

Marnie couldn't decide if her first violin was worth carrying. The evacuation deadline was in two weeks. Her mom wanted to leave early to avoid traffic on the bridges. Marnie knew she would be leaving before her.

At fifteen, it was Marnie's first Float reallocation. It was her mom's third. Marnie thought it seemed too easy for her mom to choose what would sink. She walked around the house, sifting things into piles like it was an everyday chore. Kitchen supplies? Recycled. Her grandmother's ring? Carry. Marnie wondered if one day she'd be able to extract herself from her life with the same ease.

The sea breeze circulated through the open windows of the house. The Network was anchored in the Southern portion of the Great Sea, where winds were constant. A large reef system nearby broke the waves, keeping them small. It was a good location for a floating society. She could hear kids outside yelling about points in a made up game. For a moment Marnie was jealous. They were too young to understand they were playing on a slowly sinking ship.

She looked back at the child-sized violin. It had been 3D printed from recycled polylactic acid derived from corn starch. Wooden violins were rare and expensive. Timber is grown and harvested only on designated Rare Earthen Materials Floats. Prices had been high ever since one sank three years ago. Marnie had visited one once on a fieldtrip and seen the long lines of trees. She remembered thinking they were strange—taller and with spikey leaves instead of the rounded, flat ones that decorated trees in her neighborhood's planned urban green space. Conifers, their guide had called them, grown for their softwood.

They'd talked about the delay in the new timber Float in class. "As you know, when a Float's weight-bearing platform begins showing signs of degradation, engineers from the Authority Node immediately begin preparing to launch a replacement Float." Her teacher had said.

"Unfortunately, the R.E.M. Float was delayed after one of the seafloor anchors disconnected because of a marine debris strike. Now, who can tell me why prior landed civilizations generated so much marine trash?"

Marnie put the violin in the box, then peered at the scale below it. The weight recalibrated—1.5 pounds heavier—not worth it. She couldn't risk getting investigated at the bridge's weight station. Not with *it* in her cart.

The cracks in their Float's foundation reached critical designation after the Third Tidal Quarter when the waters were coldest and the tides most extreme. It was fairly common on older Floats. The historic engineers of the Network had been dealing with a lot: sea-levels rising, mass extinction, extreme and erratic precipitation, crop failure, and PFAs. Their design was improved as years went on and humanity was able to dedicate more time to durability instead of survival.

The first Floats were launched hundreds of years ago—human-made, self-contained platforms that floated on the water, islands capable of supporting civilization. The Floats rise and fall with the tides, staying in their place with long, flexible cords anchored to the seafloor. Marnie had grown up on a designated Urban Float called Burmadei near the center of the Network.

Burmadei's age meant it wasn't worth repairing. Replacing old nodes wasn't a high priority. Residents would be reallocated.

In the inner nodes, weight was strictly regulated. All items were to flow through the circular economy. Nothing was superfluous; everything that contributed to the gravity of the Float contributed to society. Really, she should have given up the violin when her shoulders outgrew it. The newer Floats added to the outer rings of the Network could hold more weight. Marnie had heard they were more lenient there, but no one she knew had ever been to an outer Float.

The violin's not the worst thing she kept. She and her mom were supposed to get rid of it in a few days before they had to evacuate. Not it, *Him*. Her mom wanted to do it together. Scatter his ashes into the sea like they should've done months ago. Marnie would have to take him and leave before then.

According to Network law, all human remains must be offloaded within a month of the death. They couldn't afford the weight on the inner nodes, but Marnie couldn't do it. When they had gone the first time to one of the peers, she had broken down. She was inconsolable. Her mom had agreed to wait another week. Then another. Another. Until they were flagrantly ignoring Network rules.

The sea gets everything, Marnie thought. Marnie didn't want to give her dad to the waters. She put the violin in the box headed for the materials recycling facility.

She'd heard that there were still communities on land, where they didn't have enough water. They had to pray for rain and micromanage every drop they got. She thinks she might have preferred that if it meant she could keep her things, her house, and her dad.

Of course, Marnie knew that they were lucky. They had gotten a good reassignment. She was moving outwards. Everyone said that she should be grateful. As soon as she made it past the bridge with him stashed in her cart, she would be.