

EARWORM

Written by

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EXT. PARK - CENTER - DAY

Violin music, classical and sweet, plays in a vibrant park. Visitors sit on picnic blankets and wander down stone paths.

Indigo music notes drift and swirl in between park guests in time with the music.

The park's center, marked by a grand fountain, sees the most activity, in the forms of both people and the music notes. A small crowd loiters on one side. They watch as...

KADE, 21, refined but frayed at the edges, the source of the indigo notes, plays the violin on a corner across from the fountain with his eyes closed.

Lush greenery frames his performance, and an almost full tip jar labeled 'RENT' sits in front of him.

Kade opens his eyes as he concludes the song, the last of the music notes peacefully floating away.

The audience claps. He bows to the crowd as they disperse.

Kade picks up the tip jar and jostles it, focused on the numerous paper bills and coins inside. Counting.

A sudden guitar riff--accompanied by jagged, orange music notes that fly past Kade--makes him jump and fumble the tip jar. He catches it and turns to find the source of the sound.

At the next corner of the walkway stands JARED, 23, loose and casual, as he plays the guitar. His hand glides along the fretboard with minimal effort.

A crowd collects in front of Jared. They swoon over his modern, exciting sound. Orange music notes fly and cut around them with sharp, unpredictable motions.

Kade watches Jared's audience and looks back at the tip jar in his hands. He rushes to set it down.

He closes his eyes and starts a new violin song. A gentle stream of indigo notes spills from his violin and curls through the air--

The notes are immediately trampled by the orange stampede of a harsh riff from Jared's guitar.

Kade's eyes snap open and he glares at Jared.

Jared meets his gaze and cocks his head with a grin--a challenge and a mocking tease.

Park visitors walk right past Kade to join Jared's audience.

Kade's glare deepens and he adds more flourish to his performance. He moves and twirls with the music, and he shifts to a more intense, difficult tune.

Indigo notes spin around him in dense lines, but any that wander too far are thwarted by Jared's intense orange notes.

No one returns to watch Kade.

Sweat beads on his forehead as he reaches the climax of his song. He plays it with considerable force, but Jared's music swallows it, too.

Kade lowers his violin before he reaches the end of the song. He watches Jared play and notices an amp at his feet.

Kade looks at his own setup: his violin, its case, a tip jar.

He places his violin in his case and zips it up. Behind him, Jared's crowd cheers as he finishes his song.

Kade picks up his tip jar and runs his thumb over the glass. He holds it close to his chest as he abandons his spot, walking towards the park's front gate, head down.

Kade steals a glance at Jared as he passes and Jared meets his eye with a cocky grin. Kade holds his gaze for a moment before he squares his shoulders and leaves.

Jagged orange notes follow him, taunting.

EXT. PARK - CENTER - DAY

The sun rises on the park. Birds sing and visitors chat as they walk down the pathway.

Kade, violin case in hand, makes his way towards the central fountain. As it comes into view, he stops short and gapes.

Jared occupies Kade's previous spot. He sits on an overturned bucket and picks a relaxed tune on his guitar, and the music notes that dance around him are less intense in turn.

Kade stares at him, eyes wide. Jared glances up from his guitar, spots Kade, and grins. Triumphant.

Kade reddens and glowers at him. He turns away to sulk and looks anywhere but at Jared. His gaze stops at the busking spot Jared used the day before.

Kade's expression hardens and he walks over to it.

He sets his violin case on the ground, unzips it, and stands up with his instrument in hand. He plays.

The song starts slow, melancholic. Strong indigo notes arc off in different directions. As the song hits a dramatic uptick, a few heads turn Kade's way--including Jared's.

Jared scowls as his crowd's attention slips towards Kade. He covers it with a forced, scheming smile and stands up.

Kade's song slips towards something happier as a few onlookers gather in front of him. Indigo music notes weave in and out of the crowd.

Kade plays a challenging, impressive melody. His spectators wander closer, and a few add to his tip jar.

As Kade relaxes into his song, Jared rips his pick down his guitar strings and launches into a more intense piece. Massive orange music notes pierce the air in all directions, blowing Kade's indigo notes away.

It shakes the crowd and Kade. He trips on the next part of his song, and his face falls as the crowd turns to Jared.

Kade's melodramatic tune quells to a subtle, mournful lament. He watches as park visitors flock to Jared and his storm of orange notes.

Kade's gloomy song tapers off as the crowd cheers for Jared.

He picks up his tip jar. It contains a few measly dollar bills. He holds it out to the last people who walk by but gets nothing.

Kade wilts in frustration and looks at Jared's crowd. Nobody looks back at him.

His shoulders slump. He packs his violin in its case with force and walks away.

Jared, in between songs, catches Kade's eye as he passes. He waves with a knowing smile. Kade looks away.

The fountain and Jared's music fade into the distance as Kade vacates the center of the park.

EXT. PARK - BACK GATE - DAY

Kade enters a dense grove of trees near the back of the park. Empty benches line the path. Leaves crunch beneath his feet.

Cast in shadows, he stops and looks around. Silence. Nothing moves. No sign of anyone else.

He glances at the sunny field behind him, the central fountain small in the distance.

Kade walks to the edge of the pathway and sets his tip jar on the ground. He stands behind it, pulls his violin from its case, and plays.

His face contorts with focus as a serene, hopeful tune spills from his strings, every note clear and bright.

No sound competes with his violin. Its indigo music notes explore the space around him freely and uncontested, swirling beneath leaves and around tree trunks.

Upon completion, he keeps his eyes shut and takes in the silence that follows.

He finally opens his eyes and looks at the walkway in front of him. Empty.

Kade glances down at his tip jar. Empty.

He lowers his violin and wipes his brow with his other arm, then sets his instrument in its case and carries it to the edge of the grove.

He sits on a bench and stares, first at the central fountain, then past it, at Jared's distant crowd, bigger than before. Orange music notes whirl through the air, visible even now.

Kade drops his head and buries his face in his hands. When he looks up, he wears a frown.

He stands and tightens his grip on his violin case. Eyes fixed on the crowd, he walks forward and leaves the grove.

EXT. PARK - CENTER - DAY

Kade walks up to the central fountain. He stops in front of it and peers at Jared through the water.

A large crowd stands in front of Jared. Some dance or bob their heads as he plays a fast, energetic song. Orange notes bounce through the crowd in time with the music.

With steady, purposeful steps, Kade circles around the fountain and approaches the back of Jared's crowd. He lingers in the back as Jared finishes the song.

Before Jared can start the next one, Kade brings his violin up to his shoulder and runs his bow along the strings.

The first notes strike hard, and the crowd members in front of Kade jump in surprise. A bold streak of indigo music notes snakes through the audience.

Jared's head shoots up, eyes hard. He searches the crowd and takes a step back as the first indigo snake breaks through to the front.

Kade pushes through the next few notes, each one fierce and jagged, a dramatic introduction. He strides forward.

More indigo trails weave through the crowd, reaching for Jared and circling around him.

The audience parts for Kade as he approaches. A split in the middle leaves a clear path to Jared.

Jared zeroes in on Kade with narrowed eyes.

Kade returns the gesture as he reaches the front of the crowd, almost chest-to-chest with Jared as he hits the peak of his song.

Jared grimaces and steps back.

Kade, quick to claim the space, keeps pace with him until Jared stops retreating and holds his ground.

Indigo notes surround the two of them until Kade finishes his song with a series of sharp, pointed notes.

Silence follows its end as the crowd looks to Jared.

For a moment, the two stare at each other.

Then Jared plays. He comes out strong, the notes fast but dark and tense. His song builds at a rapid pace. Orange notes dart around Kade's feet and gradually climb higher.

Kade takes a step back. Jared lets him.

Kade cuts in with a few notes of his own, but Jared refuses to give him a good opening--the indigo notes are overturned. He plays his part to the end.

As soon as Jared's song begins to slow, Kade takes over. He pulls out a haunting melody, and indigo swells back to dominance.

Jared throws in a few random chords, but Kade avoids stumbling. The orange notes slide in alongside the indigo.

Jared's fingers dance along his fretboard as he swarms back in and demands control of the song, flipping the colors.

Kade strikes back. His bow swerves with purpose and keeps him on even ground with Jared's music.

The back-and-forth aspect ceases as both musicians play over each other, each song caught in a fight for supremacy. Neither Kade nor Jared backs down.

The audience fades away--their surroundings are a sea of indigo and orange, the notes rattling against each other.

As the song approaches its end, however, the colorful notes instead begin to blend and meld together. They're syncing.

The impromptu duet swells a final time. Both musicians strike with intensity. Their final notes ring out together.

Both musicians pant. Kade wipes his arm across his sweaty forehead, and Jared tugs the collar of his t-shirt up to wipe at the lower half of his face.

Neither yields as they glare at each other. Their music notes fade away, revealing a stunned and awed crowd beyond.

Silence.

Then the crowd breaks into a cheer, and Kade and Jared falter. They turn to look out at the audience.

Jared's eyes widen as he takes in the size of the crowd.

Kade looks down at Jared's open guitar case and blanches. It almost overflows with dollar bills and quarters.

Kade swallows and shares a long look with Jared. Both scrutinize the other--for the first time without animosity.

Jared extends a hand. Kade stares at it. Blinks.

He looks at the money, the crowd, then back at Jared.

Jared keeps his hand extended. Kade holds up his own hands and shows off their fullness--violin in one and bow in the other.

Jared ducks his head, sheepish. He closes his hand into a fist and bumps it against Kade's chest instead. He backs off, returns his hands to his guitar, and nods at Kade, who grins.

Kade brings his violin to his shoulder and raises his bow with a twirl. He plays.

The first notes play with hesitance, as if charting new territory. Slow, basic, calm. Indigo notes stream away.

Jared listens and plucks a few stray, experimental notes. His orange presence falls in line alongside indigo, as if escorting the notes to the crowd.

As the song continues, Jared plays along with more confidence and complexity.

Their styles contrast--Kade maintains a slow pace while Jared introduces faster sequences. The sounds layer on each other with grace and begin to mesh again.

Orange and indigo music notes fill the space around them, neither pushing the other away.

Jared changes it up and coaxes Kade towards a quicker, more intense sound. Kade follows his lead and responds to his cues. The song swells, and their colorful notes expand.

Their music transfixes the audience, though neither Jared nor Kade pay them any mind. They play to each other, notes intertwining and continuing to grow.

Kade slows his song, and as it fades, Jared fills the space with a solo. Kade rejoins him, then continues with a solo of his own when Jared pulls back. Taking turns in the spotlight.

They both play for the final moments of the song. It slows, peaceful and content. Jared strikes a final chord, and Kade caresses his bow along his strings for a long last note of his own.

As the song and colors fade, the crowd erupts with applause. Several onlookers dart forward to drop dollar bills in Jared's guitar case.

Kade lowers his violin and bows to the crowd. When he straightens up and looks at Jared, they smile at each other.

Jared raises his eyebrows, expectant.

Kade nods and lifts his violin again.

The next song begins.

THE END