Windows
by
Morag Strang

*The Musician*

I haven’t spoken to him before; The Writer at number 35, just across the street. I’ve looked across to his home office since lockdown began, but never once have our paths crossed. I love living here, just outside the university, its lazy parks, quirk shops and peaceful cafes, with a carpet of scarlet leaves littering the pavement this time of year. He looks as bookish as anyone could get. Open-collared shirt, immaculately ironed beige trousers, tweed waistcoat, circular glasses, hair swept upwards to one side, the whole shebang. I like to see him circle the tiny writing room, sit down, find the pencil that is inevitably hidden behind his ear. He’ll chew the metal end, start writing again, only to scrunch up the paper and throw it away. He handwrites everything. No computer, no phone, nothing. I doubt he even looks out of his window. Watching his life is so interesting, it’s so structured, calm, cool and collected, but he doesn’t look very happy. What does he write? He looks like a poet, or maybe a novelist, but perhaps it’s political thrillers instead?

*The Writer*

I think I’ve got writer’s block. I’ve been pacing my office for the past three days and not a single edit to my novel. The publisher wants the first draft on his desk by Monday. Four days. I can’t think and I feel lost in my thoughts, but with no way to voice them. I feel trapped in my ever-shrinking flat, and fighting the demons of my mind for headspace, with the news in the papers not providing any comfort. I sit, slouching in my rickety old desk chair, staring out the window at nothing in particular. The Musician across the cobbled car park caught my eye. We’ve never been introduced, not a word said to each other since she moved in, and yet I can’t help but watch her. She’s always smiling, ear-to-ear like the Cheshire cat, wearing half the rainbow as she goes about her day. She suits it, her unique style; the statement earrings, the loud scarves, the patterned denim jeans. They scream confidence, even with the mandatory masks. She is the sort of person that little kids pass on the street and aspire to be, and I admire that. It’s as though her always running out of milk is a good thing. Always somewhere to be and always running late, is *The Musician*.

*The Musician*

I think *The Writer* knows I’m watching him, he’s been watching the clouds go past all day, stuck in a daydream. He had a new waistcoat on today, a dark earthy green, with silver buttons instead of his regimented grey and brown. It’s odd. I’m noticing the little things more; like the way he walks down the street or lays all the pages of his latest manuscript on the floor to get a better perspective. I like *The Writer*’s regimented style, disciplined and rigid. He is the chalk and I am the cheese (the nice deli brie, of course!). He keeps himself in check. I tend to scatter things and cause a bit of a scene. And yet, I like him. He seems like the type of person with a million stories to tell, each one a little different but hasn’t found the right person to sit and hear them. A closed book with the spine unbroken.

*The Writer*

I gave up on the manuscript in the end, the deadline came and went like a bus passing an empty shop. But I did start writing something. It wasn’t political, and it wasn’t a thriller. I don’t really know what it was. I guess you could say a romance of sorts. The subject is bold; she is brave, she is fearless and she has the voice of an angel. She wears the colour red like it’s a mindset and moves through life with such kind confidence that no one questions it. The phone rings and it’s my publisher, and the heavy cloud descends again. But I don’t dread the publishers’ calls like I used to. This time feels lighter, which I’m taking as a good omen, as I’ve got some ideas to propose to him.

*The Musician*

I got a letter from *The Writer* today, hand-delivered through my door. “*The Musician*” was all that was written on the brown paper envelope, in a soft, cursive hand. It sat, unopened, on my kitchen table for a few hours before I dared to open it. My first thought was he would be telling me to stop peering through his window and to leave him, and his little office, alone. But it wasn’t that, not at all. It was a question. He told me he had been watching me through the windows as well, and I had inspired him to write something different, something that revealed new parts of himself that he didn’t know existed. The poem he’s written takes pride of place on the front of my fridge, it’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever read. My heart sings each time I walk past.

But here’s the question; would I like to put it to music? The sad thing is, I’m leaving Buccleuch Place, moving out, down to London. I’ve managed to get myself a record deal with a little independent producer, and a London label with be monumental for me. My little lockdown album has been a hit and I’m touring half of England next month if restrictions permit. If only he’d written sooner.

*The Writer*

*The Musician* wrote back. She moved out on Friday and took the vibrant autumnal leaves that matched her style with her, leaving a cold, quiet, empty frost on Buccleuch Place. The CD lies untouched. It turns out she had been looking through the window as well.