

## ENGLISH: *CREATIVE WRITING*

### The Fiddle Maker

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He keenly felt the weight of the world in the letter he held in his hands. In neat blocks of ink type it read: “we at Connoisseur Factories Pty. Ltd. recognize your expertise and influence in the field of violin-making. Thus, we would like to invite you to join your fellow violinmakers at our factory in the elite position of: ‘Section B, Level 2, Three-quarter size violin rib construction’.

This was only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what was being offered. The unspoken assumption taunted him like an unsavoury D-sharp in the back of his mind: the chance for a stable income, normal work hours and, that scourge of modern living, superannuation.

Finally, the siren call of Progress had reached even him.

It was a bitterly cold winter’s afternoon in his little town, so insignificant that one could only locate it as a pinprick on a very detailed map of Russia. The snow falling from the sky was only power snow, but an icy wind had picked up only a few moments after the Fiddle Maker had stepped off the train. He had walked along the lonely path that led to the factories and now stood slightly to the left of the Connoisseur Factory’s main gate.

On the one hand, his back stiffened at the thought of working for an American. That old reflex was hard to shake off, even though the Cold War had dissipated years ago. Now they welcomed all this capitalist garbage, Coca-Cola, The Simpsons, he had even caught his eldest daughter watching a cheerleading movie in her room the other day. The Fiddle Maker expelled a long breath of air. His daughter, now nineteen, worked at the photo frame factory, received a decent pay and now dreamt of moving to America. His wife blamed him for their family’s instability, saying that the children were in want of affection during the long spells of crafting in which the Fiddle Maker habitually isolated himself with his work. The coming of the factories had brought trouble for the Fiddle Maker.

Several of these factories had sprung up on the outskirts of his town only a few months ago, and they were already churning out products. He felt dizzy when he looked up at the sharp, polished spikes atop each metal pole. The worker’s door to the left of the gate opened suddenly and, in an uneven but unbroken line, the rank and file of Connoisseur Factories plodded out.

He observed as they walked by. They seemed to pass right by him, miserable little wretches battered by the wind. Every youthful dream and ambition fell to their feet with every leaden footfall as they trudged down the pathway leading back into town. No one seemed to notice him, a stranger standing beside the path, as if he were stuck at a crossroads...

The Fiddle Maker had spent two years on his latest creation, Isabella, a fair skinned little fiddle. The celebration had been a small affair, a get together of a few old friends: a penniless conductor, two pianists and Wish, arts teacher by day, poet vigilante by night. They had toasted the fallen Greats: knowledge and finesse, craftsmanship and patience, each assigned to the closet of antiquity and forgotten thereafter. When they all felt that they had toasted enough, Wish had sprung forward, champagne trembling precariously, and said: “here’s to work! Work that saves us from the three evils: boredom, vice and need!”

When the Fiddle Maker thought of work, he felt the quiet presence of seasoned wood, the symphony of aged rosewood, spruce and hot glue and the smoky taste of maple against a hot iron. No doubt the factory workers envisaged cool, metal surfaces, the dead staccato of machines and the sickly conglomeration of petrol, commercial wood and metal. It had taken the Fiddle Maker two weeks, chipping away at a nice, but temperamental, block of maple to reveal Isabelle’s scroll, at the factory, violin clones rolled out by the dozens.

He read the last lines of the letter:

'We eagerly await your response.

Sincerely yours,

Marty Cash  
General Manager  
Constructions'

The landscape surrounding his town once consisted of lush, green, rolling hills dotted with daisies and wild goats. Nowadays, the only decorations were the plumes of chemicals and smoke that swarmed out of several factories, purported to make our life happier and easier. He considered the audacity of all the Marty Cash's in the world. Nature was not their master. They had tamed the wild, untamed beauty of our world, the Fiddle Maker thought. Humans like Marty Cash had managed to engineer a movement greater than any one person. And yet...

The Fiddle Maker was also a part of something bigger than himself. When he was 20, he had crafted wood twice his age. Violinmaking had empowered him, and had become his *raison d'être*. He was the heir to an ancient knowledge that spanned many millennia since the dawn of mankind. The knowledge of crafting instruments was an empowering gift, but one that also demanded fidelity and loyalty. The Fiddle Maker was responsible, just as his late Master had been, to preserve the hallmarks of this ancient trade: craftsmanship, finesse and patience.

Suddenly, the wind that had assailed him for hours stopped, and for one moment of profound silence he could hear nothing but the harmony of nature. Then the towering crescendo of Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake broke like an ocean in his mind, and flooded his heart and soul with fortitude and resolve. It lifted him above his temporal worries until he saw from a new perspective, although it was not new, but simply forgotten long ago.

How easy it was to tear up the letter, now so insignificant in his hands. It was disposed of in a bin on the way home.