

# Vivaldi

Von Taoya

Sounds of Vivaldi drift through my sleep-fuzzed brain and bring me back to my senses. As usual, I do a quick mental check of my surroundings, finding Nagi still sound asleep and Farf in the kitchen, massacring his breakfast with a knife. Nothing out of the ordinary then.

Slowly -because it's Saturday and after an over-midnight-run- I open my eyes and search for my watch. I blink at the time it shows me and put it around my wrist at the same time.

12:32 going on 12:33.

More visions, I suppose.

I push myself up from my bed and move towards my closed door, raking a hand through my bangs to bring something resembling order into the orange mess. It doesn't really do any good but I give myself credit for trying. I stretch and roll my shoulders to resettlement the leather straps which hold my gun more comfortably against my upper body. I'm much too lazy to get them off so I sleep with like this. I got used to it. The only time I take it off is for the shower.

I leave my room and head straight to Crawford's, using my foot to push his door open wide where it had been almost shut before.

Lounging against the doorframe and rescuing my sleeping pants from becoming indecent sitting so low on my hips, I regard my fourth teammate. He stands with his back to me and doesn't acknowledge my entrance. There's no need to, I know that he sensed my approach. His body and shoulders are relaxed, the only tension in him is what he needs to handle the instrument. His dark-brown violin is perched between chin and shoulder and the bow is describing delicate moves on the strings. I can't make out Crawford's face for his raven hair has fallen out of his sleek hairstyle and covers it. I don't have to see it, though, to know his eyes are closed, as are his lips, expression almost relaxed.

I make myself comfortable in the door, content to just watch him. He had dressed for the day already, elegant but comfortable slacks, pristine white shirt. A faint scent of his cologne is hanging in the air. His leather holster with the loaded guns is sitting on

the bed beside him. He never wears his guns while playing. It constricts him in his movements or so he has told me long ago. Everyone of us carries a gun with himself at all times except for Farfarello. But he has so many knives hidden on him it doesn't matter anyway. We have orders to carry a weapon, always,(order from Rosenkreuz, preparing for every eventuality) yet Crawford puts his aside when he takes up the violin nonetheless.

I cross my arms in front of my chest and listen to Vivaldi's 'Autumn' start. I've never pegged myself to be a fan of classical music and I am not. But this is different.

Crawford plays to handle his visions. He told me once he started to learn to play violin at the age of three. He never quit.

I first heard him play on my second day at Rosenkreuz. I couldn't stand the headache anymore. I wasn't used to my gift or the rough handling from my teachers. I was eight years old and ready to jump off a cliff.

I had been drawn to the music like a moth is to a flame and as I had opened the door to the room he had been playing in I had noticed for the first time that I got nothing from the musician. Not one single thought, not even some kind of buzz I received from the one's who could shield. His mind was completely quiet and it had felt like heaven. He had stopped playing then and had turned around to look at me and I had frozen in my tracks for I hadn't even known if I was allowed in here. It wasn't his private room, this room was used for meetings and such but still. I didn't know his name but I saw that he was older than me, taller, too. The batch on his uniform identified him as part of class 483, so he had to be fourteen.

"Door." he had told me in English. I hadn't been fluent in the language then but I understood and closed the door behind me. Then he had pointed to some chairs with his bow and continued to play.

Since then I used him as a refuge and for recovery. My gift was so bruised these first couple of weeks. I needed shields and I learned to build them fast. By the time I could tune everyone else out if I had to I was so used to listen to Crawford play that I still went to him every time.

As my shields grew stronger my telepathy advanced as well. My teachers didn't notice *how* strong I became until it was too late for them. I always let some random thoughts stay on the surface of my mind behind some put-upon screen so they wouldn't notice anything out of the ordinary. Everything else was hidden behind a wall so strong even SZ had no way getting through it.

I used to get the group summons from our superiors earlier than anyone else for as soon as the call was starting out there was a prickle against my mind before the actual mental command came. These few extra seconds helped Crawford to surface from whatever depth his visions had taken him. I relayed the buzz over to him so he was coherent enough when the command came. Otherwise he could be thrown seriously off balance.

Crawford told me once that his visions weren't something he could control. They came in blurs, often one at a time, randomly varying with importance, dates or times. Other times they came all in a heap, flooding him with pictures so fast all he could do was stay upright and let them in.

There was never a rhythm, never any kind of order to his visions. He had to sort them through by himself. That's what he uses his violin for. If he's able to get his instrument during the heap-visions he can use the music to slow them down so it's easier for him to sort them through. Otherwise he just recalls the visions while playing and decides about their significance.

While staying in Tokyo he usually leaves his instrument at the flat but I have seen him pull it out of his luggage and play in the middle of a crowded airport. I had 'told' everyone to just look away and piss off, then stood beside him and listened, also blocking the view of his handguns laying on the floor beside him from the minds of those passing by.

Smooth muscles move under the white shirt in front of me. Crawford is dressed except for his socks. His visions must have hit him then for he never goes without proper footwear.

My eyelids start to drop, I'm not completely awake after the few hours of sleep I got after our run. The music is just enough to keep part of my mind in the here and now to not lie flat in the doorway.

Vivaldi is replaced by Chopin, something slow and with a lot of repetitions. It means that Crawford has got his visions sorted and is now using them to guess at the future some more and decide on our next projects. The repetitions help him to try on situations from different angles.

I wonder if I should move over to the bed as I have done so numerous times (visions do not check my sleeping-schedule) but the buzz from Nagi's mind as he wakes is enough to get me centered again.

I let my gaze wander to the window on the far side of the room and notice that it's raining. The violin had been loud enough for me to miss it.

Nagi acknowledges my soft brush against his mind with a mental 'hmf' and rolls over to his other side to see if he'll doze off once more. I guess Chopin woke him but isn't enough to get him out of bed.

It's a slow morning after a successful night out the town. I love those mornings, even if I'm still sleepy. A morning like this is full of promises, of dozing away on the couch, of hot chocolate made by Nagi in the afternoon, of Crawford staying in the apartment, working in his room next to mine and allowing me to stay close to him so the silence from his shields gives my gift some breathing room.

Mornings like this give me the illusion of being normal. Not that I want to be like everyone else. But these mornings remind me of just how glad I am to be part of Schwarz.

It's the lazy arrogance of living a life like mine and getting paid horrendous amounts of money for it.

A slow smile spreads on my lips while watching long, elegant fingers moving over the strings without fail. Crawford lets his subconscious play, the rest of his mind occupied by the visions. He's so absorbed in his music it takes a great deal to get him out of it.

Rosenkreuz usually didn't encourage extra activities that weren't initiated by them but somehow Crawford had found a way to persuade them. They even got a violin teacher on school grounds for him.

Chopin gives way to Mozart, a change I can't quite decipher. I guess he's done and needs a way out of his trance-like state.

Farfarello is done in the kitchen and wanders out to come stand beside me. He studies Crawford with his glowing golden eye and I don't miss the way his gaze lingers on the weapons on the bed. Then he looks at me and back at the guns. His shoulders move in a slight shrug. Being unarmed is a concept Farfarello does not understand. As I shift my position he half turns towards me. I'm still watching Crawford.

"How he managed to stay alive all these years is a mystery to me. Considering he gets rid of his gun for the violin every time." I say after a while, amused.

Farfarello faces me fully then and I am rewarded with a half-mocking glance and a creepy smile.

"He does not need it." he tells me in a low voice. "You are always with him."

With that he wanders off and leaves me stricken by this seemingly obvious observation. All amusement leaves me.

Crawford is finally done playing and puts down his instrument. Then he turns and we study each other for a long time. At last, he steps forward, moving to leave the room and I don't miss how his lips curl into a small knowing smile as he passes me.