

## La Cadenza

I was sitting on a cold black bench near the front door, hugging my arms close and exhaling puffs of mist as I watched the cars pull away, when it happened. The door gave way, and out he came, the star of the night. He walked with the same quiet confidence I saw in him onstage. The violin case at his side swung gently as he straightened his overcoat with one hand, taking the night in with one deep breath, as I held mine. I willed time to freeze this moment for me, give me more time to adjust, but he was already striding towards the bench, the one convenient landmark standing between the concert hall and the parking lot.

It took him twelve steps, over a span of six seconds.

By the time he briefly caught my gaze around step number nine, even then I was fully aware of the thousands of wonderful directions I could've taken: I will shake his hand. I will tell him that I thought his performance was amazing—no, fantastic. I will let him know how much his last piece got to me, made me appreciate life. I will ask to take a picture with him. I will give him my program to sign. I will stumble over words, playing bashful as I admit how much he has influenced my own music. I will kidnap him, making him play for me forever. I will grab him and kiss him on his sharp, wizened, beautiful face—I will *do* that. I will applaud him with gusto, from this cold bench, my own personal best seat in the house sitting right out here, so that he knows what a difference he has made to at least one person tonight. And he will remember me.

What I actually did was, when he spotted me, clench my fists inside my pockets and give a small jerk of a nod with my head. He responded with a faint smile and a light nod of his own, and then he was gone. The show was officially over.

I loosened up, exhaling once again as I watched his him get in his car and leave. When I couldn't see it anymore, I looked up at the few stars I could see through the dark clouds. I gave one last glance toward the parking lot before I began my long walk home. I have not often found much to regret in life, yet every time I remember that night, it hurts just a little bit, like the feeling you get when your favorite song is about to end.