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Mrs. Stein

English P. 4

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Cymbal Crash

30. 40. 50. Lawrence always kept an eye on his speed when driving at night. He sat through many school PSAs and stories delivered via word of mouth about the dangers of speeding and the abrupt endings each of them entailed. However, in Laurence's case he did not check the speedometer out of caution nor did he check it out of diligence, to him it provided rhythm. A diagnostic of his speed delivered in a brief glance then his eyes traced back to the road with a pause, then another glance and back to the road, glance, pause, quick, slow.

The young man was no stranger to rhythm and repetition, the inseparable pair had accompanied him since childhood. Now he found them inescapable, every facet of life made to comply with the internal cadence instilled in him by years of learning the violin. He believed music's influence could be found in everything: the gentle hum of his car's motor, the constant vibration of the tires against pavement as the car sailed down each hill, and most of all the poignant pitch of the empty beer bottle rattling in his cup holder.

52. 54. 56. Lawrence could see the steady climb in speed, but his mind was drifting elsewhere. It had wandered back down the winding roads to a party he had just left, held in celebration of his most recent performance. Lawrence rarely sang, but this night his voice was spent from so many cheers, each accompanied by a drink.

A new sound now rang out in the car's orchestra of automated machinery. As if an unwelcome worker bee had found its way into tonight's performance, a cacophony of buzzes began to sound from the phone resting on the passenger's seat. His gaze flew to the insistent ringing, its dissonance grew with each buzz.

The budding musician's sense of smell was far outpaced by his more refined listening palette, he was only now beginning to recognize the pungent exhale of alcohol on each breath. Now the sporadic buzz of the phone had grown into a swarm of rings and vibrations against the passenger seat. Despite this, Laurence noticed the rising tempo of the swarm paled in comparison to the rapid churning beat of his heart. His breathing grew labored and was quickly accompanied by thick beads of sweat running down his forehead as he thought back to his final moments before leaving the party. Had he told anyone he was leaving? He had hadn't he? Nevertheless he had only had a few drinks, he was certain he could manage the familiar ride home.

61. 64. 71. The olive sedan flew down the pavement like a leaf whipped away by the winds of a hurricane, any remaining semblance of cadence lost in the maelstrom. Each member of the automobile's orchestra fell silent. The stalwart humming of the motor was muted, now replaced with a faint crackling. The quartet of wheels each fell out of tune, one buried deeply into the cold dirt of the ditch, another laying far from the rest having briefly continued its performance. Finally the rear pair of tires rested in the air, and would not return to pavement for another 3 hours. The lone bottle, once resting in the cup holder, now found company among the several handfuls of shattered glass which once comprised the windshield.

Unlike his lagging sense of smell Laurence's taste quickly caught up to his ears. His mouth was full with a stinging sensation of iron. After several futile attempts he managed one

eye open, the other was unresponsive, lost to a stinging river of red pain gushing from his forehead. His gaze finally returned to the windshield after the considerably out of cadence glance that had now landed him in the earthen crevice. Over the dashboard lay two heavy, rubbery cords where his arms should've been, and poking out of the precipice where the windshield once rested were his hands. Glass now laced his once dexterous fingers. Were he to pluck a string on his violin now it would surely sever, and the instrument would belt out a broken wail. With this realization, he did so in its place.