

## Lone Violin

*Jonathan Gallagher*

Somewhere in south-west Ireland I stopped. The driving had been long and hard, and I needed a rest. As I opened the door, I heard music. Coming from the white-washed building across the square.

A lone violin sweeping up and down the strings, a pure haunting melody that captured my mind. Like the song of the sirens, I was entranced and stood there, frozen as I listened to the play of the notes. An immensely moving piece, played with the feeling that only the Celts can give.

Slowly I walked over. I looked inside—a pub! I had no reason to be there, but I entered anyway. Just to listen. On a tiny stage a thin girl with eyes downcast played, not noticing who was listening or not. A simple yet profound melody that seemed to capture all the pathos of the world.

When the echoes of the last note died away, I was the only one who clapped. She looked up surprised in my direction. And in those eyes I saw nothing but pain and grief.

She came over. “Thanks for the applause. No one else bothers. They know me.” She averted her eyes.

“You play beautifully—expressively...” What do you say? How do you say it? “Yet it seems so tragic, so terribly sad.”

She nodded. “Sadness is the only beauty left.”

I wondered why. But it’s hardly appropriate to ask a perfect stranger to explain their most intimate thoughts and experiences.

“That’s why I play. It expresses the world I see. One that is full of pain and tragedy. What is the point—we were just born to suffer and die...”

A tragic worldview that made my heart ache. For my friend, there is so much more.

“So you don’t believe in God, then?” Nothing like a direct approach.

She looked up quizzically. “Now why would you be saying that?”

“Well, he’s the only answer.”

“If God is the answer then I’m not understanding the question.” She sounded as if that too caused her sadness.

“Do you want to talk about it? Now?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “Why not. I’m done here—Mickey won’t be wanting any more tunes for a while.” She put on her coat and picked up her violin. “I’m Bridget, and my fiddle is my only friend,” she said, self-mockingly.

Sitting on a cold wooden bench under a scowling gray Irish sky, we talked. On and on, until the light faded into a heavy twilight. Of God and his grace, his joy and salvation. Of his answer to the troubling questions of pain, of existence itself. Of his personal love for each of his suffering, troubled children.

“I’d better go. I’ll be playing to the evening crowd back at Mickey’s.”

“I’d like to pray for you. Is that OK?”

“Nobody ever prayed for me before. I’d like that.”

As the evening drizzle started falling, two shadowy figures on a bench bowed.

Though all around was dark and wet, all I saw was the brilliance and light and joy of God. I scribbled out my address. She grabbed the paper, smiled, and was gone.

I slowly walked back to the car. Of course I should have found out her address, at least given her a tract or a Bible correspondence card, I suppose. I could have made sure she was an ‘evangelistic contact.’

But I don’t think so. For the reality of the situation demands we act entirely naturally. For God is still there, despite our failings.

As I opened the door, I paused. From the still open window came a new tune, bright and happy. I grinned. She knew I’d be listening, and saw me off with a lively Irish jig.

What are called to do, but to sing a new song that tells of the inexpressible joy of knowing Jesus, the truth and life?

Sadness is not the only beauty left.

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