

## Leila Chapter 12

From deep somewhere in the undergrowth, music was playing.

It was not recorded music, it was live.

She strained to hear it, as it came and went. When it went, she took a few paces towards where it seemed to be. When it came, she stopped and listened, trying to orientate it. A lone violin or something similar was being played somewhere in the distance, perhaps not so far away, but masked by the undergrowth through which it had to struggle to reach her ears.

The sound was unmistakably live music, played liltingly at a slow tempo, with little stops and starts, and mistakes. She was drawn towards it and walked on.

She'd never known the extent of the forest. Somewhere it was recorded as being ninety acres, but that meant nothing to her. It was certainly the sort of place where someone could get lost, although Leila always felt that if she kept walking through she would reach a road or a house or something eventually. She didn't feel scared, even if lots of things often did worry her. She felt pulled towards the sound somehow. Although there was not really a discernible tune, the pattern sounded like something she knew. Or perhaps it was just similar to something she'd made up herself.

As she walked, she thought back, and looked back, to the chair she had passed. *Was that somehow connected to the music?* She briefly imagined someone sitting in the chair with a cello or a violin, lost in the moment of music-making.

As the playing drew her into the forest, she realised that this was the furthest she'd ever been in. She knew most of the paths closer to home well, but at that moment she was surprising herself with what she was doing. Impressing herself even. That didn't happen often. She looked around for landmarks. There weren't any, just a seemingly endless expanse of woodland. She had to duck down to avoid a large trunk that had fallen across the path.

She made a mental note of that one for the way home.

She was closer now. The sounds came and went, stopped and started, like someone was practising. She walked on down the path. The path narrowed as the undergrowth encroached.

Leila didn't like noise. Noises in her head often arranged themselves into cacophonous walls of sound which became overwhelming, and sometimes the speed at which she could melt down was exacerbated by these sounds.

Music was different though. It played in her head regularly and she had some experience of trying to play instruments herself. But she was disabled by her own ability. It came naturally to her, but her enjoyment was limited by the unerring accuracy with which she could identify sounds and notes and chords. Ever since she'd sat down with Melody to pick out tones on the guitar, she'd been able to name them without looking. She'd been so proud to see how delighted Melody was with that! Even more so when she could correctly call out the note of a chirping bird or a beep from the microwave.

The music continued and she continued to analyse it. A chord sequence repeated and repeated over three or four bars. It was not unattractive, but it was constant, insistent.

She tried not to, but something in her head forced her to map out the pattern.

The overall feel was one of minor chords. Probably E minor. There was a certain melancholy to the piece, and it was played at a moderate tempo. She heard each phrase start with E minor, before moving to a G or a B, and ending on A. The chorus was more major chord based, Cs and Gs giving it a more positive feel, with a decisive B $\flat$  to resolve it.

Unaware that it would come back to haunt her, she followed the sequence towards a natural clearing, deep in the forest.