

Through the Gap in the Curtains

Will life ever be the same again?

My flat is unrecognisable, scarred by war and barely standing, but despite all this it is still my home – it always will be. Sitting alone, jagged pieces of shattered glass stare at me menacingly and chunks of cement submerge the floor of my bedroom. A gust of raw, wintry wind penetrates my body, sending a spiteful shiver down my spine. For twelve harrowing months we have been trapped in this devastating war, prisoners in our own homes. There seems to be no end to this heart-breaking misery and the arrival of winter has only accentuated this. The deafening roar from the planes has now become an everyday occurrence and the overwhelming fear when the bombs fall is slowly breaking me. Terror and horror torment me day and night: death, destruction and distress. The agonising pain of recent events weighs heavily upon my timorous body like a cold, hard stone compressing my chest, slowly suffocating my soul.

Through the small crack in my bedroom door, I can see the dim, flickering candlelight from the room next door. Every night, I hear the muffled sounds of my mother crying herself to sleep. Without Dad here, she is inconsolable, her heart has been broken into a thousand tiny pieces. Sometimes, I even wonder myself if he will ever return home - my beloved Dad, my protector, my world, where are you right now? I can see the unbearable pain burning constantly in my mother's eyes and her face is a ghostly white, drained of all colour, happiness and hope. I know I am slowly losing her and despite the fact she is in the room next door, she is nearly gone. Weighed down by dread, fighting for our survival, she has become detached from her normal self; I can sense it. Her legs shiver frantically and she is almost half mad with fear. It is petrifying.

Suddenly, the ragged curtains in the corner of my bedroom flicker and dance mournfully in the gusty, cold wind. Edging tentatively towards the window, my mind races and I torment myself with conflicting feelings of both terror and hope. Do I allow myself to fall slowly into this place of calm? Unable to fight the feelings and desperate for the sense of freedom, I escape one more time...

Imaginary or not, through the tiny gap in my curtains, I see a lush, emerald field, untouched by war and I begin to drift into a safe haven. Excited, radiant children play unharmed and large family groups gather – happiness in abundance. Closing my eyes and filling my lungs with one huge breath, it smells clean, like a fairy-tale. I can make out the sound of free birds flying gracefully overhead and bustling roads are filled with animated people navigating the cobbled streets of my beloved hometown.

Life before was so magical; I took for granted any feelings of happiness and friends, who I now long to even catch a glimpse of. Frequent family visits and street parties used to make my heart glow and sing with a happiness I have missed them so terribly. The familiarity of warm, mouth-watering cooking prepared by my father flooded our neighbourhood with delight, making my heart sing with joy. These are all feelings I want to hold onto for eternity. The gap in the curtains is like a precious diamond to me – it is a symbol of both hope and promise for a dream like future. A radiant white light at the end of a seemingly never-ending tunnel, it is guiding me through the darkness like a torch trying to find the safest route out of what seems to be a perpetual nightmare.

“Bang!” My body jolts violently like an electric shock has been sent down my spine as a loud boom outside brings me rudely back to my senses. The room is vibrating as the tower block swings and sways like a deadly pendulum in the sky. My mother’s distressing screams echo through the walls as I hang onto the bed rail to steady myself. Staring at the cracked, dull wall and the shattered glass of the broken windowpane, I feel crestfallen as the reality of life at this moment comes flooding back to me.

A lonely tear rolls slowly down my cheek and, for now, I am reminded, so painfully, that the gap in the curtains is my only hope.

Through the gap in the curtains

The curtains fluttered elegantly in the cool night air, keeping the secret of what lay beyond them a mystery. They were adorned with patterns of roses, however the old fabric was thinning and patchy, as though the life was being drawn from the once youthful flowers. Shafts of moonlight seethed through the cloth and dappled the abandoned bedroom, like the sun shining through a canopy of trees and mottling a forest pathway. No one had ever drawn back those curtains to reveal what was behind them. That was, no one until today.

Anabelle Reilly stood in the centre of the room. Her breathing was quick with anticipation as her hand lingered in front of the drawn curtains, shaking slightly. People at her school knew about this neglected house, so of course, rumours spread about it like wildfire. She had heard one girl saying how a boy once ventured across the forest just to explore the rejected building, but he had never returned. Anabelle had deemed it as nonsense but a fraction of her was curious. Curiosity killed the cat, they say. She hoped she wouldn't be as unfortunate as the cat.

Despite being certain the paranormal wasn't true, Anabelle found herself hesitant to pull aside the curtains. Her quivering hand reached out and finally she clutched the heavy curtain and drew it aside with a bated breath. The room was instantly soaked in a pastel, ethereal glow, unveiling a world that she could only imagine in her wildest fantasies. The landscape stretched before her, a nonpareil of unearthly beauty, with long curves of sand that seemed to disappear into the night like haunting, twisting trails, their ends linking to riddles and wonders, to towns unspoken of, or to a vast void where spirits were rumoured to roam.

She found herself unable to comprehend what was displayed in front of her. It was like another world; a vast desert entangled with a twisted sense of beauty like no other. Anabelle felt drawn to it, her feet moving without her brain asking them to, until her face was inches away from the old, open window. Anabelle stood idle, wishing herself to proceed forward and through the window frame, forward into the desert that lay enticingly before her in all its vast and alien beauty. It was as if the wilderness was calling her name, and her heart felt such longing for this place she had never been. Tentatively, she crept forward and through the window frame, until her feet were planted firmly in the cool sand.

As Anabelle stood on the edge of the mystical desert, a realization dawned over her. The shifting sands told tales of souls finding solace in this timeless expanse and the wind whispered secrets of the afterlife. As the moon dipped below the horizon line and casted a silver haze upon the land, Anabelle showed a bittersweet smile. She knew she had found her perpetual resting place. The final chapter of her story had been written, and her spirit danced amongst the dunes, forever a part of the ethereal desert's tapestry.

The Power of Music

The enchanting, titanium white moon illuminated down onto the surface. I stood petrified as the fear I was facing seemed to be moving tantalisingly closer. The fierce, blinding, blue lights rained down on me like a spitting glacier of ice. My skin trickled ~~trickled~~ as the thousands of eager eyes gazed at me in anticipation, waiting for me, not to let them down. I raised my plectrum in the air, clutching onto the guitar in my other hand. My palm began to sweat. My heart started pounding like a bolt of lightning.

The microphone sat tempting on the tall black stand, luring me in as I took one steady step forward. I breathed and breathed but my insides disagreed with me. I couldn't stand there any longer. I bolted off the stage as a roar bellowed from the crowd; that's when I saw her.

My granny stood, barely on the corner of the stage. The crowd couldn't see her but I could. Her diamond eyes smiling at me warmly. Her soft skin on the palm of her hand as she lifted it to wave at me. I loved the way she gestured. The way she comforted me when I was worried. I felt a flood of tears ready to cascade out. I rushed over to her and wrapped my arms around her. Like a panda, she stood with her soft, elegant shawl around her neck. I stared at her frail body. "Granny!" I cried as she let out a warm, innocent chuckle. "Hi vivienne," she coughed. My grandma had been sick for quite some time now. I was so glad that she could come to see me play at my first concert.

"What's wrong vivienne sweetie?" granny murmured. I stood with a blank expression, took a long, deep breath and whispered, "Granny, I don't think I can play. I'm too scared."

My granny only laughed gently, amused by my terrified, squeaky tone of voice.

"Vivienne," she said. She shuffled closer to me. "Sing it for me. Go on." I couldn't refuse. I trembled as I reached out for my old, crooked, acoustic guitar. I watched as granny admired the thin, wire strings being brushed along by my hand. I began to play it to her.

I let the faint, doubted words splutter out. As I reached the chorus, my hands began to unstiffen. My tense, trembling legs eased out of the state of fear and dread I was in. I lifted myself off the ground and held my granny's hand. She let out another concerning cough. I stopped. "Keep... pla... playing." She stammered. I stood motionless. "Please, it will make me better. I must go to the hospital tomorrow. I must also not forget your first concert. It always makes me better when I hear you play," granny explained. I let go of her hand. I walked on stage. I began to play.

*Drifting off in a deep sleep,
Waiting for the sun to rise at dawn.
Climbing up a mountain so steep,
Like nothing I've climbed before.*

This time, the words didn't just blurt out, they rivered out like a waterfall. I felt tranquil as I sang the words. I felt better, like a hundred weights had been lifted from my shoulders. Most of all, I turned to face granny. Her eyes twinkled when they lit up. Her smile reminded me that music fixes everything. I realised that when I'm playing, all my worries vanish. That's the power of music.

The next morning, the blazing, crimson ball of light beamed onto my house. I arose from my long, revitalising slumber. I stretched my arms out like an elastic band and whipped on my clothes. When I went downstairs I heard fierce, ferocious footsteps fumbling around. Dad was pacing back and forth like he was waiting for something. "Honey!" He yelled as I swam my way through mom's clumps of washing hung above me. "What is it dad..." I croaked. "It's... about your granny." He replied. I paused.

I chewed on my fingernails as dad drove me through the endless grey streets. What was going on? I thought. Was granny alright? I had no clue. Then we reached the ~~too~~ tall, white building that loomed over our van.

"Dad... why are we at the hospital?" I whispered. All of a sudden dad's face lit up with an enormous beam.

"We've come to take granny home." He smiled. I froze.

"What..?" I replied.

"They say it was a miracle, the nurses, but granny says it was something to do with your concert yesterday. I don't quite know what she means," dad grinned.

"I do." I whispered under my breath. I ran up to granny and squeezed her tight.

The Power of Music

Music is a large part of our lives whether we realise it or not. You may be in the supermarket shopping with the background music playing on the intercom or in the car with the radio on—if you think about it, music is essentially the soundtrack of our lives. But what is the true purpose of music, to be in the background? I asked a range of people across the generations to share their thoughts on the power of music in their lives, and I was surprised by the range of responses. Here are their thoughts:

Firstly, I asked a primary school headteacher about the importance of music in education. She believes that children should be introduced to music from a young age to express themselves. Today, music is highly expressive and reflects national and cultural identities from all over the world. In addition, she thinks that children should be introduced to a wide variety of music - classical and contemporary so that they are aware of the different styles and can experience the joy of music. We are lucky to have a wide range of music genres today: pop, rock, jazz, and everything in between - so many different genres that there is something for everyone. She says that children should have the chance to learn a simple musical instrument to produce music for themselves and share that joy with others. Despite this, some educators struggle to find time in the timetable for subjects like music in the curriculum with pressure on schools to perform in SATs tests.

I also asked a pensioner about the meaning of music in her life, and her response was moving. She spoke about how good music lifts her heart and how all kinds of music lift her spirits, also mentioning how it can almost 'bring you back' to an event since it strongly triggers memory. It rekindled a memory from when she was around ten when she went to see her dying little sister in hospital - the nurse came in, singing 'Moonlight Serenade' by Glenn Miller. "It brought me right back," she said, "I think music can bring you very close to people you know." Her story shows how the power of music can trigger memories of past experiences: joys and sorrows.

I asked a student about music in his life. He was talking about how music helps him relieve stress, especially with the hustle and bustle of school life. It demonstrates the incredible impact of music on our emotions: you might hear a song and feel calm or relaxed. Music is also highly personal: we all have our preferences in genres and songs. He says his favourite genre was alternative rock - with all these genres and songs, music has something to appeal to everyone because of its diversity!

Later, I asked a Catholic priest about music in the church. He says that the purpose of going to church is to give glory to God, and music (which can be the music itself or words set to the music) can give glory to God through its beauty and by the content of words. "Sometimes," he said, "when we are praying to God, we can simply say prayers or we can embellish them with music." He thinks music can even have the power to enhance the liturgy if it is beautiful. Originally, the psalms in the Bible were written to music. Today, the psalms still survive - we sing them today in church 2,000 years later!

I asked a deaf person what the absence of music had on his life as someone who had enjoyed music before losing his hearing. He said that he could still hear the music in his head from his younger days and frequently listened to the radio and the songs on his cassette player - sometimes he would stay up all night listening to it. "It's strange," he says, "You'd think when you lose your hearing that you might forget the music, but you don't." He said that it is hard to forget a tune if you have heard it a couple of times and that you do miss being able to listen to music but since it's still in your memory, you don't miss it as much.

To conclude, the power of music impacts people of all ages, whether they are teachers or students. Music has the power to trigger memories and emotion: a way to bring you back to an experience or the way you felt before, is highly expressive and can reflect cultural identity, is hard to forget, and can finally, survive the test of time. How does the power of music influence your life?

787 Words

The Power of Music

By Lukas A

As I jog to school through busy London streets, rushing to beat the bell,

I am grooving to the rhythm that is playing in my ears.

After a three-week Easter break, I still manage to arrive late,

just to find out that we start off the day with music,

I know – how ‘boring’, right?!

I have always loved music since I was a small child,

but if only the teachers could put more effort into us actually playing music,

not just listening to the monotonous classical tones.

Its time for a change, it’s not the 1800s,

The world has progressed, and so has music,

Why not deep dive into hip hop?

Have you ever heard the quote:

“Never be afraid of trying something new because life gets boring?”

I have been daydreaming in all the classes, thinking of beats,

at least, the day is over now. It felt like an eternity!

While I stroll through the roads that guide me home,

at the corner of my eye I catch a sight of a school for hip hop and talented artists,

wow, this might just be exactly what I have been secretly looking for!

“Auditions on the 5th of May!” a voice shouted from behind.

“Thanks,” I responded, trying to hide my excitement.

The only problem is that my Mum is obsessed with academics;

Sadly, my dad passed away last year and he was the only one

who enjoyed me learning about hip hop, listening to it, performing and creating it.

I am going to have to use all my techniques of persuasion ...

'Family dinner' time has arrived, it is much more hectic than it should be,
my little brother keeps screaming and kicking,
because Mum forgot to put on his favourite TV show;
he's a little spoiled baby, who knows how to make it all about himself and what he enjoys,
depriving everybody else of peace and tranquility.

Eventually, I gather my courage to interrupt and to ask:

"While I was walking back from school, I came across this poster,
Which advertised auditions for Talented Hip hop artists,
..... and I was wondering if I could audition..."

"Haha, you are funny. You can try to audition, but what do I always say:

You are wasting your precious time!," responded Mum.

In my head I was asking myself: "Does my Mum really think that I am that bad?"

I guess she is just trying to politely convince me not to spend more money.

After months of practicing and putting hours of dedication, the D-day has arrived.

I lined up nervously, silently observing rejection after rejection,

but it was finally my time to shine.

As I introduced myself confidently to the judges, it didn't hesitate to turn the track on.

"Let me introduce you to the power of music, that'll never fail.

It's a universal language,

speaks to the soul,

makes you feel whole,

helps you reach your goal.

This is what music means to me.

From the beats to the rhymes, it's a symphony,

bringing people in perfect harmony,

no matter where you are from, no matter who your parents are,

no matter your race, rich or poor,
music unites us all, puts a smile on our face.
Remember, in the ups and downs of life,
music will always be there to help you thrive,
So, keep your head up, keep the music alive.
Let it be your strength, let it help you survive.”

Suddenly, I hear nothing else than just a roar of applause echoing in my ears,
Just like a loud scream vibrating in my surroundings,
this was a dream come true and I still can't believe it is real!

Never be afraid of trying something new.
That is the power of music for me!