

Marianne Lloyd opened her eyes and jumped out of bed excitedly. "It's my birthday!" she squealed as she crossed off the day on her calendar. She grabbed two pink bobbles and tied up her hair in loose pigtales.

"Mum, Dad!" she called running down the hall and bursting into her sleeping parents' room. She jumped on the bed shaking her mother and father until they woke up. "Morning sweetie," her mother smiled pulling herself out of bed. "Shall I go and get your presents?" she laughed picking her daughter off her and putting on her slippers. "Yes, yes!" Marianne jumped up and down.

Her father sat up hugging her into a tight bundle and tickling her, "how does it feel to be eight then you little rascal?" he chuckled. Marianne stopped for a second as if to check if she felt any different. "I don't know" she thought "I feel the same as I did yesterday. Mr. Lloyd nodded. "Well you'll feel extremely special once you've received your main gift today." He said as Marianne wriggled with excitement.

"I hope you're behaving" Mrs Lloyd called from below the stairs. She began to come upstairs, every footstep exciting Marianne a little more. Finally she entered the room carrying a huge box with the label 'Lloyd family heirloom' on it. Marianne looked at it inquisitively, "What does heirloom mean, mum?" she asked, puzzled. Mrs Lloyd thought for a second "It means a special object that has belonged to our family for several generations" she told her. "Ooh fancy." Marianne giggled running over to the box and opening it quickly. In it she saw a brown shiny instrument. It had four strings and pretty cut out swirls.

Marianne's eyes opened in awe. "Shiny" she said running her fingers along it. "What is it though?" she asked making her parents laugh. "What?" said Marianne as her parents laughed even more. "A violin, it belonged to your great, great grandfather" Mr Lloyd said. "Cool! Can you tell me the story of how it was passed down generations please?" Marianne added picking up the violin. "Sure" Mrs Lloyd smiled as she sat Marianne on her lap.

"Well your great, great grandfather was alive in the nineteenth century. He was a musician and played in an orchestra. The instrument he played was the..."

"Violin" Marianne cried.

"Yes violin, but he didn't buy this violin. It was a gift from his conductor; the famous Liam-Anthony Jullen, a French composer and conductor of light music." Mrs Lloyd carried on.

"Awesome" Marianne stared at the violin.

"Yes, and when your great grandfather was born he decided he be a violinist too. He practised every day and got into one of the most famous orchestras in the country, when he was twenty he retired." She paused to let Marianne speak.

"But why did he retire so early?"

"Because of World War Two, he had to fight for our country. Your Grandpa Arthur was born just after the war. He was given the violin but he didn't want to play it for his job. He became a teacher but he still practised it often."

"Does grandpa still play it?" Marianne wondered aloud.

"Yes if you ask him he might play it for you. Anyway then the violin was passed to me but I decided that I didn't want to play it. Now I really regret it because it makes such lovely music, I don't want to be the one who stopped the violin being played in our family. So I found it and decided you were old enough to learn to play it. You can do your generation some good and prove to people that the violin is certainly not an 'uncool' instrument.

Marianne hugged the violin and whispered "I want to play the violin as my job and make you proud." Her parents grinned. They were very happy that Marianne liked the idea of playing the violin. "Well with a lot of practise you can!" ...

... Twenty years later Marianne celebrated her birthday by performing her own piece on the violin at the Royal Albert Hall. All her friends and family came to watch her play and they all agreed that the violin was indeed a very cool instrument.