

SCENE VII

PAGANINI
from
Freefall Frostbite

Another vagrant enters, empty handed.

HOMELESS #4:

There is nothing here to burn.
This city's made of steel and stone.
It's an electronic tomb.
Ashes to ashes, dust to doom.

The Homeless turn on the audience.

HOMELESS #2, #3, & #4:

Do you have anything that we can burn?
Anything to keep the fire going?

HOMELESS #2:

Ticket stubs?

HOMELESS #3:

Subway maps?

HOMELESS #4:

A wooden leg?

HOMELESS #2:

A Haitian hat?

SHARON:

We should help.

STEVEN:

We'll be soon
inside and warm
and quite immune.

HOMELESS #2:

Think of it as providence,
a chance to get rid of evidence,
your pockets stuffed with ripped receipts
that detail sex on Shakedown Street.

HOMELESS #3:

Letters, subpoenas, invitations,
all those boring obligations,
let us burn them and you'll soon believe
yourself they never were received.

The VIOLINIST walks on, sets out a hat and begins to play. The Homeless continue.

HOMELESS #2, #3 & #4: (a fugue)

#2: Playbills? Checkbooks? Notebooks? Bibles?

#2:	Playbills	checkbooks	notebooks	bibles		
#3:	Playbills	checkbooks	notebooks	bibles		
#4:		Playbills	checkbooks	notebooks	bibles	

#2: Draft cards? SAG cards? Protest placards?

#2:	Draft cards	SAG cards	protest	placards		
#3:	Draft cards	SAG cards	protest	placards		
#4:		Draft cards	SAG cards	protest	placards	

#2: Chopsticks? Nunchuks? Scrabble tiles?

#2:	Chopsticks	nunchuks	scrabble	tiles		
#3:	Chopsticks	nunchuks	scrabble	tiles		
#4:		Chopsticks	nunchuks	scrabble	tiles	

#2, #3 & #4: Drawings? Scribblings suicidal?

The Violinist persists, and has monopolized everyone's attention.

HOMELESS #3:

I'll put something sought-after in your hat
if only you'll stop strangling that cat.

DOORMEN:

It's of course an empty promise.
Inside out their ragged pockets
are dark and void of anything
but cockroaches and stinking steam.

Homeless #2, #3 & #4 begin to circle their prey.

HOMELESS #1:

Didn't quite ascend to the symphony,
did we, Paganini? Didn't surface
from the conservatory sought after?
Auditions subject you to stifled laughter?

The Homeless are focused not on the Violinist, but the violin.

Who did you have to sacrifice
to pay precociousness's price?
Can you calculate the cost
of all that you suspect you lost?

Attacking, they struggle to wrest the violin from him.

Ten million minutes spent alone
doing strange things to your bones
fingers like anemones
in imaginary murky seas.

They succeed, though the Violinist retains the bow.

Lonely nights of unknown number
in battle with baroque cadenzas,
all the dreams delayed, denied,
pursuing that pale ghost, precision.

They smash the violin and feed the pieces into the fire.

Perfecting pizzicato
will not ease compulsion's pain.
Expertise is entertainment
for an affliction of the brain.

Julliard's just as much a jungle
as anaconda'd Amazon.
Virtuosity is venom
and its vibrating in your arms.

Comfort only comes from fire
consuming all wrong reasoning,

incinerating sadness,
fire rising from the rosined strings,

fretboard burning, purfling curdling
ebony and spruce entwined
shellac crackling, stressed wood screaming.

HOMELESS #1, #2, #3 & #4:
Farewell performance funeral pyre.

The fire roars.

EX-VIOLINIST:
Maniacs! Murderers!

HOMELESS #2, #3 & #4:
Euthanasia's merciful.

EX-VIOLINIST:
Psychopaths and perjurers!

HOMELESS #1:
Hand to God, we're liberators.

Make music now without constraint
of all external instruments.
Let what's inside you resonate.
The night is now your violin.

HOMELESS #2, #3 & #4:

Come over here and share our fire.
Abandon dead dreams and desires.
In this fire's too fair light
all our faces blank and bright.

The fire roars.

HOMELESS #2:

What's burning in this wire cage?

HOMELESS #3:

All evidence of yesterday.

HOMELESS #4:

All that might have been tomorrow.

HOMELESS #2, #3 & #4:

All chance for ecstasy or sorrow.

Come over here and share our wine
and insights from the sort of sane.
Our wine distilled from broken dreams
and rotten grapes.

HOMELESS #1:

It's cruel champagne.

The ex-violinist has become almost unrecognizable as a result of the struggle, his clothes torn, his hair a mess, his face smeared with ash. With nothing left, he has no choice but to join the Homeless, whom he now resembles. He gently places the bow in the fire and watches it burn.

SHARON:

Still think they're not here to hurt us?

STEVEN: *(to Doormen)*

Couldn't you have tried to stop that?

DOORMAN #1:

We're not police. It's not our province.

DOORMAN #2:

Besides, they were just being honest.

The leader charges #4 & #5 (the ex-violinist):

HOMELESS #1:

Vultures, now renew your search
fantastic out from this low perch.
With this new soldier's amazed eyes
search alleys and scale balconies.

Pick apart the carcasses
of underwater mortgages
look minutely 'mongst the bones
of astronomic student loans.

Go! Don't stare at me like fish.
A New Year's freeze is coming fast
and the fire's ravenous.

Homeless #4 & #5 exit.