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## Hearing Things

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# Hearing Things

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*Robert J. De Smith*

Downstairs  
My daughter is practicing her violin,  
And I'm distracted.

I'm hearing things.

I blame the instrument:  
You've heard it—  
Its rings and echoes,  
Overtones,  
Its faint human squeaks  
Of finger-printed oils  
On wire.  
Echoes that bounce  
Out of square corners  
And up the stairs.

Once, I pick up the phone:  
No one there.  
Once, I'm halfway down the staircase,  
On the landing,  
Before retreating:  
Thought someone was calling me.

Human, wordless  
Voices buzz my ears.

"Thus angels affect us oft,"  
Says Donne.

Once I stand to peer  
Out the window,  
Expecting any moment  
The sired ambulance:  
False alarm.

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Don't get me wrong,  
She plays well—  
I just hear things.

It's Bach,  
Arresting when I  
Tune in,  
Order, movement, even passion.

But it's what I don't hear that keeps me on my toes.