

The Violinist

by Jack Swenson

Max leads the parade up the hill. He is sawing on his violin, wearing nothing but a raincoat. He has removed the girl's blouse and bra. She and Max's wife are huddled by the cabin door. I am pleading with Max to go back inside, but I am laughing as I do so.

Max is drunk. The others are feeling no pain. We all had too much wine with dinner. The girl's cherub of a husband is asleep on a day bed by the fire. I catch up with Max and pull him back in the direction of the cabin. He grins when he sees the girl. He has taken off her clothes, seen her naked, but he hasn't had sex with her, he says. He is thinking about it. She is a virgin. Her husband is gay. It is a marriage of convenience, Max claims.

The path to the cabin is ablaze with light as we turn and go back. The cabin roof glows red and white. The grass is black. The moon is full. Night birds flash white bellies as they circle the chimney.

Earlier, before dinner, I was an audience of one while the four musicians played string quartets. The music was thin. The musicians were tentative, too careful, afraid to make mistakes. It was later that the party goers trooped outside and Max set fire to the night.

