

DEVOTION

Susan Berry

In this dark and silent hospital room he lay restless thinking of all the unfinished work he had left behind. He had yet to finish seating, in order of proficiency, members of not just one but four orchestras. He was forced to turn down several tours with nationally and internationally known artists. He had choirs and ensembles to rehearse for up-coming concerts. He had several private students needing a master to learn from. And yet, there he was—stranded on his back for over a week now and who knows how much longer. There had been no one to see, no music to listen to, and nothing but the smell of sanitized needles and bed pans.

He began to think back to when he was a child in a small rundown farmhouse in Pennsylvania. Curious as most children, he remembered climbing the many dust covered stairs leading to the attic, a New World for young refugees. The boy discovered moth-eaten coats draped over worn brocaded chairs, empty bird cages, ragged one-armed dolls tossed into boxes, uncovered trunks of letters and documents and miscellaneous Christmas ornaments—and a most unusually shaped box. Instantly he fell to his knees in front of the odd box and wiped the dust and spider webs from it. A streak of fear and caution ran through his body but his curiosity was stronger: slowly he unlocked the clasps and opened the wooden box. Inside, embalmed in worn blue velvet, was the most beautiful violin he had ever . . . “Son, . . . come down here right this minute!” yelled his father.

As quickly as he could the boy closed the case and hid it under other surrounding boxes.

From that day on the quiet boy sought every minute alone to familiarize himself with the instrument. His hardworking father would have used his calloused hands to smash the delicate violin if he had known about his son's newfound love. “It takes up the time that should be spent with me, digging ditches every day to make a decent living for our family,” his father would have said.

Not until the young musician finished grade school did his father know of the violin. When the boy entered high school he was allowed to join the orchestra. He practiced and practiced until

he earned a scholarship at college. During his four years there he began touring with well-known musicians, through which he earned enough money to pay for his master's degree. He then fought administrators of a new high school for permission to start an orchestra. In the first few years as director he struggled to gain recognition for the orchestra. Without ever resting he encouraged many groups to form which he then led to a high performance level.

As the stricken man lying in the white-smelling bed finished reviewing his life, he cried to himself, "I'm tired, . . . I'm so tired."

Crown Hill Cemetery

John D. Wilson, Jr.

*I thought it quite unfair
To speak of it so naturally
Direct; and oh, so factually
I told them then and there
To speak of set repose gives a scare
To one who never thinks of it, actually.
But on and on they rambled
About how they felt devotionally
In defunct thoughts clear and scrambled.*