

VIRTUOSO

by Ilinca Stihi

(inspired by Gérard de Nerval's *Aurelia – The Dream and the Life*)

Producer: Kateřina Rathouská

Sound: Tomáš Pernický, Jan Trojan

Sound Design: Jan Trojan

Music: Max Bruch

Production Assistant: Dana Reichová

Director: Ilinca Stihi

Length: 50:42

Characters:

VIOLINIST (45 years old)

VIOLINIST (25 years old)

AURELIA

GLORIA

SNAKE

SON (Violinist as a child)

MOTHER

STAGE ASSISTANT

FRIEND IN FRANCE

WAITER

NEIGHBOUR

WOMAN

BUTLER

RECEPTIONIST

GIRL

OLD MAN

MALE VOICE

MAN (Violin maker's workshop)

POLICEMAN

PEOPLE at Aurelia's funeral

Virtuoso is an original radio drama by Romanian playwright and director Ilinca Stihi commissioned by Czech Radio. Directed by her in Prague it was recorded not only in studios but also on location. She was inspired by **Gérard de Nerval's Aurelia – The Dream and the Life**. “He wrote this poetic novella in 1855 before committing suicide. The manuscript was found in his pocket,” says Ilinca Stihi about her source of inspiration. The surreal story occurs in the main character's head and concerns the deepest tragedy of the human personality, as it follows its disintegration in death. “We watch the character's last moments before he dies with his dangerous memories and perceptions which pervade and flood his mind. Real events and fictitious moments blend into one stream, absorbing everything,” specifies Ilinca Stihi.

An important part of her work, which is colourful in terms of sound, Max Bruch's music accompanies the listener all the time. Aurelia herself is, according to Stihi, “a number of ways of female presence in the male character's life. She has different faces but all of them have the same power of enchantment and seduction. They resemble witches pushing men deeper and deeper into the emptiness of death.”

Ilinca Stihi has worked as a director for Romanian Radio since 2005. In the past few years, she and her colleagues have been contributing to the organisation of the international radio competition, Grand Prix Nova, which she co-founded. She has won many awards at international festivals.

Music, sounds.

STAGE ASSISTANT: Get ready! We're starting in five minutes!

Sounds, breath, cars.

Backstage. Sound of a violin.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): And that silence is here. That waiting before... I'm trying to gather myself. To concentrate more than usual. I have tried to find different lucky charms throughout the years. I always feel so insecure... like an acrobat above the full hall who is contemplating the lethal distance and listening to the pulsating air, which is expanding below, and measuring the danger... listening to the audience, watching breathlessly, ready for a disaster. That is when I take a deep breath and jump.

I don't think about anything. I just play. That night, Concerto No. 1 for Violin and Orchestra by Max Bruch. I blend with the harmony. I listen. The violin rends the air and stimulates the orchestra. All of a sudden I feel the audience sliding with me on the violin's strings, and I almost hear them whispering prayers and poems in their minds. Their subtle whispering increases the tension of the music, filling it up. The music becomes human with that whispering. The hall becomes a cathedral and the concert a mass. I play the murmur of souls. The murmur of the souls that have united there. (*music*) I open my eyes and look at them. Later on, I realize that the image has changed. The bright blue has become darker. Then faces emerge from it gradually. The first row is full of men. Men in black tails, their white shirts shining in the cone of the stage spotlights. The violin ascends like smoke from a chimney. The air trembles with the high notes of the violin. In the more distant honeycombs of the hall, the faces change into indigo. Men in tails, with dark bags under their eyes, sacerdotal men, looking straight ahead, watching me. I can feel the orchestra behind me. The orchestra gives me energy, it grows, it unfolds, it storms the

hall. I lean my cheek against the violin. The cold varnish of the instrument reduces my fever. My forehead breaks out in a sweat. I am sweating profusely. I look around the room. The concert audience. And I see... in that uniform crowd of men, maybe to the middle or to the side, I see your red hat emerging, floating over a black sea. Your wide brimmed red hat. Under its fiery colour, I look for your face, but I don't recognize it. You're not here. I see Aurelia. And the violin falls silent. There is no orchestra. My ears no longer catch the music. No chord. Only the dumb, quavering air. Then, for the first time in my life I become deaf. My hands continue to handle the bow, I feel the tense muscles of my right arm, and the fingers moving rapidly, sliding the bow over the strings, and the stretched neck with the jugular standing out and the abundant sweat on the forehead and down the temples. But I cannot hear anything. I can see you. I look at you. I can't see your eyes. I can't see your soul. Only the red lips, whispering something. I strain my ears to hear it. (*ticking*) The silence is a deafening boulder. I concentrate. I stoop and I can hear: You have to come back.

AURELIA: (*whispers*) You have to come back.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): You have to come back.

AURELIA: You have to come back.

Sounds of a thunderstorm.

VIRTUOSO

Railway station. It's raining.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): A summer rainstorm.

Interior fast food restaurant atmosphere.

VIOLINIST (45 years old OFF): Aurelia and I are sitting in a fast food restaurant. We eat sandwiches, chewing slowly.

(**VIOLINIST** 25 years old: (*making small talk with Aurelia*) I wanted to say I

really like it here. Do you come here often? Is this your favourite café? (...)

AURELIA: Enjoy your meal. **VIOLINIST** 25 years old: Enjoy.)

All hell has broken loose outside, but here we are like in a fish tank and things have their usual order. Outside, murky waste water is being poured onto the windows, but inside, however, you can hear the familiar rustling of food packaging and there is an intoxicating smell. A few guests with luggage under their tables, the uniformed employees with their fake smiles. Officially, everything is all right. Until a lizard carried by the wind is smashed against the window with a loud bang. (*sound of the lizard smashed against the window*) The poor creature's intestines have stuck on the wet glass, where they remained. We all try to somehow avoid the sight.

AURELIA: What are you doing?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I'm putting aside pieces of carrot. I don't like it.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): Orange strips are lined up on the edge of the tray. Their vivid colour contrasts the grey assaulting us through the transparent walls.

AURELIA: What time is the train?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I don't know.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): Aurelia starts laughing. It's a tiny giggle, like a mouse squeaking.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I don't know. I made such an effort to remember the time we were supposed to meet that I have forgotten what time the train leaves.

AURELIA: But I don't know how much time we have.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Neither do I. What time was it – two or three o'clock?

AURELIA: You know what? Look at the ticket.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Oh yes, you're right.

Cinema.

VIOLINIST (45 year old, OFF): Even back then, although we were so young, I adored her ability of forgiving me everything. I had lost the tickets. When the sky cleared up a bit, we walked out wading through the puddles to the nearest cinema. But I knew that would never happen. She would wear it everywhere. It was like her satellite antenna. (**AURELIA**: He loves me, he loves me not. (*the film La Dolce Vita in the background*) Her thoughts emerged under the wide brim, and people couldn't take their eyes off her.

My memories are the women who I have admired. Who I looked at. Who I loved. My thoughts absorbed their faces, their steps, their gestures. (*Marcello, where are you?*) I find myself in them. Many people might say that I am a womanizer... I find myself in my memories of the women, in their cries of desperation, in the slap on the face, in caresses, in orgasm. Even in moments of constant silence. (*Marcello, come here...*)

Apartment of the couple. In the bed.

AURELIA: Are you sleeping?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Hm.

AURELIA: Don't sleep. Get up, honey. Come and talk to me.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): No, I'm sleeping.

AURELIA: You want me to tell your fortune?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): You know I'm not curious about that.

AURELIA: A-ha. You're afraid.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): (*yawns*) Let's say I am pessimistic.

AURELIA: And what if I tell you something nice? I mean it! I'm good at this.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Then I'll be disappointed.

AURELIA: Why?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Just because.

AURELIA: But why?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Just because.

AURELIA: Why?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Because I already knew that.

Interior. Sounds of a deaf person.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): Let's call it a premonition. It was useful for something. Since then I have only imagined what people are saying. I try to remember or imagine how I would like it to sound. Since then, I've been able to be anyone, because I am capable of being ubiquitous. I can enter or sidestep reality whenever I want. The fact that I don't understand people absolves me from responsibility.

She's here. She comes every day. She has abandoned her hats. I don't know why. She wears her hair in a tight bun with no trace of coquetry. Don't worry, dear, I love you just the way you are. She looks tired, faded. I think that she still loves me, though I'm just fooling myself. The only thing that you can read in her gaze is pity. Pity. She comes here out of pity. To take care of a cripple. A deaf man. I love her nonetheless. And here she is, talking to me. I look at her lipstick with delight and I imagine sweet words. ***You are the first man I love, and I am probably the first woman to love you so much. If this is not a sort of marriage blessed by heaven, then the word love is empty of meaning. Then let it be a true betrothal in which the wife lets go, saying: The time has come!***

AURELIA: *(screaming)* Come on and do something!

(sound of a slap in the face)

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I suddenly feel a slap on the cheek. Another one. From the veins standing out on her neck I understand she's screaming.

AURELIA: *(screaming)* Like a child! Come on, you're not a cripple!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): She has a pitiful expression in her face. People have pitiful expressions in their faces when they scream. Pitiable.

AURELIA: ... you're so stubborn! You don't want to get over that! You don't want to learn to talk in sign language. You don't want to use the damn hearing

aid, maybe you'll hear something! (*hearing aid falls onto the floor*)

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): Yes, yes. The hearing aid. It whistles in my ear. Damn it! I hate it! Which is why it's always off. That is why I have it, dear, to be able to continue to love you and let you go. Let you go into the wide world, and let myself get into your breast pocket. There, deaf and silent, I'll always imagine how your heart beats.

I am in the bathroom. *Banalities*. Everything has become so estranged since I lost my hearing. *Banalities*. An alien, barren space, unliveable. Where am I? What keeps you alive when you risk going through life's loops, is banalities. *Banalities*.

I try to imagine noise... to remember human voices...

Music.

At the beer garden. Birds singing; carriage.

FRIEND IN FRANCE: Salut, Gérard, salut! Spring is here.

WAITER: A beer, as usual?

FRIEND IN FRANCE: Yeah.

Interior.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): It's a love-and-hate game. Just like between us, darling. Life gets numb when it becomes a habit. You start learning that when you're a kid.

Mother's apartment.

MOTHER: You're up? Come here. Have you brushed your teeth?

SON (Violinist as a child): Yeah.

MOTHER: Kiss me. Have you washed your face?

SON: Yeah.

MOTHER: Now eat. But blow your nose first.

Interior.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): In the evening, you sleep. If you dream, you forget everything in the morning. Or you pretend you have forgotten. It's not good to become a dreamer. To walk down the street knowing you have dreamed. To look at your friends knowing you have dreamed. "Dreams are a second life" as someone once said that. I might have read it somewhere. Or have I dreamed of it?

Now I return to you, Aurelia. Your hat rests against the backrest. Its curved brim looks as if it was being caressed by the wind. (*sound of wind*) I imagine the wind. Outside, in a huge field. One of those where you sense infinity, or you ask yourself: when did the sky become sown with wheat? It reflects blue and gold colour, obviously. (*Aurelia: He loves me, he loves me not. He loves me, he loves me not.*) It reflects the wind. You are reflected in it. You are reliving your childhood.

Flashback. Meadow.

AURELIA: I'll make a daisy wreath for you.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): Revlon 509. And love keeps whistling madly in my head. That hat!

Couple's apartment. In bed.

AURELIA: When did you wake up?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I am very tired.

(*kisses*)

AURELIA: You have to rest.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I can't take a rest at night.

AURELIA: Pull down the blinds.

(music)

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): The blinds! That's a sound I miss.

AURELIA: Come here...

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What are you doing?

AURELIA: Come closer...

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Wait...

AURELIA: I have a surprise for you.

(sound of a violin, other sounds)

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): The other day I watched a documentary about war on Discovery. All those bombs falling down the sky! All those leaden elephants walking around in the sky! It agitated me terribly. The silence became deafening. And then, to calm myself, I remembered the blinds. How they are pulled up and down. Up and down. Like fans, sweeping the air. Like lungs. Measuring time.

Sound of a violin.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I remember my mother. I can recall her because I know her too well. She's mine. She belongs to me. Or... maybe it's the other way around... Mother... Mother always wanted me to be a violinist. What else could you expect from a failed opera singer?

Flashback. Mother's apartment.

MOTHER: I'm going to have a baby. I don't even know what I want it to be like. I want it to love music. To have golden hands. When it plays, I want people to stop and listen (*giggles, another reminiscence of La Dolce Vita*) Isn't it strange? I've always imagined being the mother of a great musician! How foolish! As if it were so easy to influence one's destiny!

Motel room.

Violinist 25 makes love to a prostitute.

GLORIA: It hurts... it hurts!

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Gloria! Gloria!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): This room is a senseless half-shadow.

GLORIA: Are you done? We still have half an hour left.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What do you think about... between... during breaks... you know what I mean.

GLORIA: I never think of sex. *(He laughs, "ok". She lights a cigarette.)*

Never. I think of simple things. For instance, what it would be like to set off on a journey... anywhere... walking any street... but it must be a street... a pavement... or maybe between cars... but not in traffic. The pace has to be even... The steps... the rhythm... the same. Even at night. Always forward. Without having to think where to go. And if a passer-by wanted to ask you, "miss, what street is this?", you wouldn't stop, but you would know the answer. And in your mind you'd say: I have no idea. *(music, steps)* I have no idea. It would be my amusement. Wouldn't it be great? To feel like laughing. To laugh. And walk on. Your feet don't hurt as if you don't have any. Just high heels. High heels clicking on the pavement.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I can hear Gloria. She keeps walking, walking, walking. Like a metronome. Keeps walking, walking, walking.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What's that?

GLORIA: A strange guy. *(violin playing)* He comes here, always takes the same girl, and plays to her. Long and sadly. I always cry when I listen to him. Look, even now. Even if you're here.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I'm leaving.

GLORIA: Fine.

(He grabs her, she hisses with pain.)

VIOLINIST (25 years old): You know I'd never hurt you.

GLORIA: I know that.

Flashback. Violinist's apartment. Banging on the door.

NEIGHBOUR: Hey! Stop that scraping!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): What can I say? People need their peace and quiet.

Exterior. City. Construction site. Traffic, construction noises. Bulldozer.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Why have you brought me here?

AURELIA: Can you see that machine?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What?

AURELIA: That huge crane. Can you see it? It looks incredible to me. Like a fantastic animal created by man.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What are you saying?

AURELIA: Every time I look at it, I feel proud. I feel proud that I am here and now, got it?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I can't hear you!

She laughs.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What? I can't hear you!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): But I can't hear. (*Sounds of water.*) Strange. I had said that many times when I still had two perfectly good ears. I can't hear... which means you should run away from here. Silence gives you freedom. You look around and you make up your own words, sounds, music... (*sounds of the sea*) Let's take the sea. You can't hear it. I think that this is why the sea is so noisy. It makes you not hear it. And you put (*sounds of a construction site*) the noise of a construction site in its place. The sea and the construction site. We have... the sea and then the construction site. And gradually you understand something. Something about buildings and nature. Something about the armless

Venus de Milo. She couldn't do anything. Just look, accept, love.

City. Construction site.

WOMAN: Make way! Make way! ...the child!

AURELIA: What happened?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Let's go.

AURELIA: What happened?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Let's go.

AURELIA: Tell me what happened.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): A child got crushed by the crane.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): When I dream, I hear a lot. Especially music. Last night, for instance... I had a dream.

Big old 19th century palace.

The dream.

VIOLINIST (45 years old): I'm lost. This building is huge. Lots of corridors. I'm walking, but I don't know where. I can hear something. Maybe behind this door... *(sound of a violin)* No. There are only students studying. Quietly. Let's go on. Voices! Here? *(sound of a violin, he opens another door)* Greek... *(grabs the door handle, breathes)* Here... here... Corridors. Narrow. I can barely make it through. *(music)* This rock will crush me. Ah! I've crawled through a hole. Again, corridors. Here... *(opens another door)* Latin. It's not here. *(bangs the door)*

BUTLER: Welcome to our hotel, sir... Let me take you to your room.

VIOLINIST (45 years old): Again corridors. Corridors... low lights.

BUTLER: Follow me, please.

VIOLINIST (45 years old): This hotel looks just like a 19th-century building. I can't wait to see the window.

BUTLER: Follow me, please. I'll take you upstairs.

VIOLINIST (45 years old) *(to the Butler)* Hold on! Hold on! I'll just stop at the window. To watch the traffic!

Opens the window. Sound of a giant bird, fluttering its wings in the window.

BUTLER *from afar*: Shut the window!

VIOLINIST (45 years old): Its plumage is red. Its wings are full of the colours of the rainbow. Thick fog is hovering in my mouth.

Flashback. Mother's apartment.

MOTHER: Shut the window.

SON: Yes, mommy!

MOTHER: OK, darling! It got cold outside. You'll catch a cold!

SON: Mommy, you're never going to die, right?

MOTHER: Never, darling! *(kisses him)*

SON: I love you mommy!

MOTHER: Really?

SON: I love you more than the whole world, more than the Universe, more than the entire galaxy!

Interior.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I'm holding the violin. We look at each other. It's silent. I touch it. It's silent. I wish I could smash it into pieces, but I can't. I can still remember its sound... generally.

I look at the pendulum clock and the violin is silent. I follow its every movement. I don't want to take my eyes off it. Like a metronome. In Max Bruch's Concerto for Violin and Orchestra No. 1.

19th century hotel reception.

RECEPTIONIST: Aren't you the famous violinist?

VIOLINIST (45 years old): Yes, I am.

RECEPTIONIST: I recognized you. You stayed at our hotel many years ago.

VIOLINIST (45 years old): That's right...

RECEPTIONIST: You were with a friend...

VIOLINIST (45 years old): I haven't seen him for a long time.

RECEPTIONIST: He committed suicide.

VIOLINIST (45 years old): How do you know?

RECEPTIONIST: It happened right here. He committed suicide in our hotel. We had to deal with the police a lot. It seems that he wanted to write a suicide letter. But, for some reason, he wrote only one letter on the paper. We know he was in love...

VIOLINIST (45 years old): What letter?

RECEPTIONIST: The letter "A."

VIOLINIST (45 years old): Aurelia...

AURELIA: Aurelia.

Interior. A squeaky sound.

VIOLINIST: (45 years old, OFF): There is a party in the kitchen. Well... something's being celebrated. Since I went deaf I have insisted on being pushed around in a wheelchair.

Aurelia's apartment. Aurelia is coming...

AURELIA: What are you thinking about, honey?

VIOLINIST (45 years old, *yelling*): What am I thinking about? What am I thinking about? What kind of question is that?! I'm thinking of never seeing you again.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): They have all fallen silent. Looking at me. No one eats. They were probably talking about the weather. So I try to play an encore:

VIOLINIST (45 years old): So what? (*laughs madly*)

AURELIA: Honey...

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): And yet nothing happens.

I dream again. A pendulum clock.

Street and fantastic places.

Dream.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, off): The clock strikes midnight. I'm walking home, and raising my eyes I see the number of a building under the street light. It is the same as my age. *(The sound of a chasm opening)* A chasm opens, one that crosses the earth. To the other side of the world.

Girl speaks in an unknown language.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I don't understand... I can hear you, but I don't understand...

GIRL: *She speaks in an unknown language. Sound of violin.*

OLD MAN: Your brothers are waiting for you at the table.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I get emotional. I feel like crying. I am proud. The Patriarchs of the Bible and the Queens of the Orient are holding a feast. Solomon and the Queen of Sheba are leading the assembly in the finest garments of Asia. I recognize in their faces the divine features of my family.

GIRL: *You have to come back... (in an unknown language)*

MALE VOICE: You have to come back.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I'm hugging you all, I'm crying! Farewell!
Farewell!

Cut

Couple's apartment.

AURELIA: What's the matter with you?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I can't stand this noise any more! It's driving me crazy!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): Blinds.

AURELIA: Come into bed.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What are you doing?

AURELIA: Lower the blinds. Come here...

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I can't at night.

AURELIA: (*kisses him*) You must have a rest.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I'm very tired.

AURELIA: When did you wake up?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Someone once said: "Dreams are a second life." I might have read it somewhere. Or I have dreamed of it.

Apartment near the construction site.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): What's matter with you?

AURELIA: I can't stand this noise any more! It's driving me crazy!

VIOLINIST (45 year old): We should live somewhere else.

AURELIA: We can't. This is where we live.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): I'm unhappy. Why are you standing with your back to me?

AURELIA: I'm peeling potatoes.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): Come and give me a hug.

AURELIA: You know what I think about when I peel potatoes?

The noise is more and more intense. It seems like the building is going to collapse.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): This building's going to collapse!

AURELIA: You know what I think about when I peel potatoes?

VIOLINIST (45 year old): I can't hear anything any more.

AURELIA: You know what I think about when I peel potatoes?

VIOLINIST (45 year old): I can't hear anything any more.

Young violinist's apartment.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): He looks at the violin case. It is empty. On

the table there is a strange disorder. It is a jumble of wires and devices. He is tired.

Aurelia's funeral.

A door opens. Discreet murmuring inside.

- *(to the Violinist)* Come in... you're expected...

Pieces of conversation from inside are getting to him as he steps forward.

- And that's when I told the seller... if you think that this is how you do business...
- Nowadays... services are worse and worse.

AURELIA: Why did he forget me?

- Look at her terrible clothes!
- Relax, dear, your blood pressure is going to go up!

AURELIA: Since that day I was peeling the potatoes for lunch you have disappeared.

- *(to the Violinist)* Follow me...
- How much longer do we have to stay?
- Behave yourself.
- But my feet hurt. And the food is terrible.

AURELIA: I can't understand how people appear and disappear in my life. You are cruel.

- *(to the Violinist)* Come with me. Follow me...

AURELIA: Don't tell me that you've never loved me! That would mean you are too good a liar! And if you loved me, it means that you still love me. You were touched by the passion that survives everyone, that keeps humility and unhappiness to itself, giving you the freedom of imagination in exchange. A love which doesn't complain about instability but about unfairness.

BUTLER: Follow me, sir.

AURELIA: It will be too late when I die. What would you say? Where would you find me?

BUTLER: Follow me, sir.

AURELIA: What would you say if I were dead by the time you got back?
I love you. A.

– *(to the Violinist)* Look at her! Isn't she beautiful?

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): *sounds of a deaf man*
This is the last day of my life.

19th century hotel corridors.

BUTLER: Follow me. I'll take you upstairs.

VIOLINIST (45 years old): This hotel looks just like a 19th-century building.
Hold on a second! I want to watch the traffic.

BUTLER: Watch out! There'll be a draught!

VIOLINIST (45 years old): The street is so narrow, the building on the opposite side is so close that I feel as if I were looking through a light shaft.

Flashback. At a beer garden in France.

FRIEND IN FRANCE: Salut, Gérard, salut. It's spring once again! It's spring once again, Gérard!

Sound of a violin.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): And after all this, nothing happened.

Violin maker's workshop.

MAN: What would you like?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I'd like to work in your workshop.

MAN: I don't understand.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I will work as much as you want, you don't have to pay me anything. *(The man disagrees.)* I just want you to let me make a violin.

And I want the violin to be mine.

MAN: It doesn't sound like a serious proposal... You come here just like that, in the middle of the night...

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Please, sir, I implore you! My hands hurt...

MAN: Leave, or I'll call the police!

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Please, sir, I implore you! My hands hurt...

MAN: Get out of here! No!

Violinist kills the man.

Interior.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): They call him Violinist. He always plants a homemade bomb hidden in a violin's sound box. I don't know why, but I am sure that if anyone is going to meet him... face to face..., it will be me.

In a prison cell.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): What did you get arrested for?

VIOLINIST (45 year old): This is the last day of my life.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Are you crazy?

VIOLINIST (45 year old): Who knows? What's that stick in your hand?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): A violin bow. I hid it in my trousers.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): It's broken.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Yeah.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): How come you're in jail?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Because there was no other way.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): Your hands are trembling. You keep rubbing them. Are you sick?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): Hmm... They miss something. You're very curious.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): Sorry, I didn't want to bother you. (*Violinist 25 hums a tune.*) But why did they arrest you?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): For murder.

VIOLINIST (45 year old): Did you kill someone?

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I can't even remember how many...

VIOLINIST (45 year old): This is the last day of my life.

VIOLINIST (25 years old): I know.

Street.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): The streets look like concert halls. Concert halls full of people, waiting for the beginning. Instruments are being tuned, there's bustle, coughing, and... boom!

Music ends.

Street at the outskirts of the town.

SNAKE: Hey, violinist! Take that stuff of yours and get the hell out of here!

This is our street, you see?! You're driving away our customers!

Running steps.

GLORIA: No! No! Leave him alone! I've told him to go away!

SNAKE: Stupid whore!

She falls down, the two fight.

GLORIA: Leave him alone!

SNAKE: Bastard! Don't you ever come back! *Snake leaves.*

The prostitute comes closer to the Violinist.

GLORIA: Are you ok? Did he hurt you badly?

Walking.

GLORIA: Why are you crying? Is it for the violin? Throw it away... Come on... let go of the bow. It's broken. Come with me, ok? Don't fall behind. If you fall behind you'll get lost. You really wanted to take that case and the violin with you. That violin is ruined. It's been broken into pieces. Come on. It's getting in your way. You're lagging behind. My high heels, with their painful pride, are

digging into the cement. That's right. Freely. Keep walking. Your feet don't hurt. It's like having no feet at all. Don't stop. Walk with me. Don't run. You have to always walk the same way. Keep the pace. The same way. Fine, you got ahead of me. And now? Why are you walking backwards? Why are you looking at me like this? You want to talk but you can't? Your bow's broken. Your violin's been smashed into pieces. You'll trip... *she trips*. Ouch, that hurts! I hurt my knee, but I keep walking. You see? I'm walking. Following you. Are you cold? Keep walking and you'll get warm. One of my heels got broken off, but I keep walking. I'm following you. Even though it's hard. You're walking too fast. I'm walking too fast. And you're walking backwards without getting tired. If only you could play with that bow, hold that violin... You're raising your arm. That's not good. It's keeping you from walking. It's not natural to walk like this, backwards and with an arm raised. What are people going to say? Well, there's no one in the street. I guess I'll have to stop. God, I'm so tired. And, after all, I got so close to you. I'm almost in your arms. We're almost hugging. Like two lovers. It's funny for me to talk about lovers. I'm tired. Hug me, but don't kill me.

The Violinist strangles her.

Street on the outskirts of the town.

Police sirens.

POLICEMAN: Police. Stop! In the name of the law – stop!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): God, what have I done? Who am I? Why did I leave home today? And especially, why did I take the violin with me? I only have the bow left. And it is broken.

POLICEMAN: Stop! Stop!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): The street is strangely empty. Only at its end there are some coloured lights... blue and red... something's happened. Something's happened.

POLICEMAN: Stay where you are! Hands up!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): I'm finally where I should be. Here where I can be useful. Finally, something's happened. Now that I'm finished with music, I have to find another job. I want no more concert halls and scores. I don't want to start to keep a journal and write a memoir as my impresario advised me warmly, his eyes moist with compassion, ready to cry money again. I don't want films to be made based on my life! I want to be close to people. I want to help them, to be near them, close to their suffering and imperfections. Something's happened here, and I won't keep away from it.

POLICEMAN: Hands up! Stop!

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): No, not like this. (*sound of violin*) Doubly handicapped. Among the good normal people, you have to be a viable individual. And that is how I came to be deaf. At least I'm not limping. What good is this bow to me? Strange... I'm trying to get rid of it. It's like it's stuck in my hand. But, with a conductor's gesture...

POLICEMAN: Drop the weapon! Drop the weapon! Stop! Hands up! Put your hands up!!!

VIOLINIST: Here! Hallo!

Shots fired.

VIOLINIST (45 years old, OFF): (*sounds of a deaf man, sound of a violin*) They've come to me. They are so kind! All these policemen have come here to hug me... (**Policeman:** *Stop that, keep lying. It'll be all right.*) I love you all! I love you all! Oh, if only you knew how much I'd like to know what you are saying! (**Policeman:** *Don't move. Keep lying. Keep lying on the ground!*) To hear for one second something else than these torments of the violin...

Music.