to settle in his tense torso, allowing him to finally manage a deep breath.

“Are you okay?”

The voice finally got across to him. He stared at Joshua who had both of his hands tightly wrapped around a bent violin bow, half of it stained with a thick black mass slowly dripping to the concrete of the porch. The now lifeless imitation of Victor lay motionless by his feet, the body slowly dissipating, gradually turning into a maze of soot.

Victor shook his head, perplexed.

Joshua seemed to be losing it, his dark irises brimming with distress. “What on earth was that? I just came to check if you were alright but you... you...” Now, Joshua seemed to be *completely* losing it. “What... What the... What was all that?” He basically screamed, the pitch of his voice going up with every syllable.

“I guess he’s gone then...” Victor pondered absentmindedly. Even though he was the last person to know what any of that meant, he couldn’t help but feel as if a large weight was lifted from his chest. Somewhere in the back of his mind he was certain it would never return.

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