

FOR EMILY

Written by  
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INT. KITCHEN - DAY

ALEX GRISEY, a shy 14-year-old with young features, and his father CHRISTOPHER GRISEY, a stern 45-year-old, sit at the breakfast table with sullen looks on their faces. Alex pours himself cereal while Christopher stares blankly at a musical score in front of him.

ALEX  
Pass the milk?

After a few moments hesitation, Christopher pushes the carton towards Alex without looking up from the score.

ALEX  
Thanks.

Alex pours the milk and eats his cereal.

ALEX  
Can you give me a ride today?

Christopher continues to stare blankly at the music and ignores Alex.

ALEX  
Dad?

Christopher nods only slightly. Alex gets up from the table and puts his cereal bowl in the sink.

ALEX  
I'm gonna catch the bus. See you in class.

Christopher does not respond. Alex picks up his backpack by the door and walks outside.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Alex walks off the bus and stops when he looks up at the school. He sighs heavily and starts walking towards the school's main entrance.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Alex walks down the hall and into a classroom with a sign next to the door that says "Orchestra".

INT. ORCHESTRA CLASSROOM - DAY

Alex sits with his violin in the first row of the orchestra fingering the strings on his violin. His friend, BILLY, sits down next to him.

BILLY

Did you hear what happened to John  
on the bus?

Alex is focused on the music in front of him and continues fingering his part.

BILLY

Alex?

Christopher walks into the classroom and the majority of the class immediately becomes silent. He walks up onto the conductor's podium and TAPS his baton multiple times on the conductor's stand until the rest of the class quiets.

CHRISTOPHER

Everyone take out your music.

The students obey and SHUFFLING sounds fill the room as they take out the music. When the sound quiets, Christopher holds up his baton. The students raise their instruments and play along as Christopher cues the down stroke.

Christopher conducts with little emotion or excitement until tears start to form in his eyes. He stops the orchestra and steps down from the podium.

With his head bowed, Christopher walks out of the classroom, leaving the class surprised. The STUDENTS erupt in conversation. Billy turns to Alex.

BILLY

What's wrong?

Alex gets up from his chair without replying and walks towards the door. Alex passes the other students in the orchestra.

STUDENT 1

Where's he going?

Alex walks out of the room.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Alex walks out of the classroom and looks up and down the hall, but his father is not in sight. Alex turns the corner and looks into his father's office, which is dark and empty.

Alex turns with a dejected look on his face and walks back towards the classroom. The school bell RINGS and students flood out into the hallway as Alex shuffles back into the orchestra classroom.

INT. HOME HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Alex enters his house through the front door and walks down the hallway, peering into each room until he sees his father sitting in the last one. He enters the study.

INT. STUDY - LATE AFTERNOON

Christopher is at a piano, playing frantically with one hand and writing on sheet music with the other. Alex approaches his father.

ALEX  
Are we meeting later?

Christopher does not respond.

ALEX  
Dad?

CHRISTOPHER  
Go away. I'm working.

Christopher continues notating and playing. Alex leaves the room with his head hung.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Alex enters his room and walks over to his bed. He pulls a violin case from underneath the bed and places it on top of his bed. He opens up the case and takes out his violin and bow.

Alex positions his violin and starts playing a somber tune. He stares out the window as he plays a solo from memory.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Alex, 9 years old, continues to play his solo while his father, 40 years old, plays piano next to him. His father plays with his eyes closed and a grin on his face, deeply focused on the music. Christopher stops playing.

CHRISTOPHER

Stop.

Alex removes the violin from his shoulder and looks up at his father.

CHRISTOPHER

Have you been doing your exercises?

ALEX

Yes, but these sections are hard.

CHRISTOPHER

You just have to break them down.  
Look at these two sections here.

Christopher points to the sheet music in front of Alex.

CHRISTOPHER

They follow the same fingering  
pattern. Let me show you.

Christopher picks up the violin and positions it on his shoulder.

CHRISTOPHER

Like this.

Christopher plays the previous passage, accenting the notes that start pattern and motioning those notes to Alex.

CHRISTOPHER

You need to see how the music  
breaks down into patterns. Feel the  
music, don't just play it.

ALEX

Anything else?

CHRISTOPHER

Work on your technique. Your tone  
sounds much better.

ALEX

Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

CHRISTOPHER

Now, let's start from the beginning.

Christopher sits down at the piano and starts the tune again. Alex plays along with the music. He looks at his father and smiles. Alex closes his eyes and plays his solo.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex finishes the same solo, but without the accompaniment of his father's piano. He places his violin back in the case and slides it back underneath his bed. Alex climbs into bed and turns out the light.

INT. ORCHESTRA CLASSROOM - DAY

The next day at school, a substitute teacher, MR. SQUEO, walks into the orchestra classroom. Alex has a puzzled look on his face as Mr. Squeo steps onto the podium.

MR. SQUEO

Good morning. My name is Mr. Squeo. I am filling in for Mr. Grisey until he gets back. If you could please take out your repertoire, we can get started.

Alex is surprised by the news. A few other students turn their heads and look at Alex while shuffling their papers out of their music folders. Billy turns to Alex.

BILLY

Where's your Dad?

Alex ignores him and fingers the strings on his violin while staring at the substitute.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Alex opens the door and walks towards his father. Christopher is vehemently playing piano more emotionally than before, with both hands. He stops playing to notate on sheet music.

ALEX

Dad?

Christopher continues to notate on sheet music, not responding to the question.

(CONTINUED)

ALEX

Where were you today?

Christopher ignores him again and begins to play piano.

ALEX

Dad?

Christopher stops playing and turns to Alex.

CHRISTOPHER

(raising his voice)

What are you doing? Can't you see  
that I'm busy right now?

ALEX

Yes but --

CHRISTOPHER

Why do you keep interrupting me  
when I'm working?

ALEX

I --

CHRISTOPHER

Don't bother me. Don't come in  
here. Do you understand?

Alex runs out of the room.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex runs into the bedroom, crying. He quickly gets the violin case from underneath the bed and takes the violin out. He positions his violin and plays his solo with more emotion and fresh tears still on his face.

INT. ORCHESTRA CLASSROOM - DAY

The next day, Mr. Squeo conducts the class. Christopher walks in with a stack of papers. Alex, surprised, stares at his father.

The substitute teacher wraps the orchestra and steps down from the podium. Christopher walks over to him and whispers in his ear. Mr. Squeo hands over the baton and walks out of the orchestra classroom. Christopher passes out the parts to each row and the students pass them down.

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Christopher gets up onto the podium and glances briefly at Alex. Christopher immediately looks away and down at the music in front of him.

Billy passes Alex's part to him. Alex looks at the sheet music, which is entitled "For Emily". Alex's eyes start to water.

Christopher taps his baton on the conductor's stand and raises it to signal the start. The students all raise their instruments except for Alex. Christopher cues the orchestra to begin and the music lavishly swells.

The class continues to play through the piece while a few tears stream down Christopher's face. Christopher's conducting is flawless and dramatic. His conducting and the orchestra's sound are significantly more impressive than before.

Alex wipes the tears off his face and positions his violin. He begins to play more dramatically and emotionally also. When the song ends, there are a few seconds of complete silence.

The bell RINGS and the silence ends. The other students get up to leave and start to talk to each other with excitement. When the classroom clears out, Alex approaches the podium with caution. When Christopher sees him, he steps off the podium and hugs Alex.

ALEX

Sorry about last night.

Christopher squeezes Alex harder.

CHRISTOPHER

I shouldn't have ignored you.

Christopher pulls back from the hug and stares into Alex's eyes.

CHRISTOPHER

I love you. Lesson tonight?

Christopher smiles, Alex smiles back, and they embrace again.

THE END