The Violinist

Characters

Paolo (50 y.o.)

young Paolo (9 y.o.)

Benjamin (62 y.o.)

Papa

Mama

SS officer

the one that talks only in the beginning

THE ONE THAT TALKS ONLY IN THE BEGINNING: It is difficult for us to imagine how dreadful was the suffering that went on in the Nazi concentration campsduring the Second World War. The enormity of the crime that the Nazis committed is just too overwhelming for us to comprehend. In their attempt to wipe out an entire race they caused the death of six million people, most of them Jews. It is when you hear the stories of the individuals who lived through it - Anne Frank, Primo Levi - that you can begin to understand the horror just a little better, and to understand the evil that caused it.

For me, the most haunting image does not come from literature of film, but from music. I learned some time ago that in many of the camps the Nazis selected Jewish prisoners and forced them to play in orchestras; for the musicians it was simply a way to survive. In order to calm the new arrivals at the camps they were made to serenade them as they were lined up and marched off, manu to the gas chambers. Often they played Mozart.

I wondered how it must have been for a musician who played in such hellish circumstances, who adored Mozart as I do - what thoughts came when playing Mozart later in life. This was the genesis of my story, this and the sight of a small boy in a square by the Accademia Bridge in Venice, sitting one night, in his pyjamas on his tricycle, listening to a busker. He sat totally enthralled by the music that seemed to him, and to me, to be heavenly.

*Paolo Levi(neat, trim, cardigan, corduroy trousers, comfortable slippers) stands next to the window, plays Vivaldi on the violin. A chair or two, a violin case, a small tablet, tea pot, fine mug, fresh mint plant, an electric kettle.*

*He finishes the music. Silence.*

PAOLO: I like to practise by the window. I can watch the world go by on the canal. And I love to be near water, to look out on it. I love the light that water makes.

*He turns.*

PAOLO: I’m Paolo Levi. Almost 50. In a fortnight it’s my birthday concert.

You’ll know who I am, of course. I played my first major concert when I was 13 - I’ve played every major concert hall the world over, in front of Kings and Queens - Presidents. I’m best known for Vivaldi but I’m equally at home with jazz, or Scottish fiddle music, or Bach. And yes my English is good, even though I was born here in Venice Language is like music: you learn it through listening. But I’m talking too much. I talk too much when I’m nervous. When I go to the dentist’s I talk. Before a concert I talk.

*He puts the kettle on, plucks peppermint tea leaves, pours the water.*

PAOLO: I like to keep this room empty. Sound needs space to breathe - just the same as we need air. I like silence. There should be silence after a performance. It’s part of the music. There shouldn’t be applause. I don’t like to be interrupted. Applaud the music, the composer, but certainly not the musician.

*Paolo sits on the chair, rests the violin on his drawn up knees, plucks the strings to tune it.*

PAOLO: I have a confession to make. I have a secret. And someone once told me that all secrets are lies. The time has come, I think, not to lie any more.

… I will tell you a story… I will start with my father.

*Barber shop(customers, mirrors, chairs) , papa is working, young Paolo is sitting on the chair and swinging his legs. The rhythmic sound of meticulously snipped barber’s scissors.*

PAOLO: Papa was a barber. He kept a little barber’s shop just behind the Accademia, near the bridge, just two minutes from here. We lived above the shop, Mama, Papa and me - but I spent most of my time downstairs, in the barber’s shop, sitting on the chair and swinging my legs, smiling at him and his customers in the mirror, sweeping up the hair clippings for a few lira my father would tip me, just watching him. I loved those days. I loved him. I must have been around nine years old.

Papa was infinitely deft with his fingers, his scissors playing a constantly changing tune. It seemed to me like a new improvisation for every customer. He would work always in complete silence, conducting the music of his scissors with his comb. his customers knew better than to interrupt the performance. some would close their eyes as Papa worked his magic; others would look back in the mirror at me and wink.

*Papa moves to the next customer and starts shaving.*

PAOLO: Shaving was just as fascinating to me, just as rhythmical too: the swift sweep and dab of the brush, the swish and slap of the razor as Papa sharpened it on a strap, then each time he miraculous unmasking as he stroked the foam away to reveal a recognisable face once more.

*Papa finises the shaving, he starts to talk with his customers. Another customer comes.*

PAOLO: After it was all over, he and his customers did talk, and all the banter amongst them was about football - or sometimes the machinations of politicians - and women. They laughed a lot, and then the next customer would take his seat and a new silence would descend before the performance started and the music of the scissors began again.

Papa wasn’t just the best barber in all of Venice - everyone said that - he was a musician too, a violinist. But strangely he was a violinist who never played the violin. I never heard him play, not once. I only knew he was a violinist because Mama told me so. She had tears in her eyes whenever she told me about it. That surprised me because she was not a crying woman.

*Young Paolo’s home, Mama and Paolo are in the living room. Mama has tears in her eyes.*

MAMA: He was so brilliant as a violinist, the best in the whole orchestra.

YOUNG PAOLO: Why doesn’t he play any more, Mama?

*Mama turns away.*

MAMA: You will have to ask him that yourself, Paolo.

PAOLO: So I did.

*Papa reads a newspaper. Paolo runs to Papa.*

YOUNG PAOLO: Papa, Papa! Why don’t you play the violin any more?

*Papa doesn’t pay much attention to Paolo*

PAPA: People change, Paolo. Times change.

*Papa and Paolo go away, Mama comes.*

PAOLO: Papa was never a great talker at the best of times, but I could tell he was hiding something. I kept on at him. Every time he refuses to talk about it I became more suspicious, more sure he had something to hide.

One morning, while my father was snipping away in the barber shop below, my mother relented:

MAMA: If I show you the violin will you promise me you’ll not ask Papa again?

YOUNG PAOLO: What violin?

MAMA: Promise?

YOUNG PAOLO: Promise.

MAMA: And you’re never ever to tell Papa I showed you. He’d be very angry. Promise me now.

YOUNG PAOLO: I promise. I promise faithfully.

*Mama and young Paolo do as old Paolo describes.*

PAOLO: I stood in my parents’ bedroom and watched as Mama climbed up on a chair to get the violin down from where it had been hidden on top of the wardrobe. It was wrapped up in an old grey blanket. I knelt on the bed beside her as she pulled away the blanket and opened the violin case. It smelt musty. The lining inside was faded and worn to tatters. Mama picked up the violin with infinite care, reverential. Then she handed it to me.

I stroked the polished grain of the wood. which was the colour of honey - dark honey on the front, and golden honey underneath. I ran my fingers along the black pegs, the mottled bridge, the carved scroll. It was so light to hold, I wondered at its fragile beauty. I knew at once that all the music in the world was hidden away inside this violin, yearning to come out. I longed to be the one to let it come out, to rest it under my chin, to play the strings, to try the bow. I wanted there and then to bring it to life, to have it sing for me, to hear all the music we could make together. So I asked my Mama:

YOUNG PAOLO: Can I play it?

*Mama is taking fright.*

MAMA: Papa might hear downstairs. He’d be furious with me for showing you.

YOUNG PAOLO: Why, Mama?

MAMA: He never wants it to be played again. He hasn’t so much as looked at it in years.

YOUNG PAOLO: But why?

MAMA: You promised if I showed you you’d not ask any more questions. You now know it exists, Paolo. But you never saw it, understand? And from now on I don’t want to hear another word about it, all right?

YOUNG PAOLO: But Mama!

MAMA: You promised me, Paolo.

*Mama puts the violin back.*

PAOLO: She laid it back safely in its case, wrapped it in the blanket, and put it back on top of the wardrobe.

And that was that.

*Young Paolo is in the bed.*

Then late one summer’s evening I was lying half awake in my bed-

*The distance sound of an unaccompanied violin- Bach; Vivaldi.*

-when I heard the sound of a violin. I thought Papa must have changed his mind and was playing again at last. But then I heard him and Mama talking in the kitchen below, and realised that the music was coming from much further away.

*Young Paolo goes to the window.*

I listened at the window. Over the sound of people talking and walking, over the throbbing engines of the passing water buses, came the sweet sound of the violin from somewhere beyond the bridge.

*Young Paolo goes to the street, goes to the bridge.*

PAOLO: In my pyjamas I stole past the kitchen door, down the stairs and out in the street. It was a warm night, and quite dark. I ran up over the bridge and there, all on his own, standing by the wall in the square, was an old man playing the violin, his violin case open at his feet.

*Benjamin is alone, playing violin.*

PAOLO: No one else was there. No one had stopped to listen. He was so engrossed in his playing that he didn’t notice me at first. I could see now that he was much older even than Papa. Then he saw me.

*Benjamin stops playing.*

BENJAMIN: Hello. You’re out late. What’s your name?

YOUNG PAOLO: Paolo. Paolo Levi. My Papa plays the violin. He played in an orchestra once.

BENJAMIN: So did I, all my life. But now I am what I always wanted to be, a soloist. I shall play you some Mozart. Do you like Mozart?

YOUNG PAOLO: I don’t know. I know the name, but I don’t think I’ve ever listened to any of his music.

BENJAMIN: He wrote this piece when he was even younger than you - I would guess you’re about seven?

*Young Paolo is a bit affronted.*

YOUNG PAOLO: I’m nine.

BENJAMIN: Well, I’m sixty-two - and Mozart wrote this when he was just six years old. He wrote it for the piano, but I can play it on the violin.

*Mozart(Minuet and Trio) starts to play. Young Paolo is listening. Other people are gathering around and they drop some coins.*

PAOLO: As he played, others came and gathered round for a while before dropping a coin or two in his violin case and moving on. I didn’t move on. I stayed. The music he played to me that night touched my soul. It was the night that changed my life forever.

Whenever I crossed the Accademia Bridge after that I always listened out for him. I never told Mama or Papa. I think it was the first secret I kept from them. But I didn’t feel guilty about it, not one bit. After all, hadn’t they kept a secret from me?

*Benjamin gives the violin to young Paolo and shows him how to draw the bow across the strings.*

PAOLO: Then one evening, the old man let me hold his violin, showed me how to hold it properly, how to draw the bow across the strings, how to make it sing. The moment I did that, I knew I had to be a violinist.

*Benjamin shows young Paolo how to hold the violin under his chin, without hands.*

PAOLO: Signor Horowitz, as he told me he was called, became my first teacher. Every time I ran over the bridge to see him he would show me a little more, how to tighten the bow just right, how to use the resin, how to hold the violin under chin using no hands at all and what each string was called.

YOUNG PAOLO: Papa has a violin at home but he doesn’t play it any more. He couldn’t anyway, because it’s a bit broken, I think it needs mending. Two of the strings are missing, the A and the E, I think, and there’s hardly a hair left on the bow at all. But I could practise on it if it was mended, couldn’t I, Signor Horowitz?

BENJAMIN: Bring it to my house sometimes and leave it with me. I’ll see what I can do.

*Young Paolo does what old Paolo describes.*

PAOLO: It wasn’t difficult to escape from home unnoticed. I just waited till after school. Mama was still at the laundry round the corner where she worked. Papa was downstairs with his customers. To reach the violin on top of the wardrobe I had to balance a suitcase on the chair and then climb up. It wasn’t easy but I managed. I ran through the streets hugging it to me.

*Young Paolo arrives at Benjamin's house.*

Signor Horowitz lived along a winding passage, up a narrow flight of stairs in one small bare room where his music could breath. On the walls were lots of posters.

*Benjamin shows young Paolo the posters and talks about them.*

BENJAMIN: Some of the concerts I have played in, Paolo: Milan, London, New York. Wonderful places, wonderful people, wonderful music. It is a wonderful world out there. There are times when it can be hard to go on believing that. But always believe it, Paolo, because it’s true. And music helps to make it so. Now, show me that violin of yours.

*Young Paolo gives the violin to Benjamin, he studies it closely, holds it up to the light.*

BENJAMIN: A very fine instrument. It’s a bit on the large side for a young lad like you… But a big violin is better than no violin at all. You’ll grow into it.

YOUNG PAOLO: And when it’s mended, will you teach me? I’ve got lots of money saved up from my sweepings.

BENJAMIN: Sweepings?

YOUNG PAOLO: In Papa’s barber shop.

BENJAMIN: I’ll teach you for nothing! You’re my best listener. You’re my lucky mascot. When you’re not there, everyone walks by and my violin case stays empty. Then you come along and sit there and they stop to listen and leave their money. A lesson or two will just be paying you back, Paolo. I’ll have the violin ready as soon as I can and then we can start your lessons.

*Benjamin starts to mend the violin.*

PAOLO: It was a fortnight before the violin was mended. I dreaded what Mama or Papa might do if they discovered it was missing. But they didn’t, and my lesson began.

*Music: violin practice.*

PAOLO: I took to the violin as if it had been a limb I had been missing all my life. And it sang with the voice of an angel.

*Music.*

BENJAMIN: I think this instrument was invented just for you, Paolo. Or maybe you were made for it. Either way it is a perfect match.

*Benjamin and young Paolo drink mint tea.*

PAOLO: We would finish every lesson with a cup of mint tea made with fresh mint. I loved it.

My secret was safe, I thought. But secrets are never safe, however well hidden. Sooner or later truth will out.

One day with the lesson over, we were drinking tea when Benjamin looked across me.

*Benjamin is serious.*

BENJAMIN: It is strange, Paolo, but I feel I have known you before, a long, long time ago. Your name: Levi. It’s a common enough name, I know - but his name was Levi too. It is him you remind me of. I am sure of it. He was the youngest player in our orchestra, no more than a boy really. Gino, he was called.

*Young Paolo is excited.*

YOUNG PAOLO: But my father is called Gino! Maybe it was him? Maybe you played with my father? Maybe you know him?

*Benjamin is staring at young Paolo.*

BENJAMIN: It can’t be possible. No, it can’t be. The Gino Levi I knew must be…I have not heard of him in a long while. But you never know, I suppose. Maybe I should meet your Papa, and your Mama too. It’s about time anuway. You’ve been coming for lessons for a good while now. They need to know they have a wonderful violinist for a son.

YOUNG PAOLO: No, you can’t! He’d find out! You can’t tell him. You mustn’t! It’s a secret. Mama showed me Papa’s violin and made me promise never to say anything, never to tell Papa, and I’ve kept it a secret all this while, from Mama too, mending the violin, the lessons, everything…

BENJAMIN: Secrets, Paolo, are lies by another name. You do not lie to those you love. A son should not hide things from his mama or papa. You must tell them your secret, Paolo. If you want to go on playing the violin, you will have to tell them. If you want me to go on teaching you, you will have to tell them. And now is usually a good time to do what must have been done, particularly when you don’t want to do it.

YOUNG PAOLO: Will you come with me? I can only do it if you come with me.

*They go to Paolo’s home, Paolo is very nervous so Benjamin holds his hand, Mama and Papa are upstairs.*

PAOLO: So, Signor Horowitz carried Papa’s violin, and held my hand all the way back home. I was dreading having to make my confession. I knew how hurt Mama and Papa would be. All the way I rehearsed what I was going to say over and over again. Mama and Papa were upstairs when we came in.

*Young Paolo blurts it all out in one breath.*

YOUNG PAOLO: Mama, Papa: this is Signor Horowitz, he is my violin teacher. I didn’t really steal Papa’s violin, I just borrowed it to get it mended, and to practise on-

*Young Paolo stops, because he sees how his parents are looking at Benjamin.*

PAOLO: I was terrified - but they didn’t look angry. In fact, they weren’t looking at me at all. They were just staring at Signor Horowitz, unable to speak. He spoke for them.

BENJAMIN: Your mama and papa and me, I think perhaps we do know one another. We played together once, did we not? Don’t you remember me, Gino?

PAOLO: Papa looked at him.

PAPA: Benjamin?

*Benjamin turns to Mama.*

BENJAMIN: And if I’m not mistaken, Signora, you must be little Laura Adler - all of us violins, all of us there, and all of us still here. It is like a miracle. It *is* a miracle.

*Traditional Jewish string music.*

*Mama, Papa and Benjamin start to hug each other, all of them are crying through their laughter.*

PAOLO: Suddenly it was as if I wasn’t in the room at all the three of them seemed to fill it, arms around each other, and crying openly, crying through their laughter. I stood there mystified, trying to piece together what I’d just heard, all that was going on before my eyes. Mama played the violin too! She had never told me that!

BENJAMIN: You see, Paolo, Didn’t I tell you it was a wonderful world? Twenty years! It’s been twenty years or more since I last saw your mama and papa. I had no idea they were still alive. I always hoped they survived, hoped they were together, these two little lovebirds, but I never really believed it, not really.

*Everybody except Paolo sits around the table, they all hold hands.*

PAOLO: Mama was drying her eyes. Papa was so overcome he couldn’t speak. They all sat down then, hands joined around the table, unwilling to let each other go, afraid this reunion might turn out to be no more than a dream. Signor Horowitz - Benjamin was the first to recover.

BENJAMIN: Paolo was about to tell you both something, I think. Weren’t you, Paolo?

YOUNG PAOLO: Well...yes...Signor Benjamin has been my violin teacher - he is the best teacher in the world! But I please don’t be angry. Don’t be cross…

*Mama and Papa are very happy.*

PAOLO: But Papa and Mama were glowing with joy.

MAMA: Didn’t I say Paolo would tell us, Gino? You see, Paolo, I often take down my violin, just to touch it, to look at it. Papa doesn’t like me to, but I do it all the same, because this violin is my oldest friend. Papa forgives me, because he knows I love this violin, that it is a part of me. When it went missing, I knew it had to be you. Then it came back, mended miraculously. And then, after school, you’ve started to be late home; and when you haven’t been home, the violin has always been gone too. I told Papa, I told him you’d tell us when you were ready. We put two and two together; we thought you might be practising somewhere, but it never occurred to us that you were having lessons, that you had a teacher - and certainly not that your teacher was Benjamin Horowitz, who taught us and looked after us like a father all those years ago.

YOUNG PAOLO: But you told me it was Papa’s violin, that he’d put it away and never wanted to play it again? And what do you mean Signor Benjamin was your teacher too?

*Papa, Mama and Benjamin all look at each other, not sure what to say.*

PAOLO: The three of them looked at one another. I knew then they all shared the same secret, and without a word passing between them they were deciding whether they should reveal it, if this was the right moment to tell me. Papa invited me to the table to join them.

*Young Paolo joins others on the table.*

PAPA: Mama and me, we try never to speak of this, because the memories we have are like nightmares, and we want to forget. But you told us your secret. There is a time for truth, it seems, and it has com. Truth for truth.

*Throughout the revelation of the secret a sound and music score plays under the speaking.*

*Young Mama, young Papa and younger Benjamin arrive at the concentration camp.*

PAPA: The three of us were brought by train to the concentration camp from all over Europe: Benjamin from Paris, Mama from Warsaw, and me from here, from Venice. We were all musicians, all Jewish. We survived only because we were able to say ‘yes’ to one question put to us by an SS officer on arrival at the camp.

SS OFFICER: Is there anyone amongst you who can play an orchestral instrument, who is a professional musician?

*Young Papa steps forward and is separated from his family by the SS officer.*

PAPA: I didn’t know that when I stepped forward I would immediately be separated from my family...

Playing was very hard because our fingers were so cold that sometimes we could hardly feel them and we were weak with hunger. Sickness had to be hidden. The SS were always watching. In those rehearsals the three of us met. Benjamin was a good deal older than me and your mama. We were very much the babies of the orchestra, we were barely twenty. Why the orchestra was rehearsing, who we would be playing for, we did not know and did noy ask. We played Mozart, a lot of Mozart.

*A medley of Eine kleine Nachtmusik, minuets etc. And Johann Strauss Viennese waltzes.*

PAPA: The repertoire was for the most part light and happy - *Eine kleine Nachtmusik,* minuets, dances, marches. And Johann Strauss was popular too, waltzes, waltzes always waltzes.

At first we gave concerts only for the SS officers. You just had to pretend they were not there. You simply lost yourself in the music - it was the only way. Even when they applauded you did not look up. You never looked them in the eye. You played with total commitment. Every performance was your best performance, not to please them, but to show them what you could do, to prove to them how good you were despite all they were doing to humiliate you, to destroy you in body and soul. We fought back with our music. It was our only weapon.

PAOLO: Then Benjamin interrupted.

BENJAMIN: You see, Paolo, your papa could speak no Polish, your mama knew no Italian, but their eyes met when they were playing. They shared a joy in music-making, and they fell in love - the whole orchestra knew it, before they did! ‘Our little lovebirds’, we called them. For everyone else in the orchestra they represented hope, the future.

PAOLO: But Mama wasn’t so sure.

MAMA: I don’t know about that, Benjamin. Our love numbed the pain, protected us from the fear we were living through, from the horror going on all around. But we all shared a shame. We were being fed while others were not.

*Pause.*

PAOLO: Papa continued.

PAPA: One cold morning with snow on the ground, we were made to assemble out in the compound with our instruments and ordered to sit down and play.

*Mozart plays over trains screeching, wagons unloading, barked orders etc.*

PAPA: A train arrived, the wagons packed with new prisoners. Once they were all out they were lined up and then divided. The old and young and frail were herded past us as we played, on their way - so they were told - to the shower blocks. The able-bodied, those fit for work were taken off towards the huts. And all the while your mama and Benjamin and I and the orchestra, we played our Mozart. We all understood what our Mozart was for: it was to calm each new train-load of frightened souls, to give them a false sense of security. We were part of the deadly sham. We all knew of course that the shower block was a gas chamber.

Week after week we played, month after month, tarin after train. And twenty-four hours a day the chimneys of the crematorium spewed out their fire and their smoke and their stench. Until there were no more trains; until the day the camps were liberated.

We were all emaciated by now. It was unlikely that any of us would survive. Your Mama and I walked out of the camp. That was the last time we saw Benjamin. Until now.

PAOLO: Papa stopped talking. Mama leaned towards me.

*Mama leans toward young Paolo.*

MAMA: We walked across a shattered Europe, playing our violins for bread and shelter. We were still playing to survive. And we came here to Venice, to your Papa’s home. And he smashed his violin. But I kept mine. It was my talisman, my saviour and my friend. I wouldn’t destroy it, sell it, abandon it. It had brought me through all the horrors of the camp, brought us safely across Europe, back to Papa’s home in Venice. It had saved our lives.

Papa has never played a note of music again - he can hardly bear to hear it, which is why I haven’t played my violin all these years. I’ve kept it on the top of the wardrobe, hoping against hope that Papa might change his mind and be able to love music again.

In time we were blessed with a child, a boy we called Paolo - a happy ending. And now, Paolo, you have brought Benjamin and your Papa and me together again. So another happy ending.

YOUNG PAOLO: What happened to you, Benjamin? How did you come to be in Venice?

BENJAMIN: I found my way back to Paris after a while. I played again in my old orchestra. I married a French girl, Francoise, a cellist who died only recently. So I came to Venice because Vivaldi was born here - I have always loved Vivaldi above all other composers. I play in the streets - not just for the money, but because I could not bear not to play the violin. Music kept me alive in the camp, and music has been my constant companion ever since. I couldn’t imagine living a single day of my life without it. Which is why I would dearly like to go on teaching Paolo if you both would allow it.

PAOLO: Benjamin looked at Papa. Papa looked at me. I looked at Mama.

MAMA: Can we hear Paolo play, Gino? Can we hear him, please?

*Pause.*

PAPA: So long as it’s not Mozart.

*Vivaldi’s ‘Winter’ movement from the Four Seasons on unaccompanied violin.*

PAOLO: Benjamin turned to Papa.

BENJAMIN: He has a great and wonderful talent, your son, a rare gift you have both given him.

PAOLO: And then my father said, quietly.

PAPA: Then it must not be wasted.

*Benjamin, Paolo and Mama go to Benjamin’s apartment, Mama is listening to how Paolo plays.*

PAOLO: So every day without fail I went from my violin lessons with Benjamin in his little apartment. Papa could not bring himself to listen to me playing, but sometimes Mama came along with me and listened, and afterward she always hugged me so tight it hurt.

*Paolo and Benjamin are playing in the street.*

PAOLO: I began to play in the streets alongside Benjamin, and whenever I did the crowds became bigger and bigger.

*Bach ‘Double Violin Concerto’ unaccompanied.*

PAOLO: One day amongst those watching and listening was Papa. He walked me home afterwards, saying nothing until we were outside our front door.

PAPA: So, Paolo, you prefer playing the violin to sweeping up in my barber’s shop, do you?

YOUNG PAOLO: Yes, Papa. I’m afraid I do.

PAPA: Well, them, I can see I shall just have to do mu sweeping up myself. I shall tell you something, Paolo, and I want you never to forget it. When you play I can listen to music again. You have made music joyful for me once more, and that is a wonderful gift you have given me. You go and be the great violinist you should be. I shall help you all I can. You will play heavenly music and people will love you. Mama and I shall come to all your concerts. But you have to promise one thing: that until the day I die you will never play Mozart in public. Never Mozart. Promise me.

PAOLO: So I promised. I have kept my promise to Papa all these years. He died two weeks ago, the last of the three of them to go. At my fiftieth birthday concert I shall be playing Mozart, and I shall play it on Mama’s violin, and I shall play it so well that he will love it, they all will love it, wherever they are.

*Silence.*

*Mozart violin music - which then builds into the whole orchestral version - and we hear church bells, the chuntering of boats, talking and laughing and music, music from the streets. Paolo stops playing. The music continues.*

PAOLO: Music belongs in the streets, where Benjamin played it, where I played it with him, not in the concert halls.

*Pause.*

PAOLO: It was time to tell the truth. Because secrets are lies…

*Mozart violin soars.*

What we need:

violin

violin case

chair(maybe two)

table

teapot

mug(s)

fresh mint plant

electric kettle

couch

posters(Milan, London, New York)

customers

mirrors

barber chairs

scissors

broom

shaving things(razor, foam, towel)

newspaper

wardrobe

blanket

bed

other people, who drop the coins