

THE SEVEN SYMPHONIES

A Finnish Murder Mystery

by

Simon Boswell



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The ideas expressed in the seven Sibelius lectures by the novel's fictional character Dr Nick Lewis are to be understood as the genuine thoughts of the author, Simon Boswell. As such, the lectures should be taken as a serious (non-fictional) attempt by the author to express an original commentary on the life and works of the great Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius. Quotations from Sibelius and his contemporaries, as they appear in the lectures, mostly derive from the Robert Layton translation of Erik Tawaststjerna's Sibelius biography which, in the author's opinion, is a primary source for any researcher of the subject.

Claims are made by fictitious characters in this novel that the texts of the letters sent to (or intended to be sent to) 'The Ainola Residence' are direct quotations from Sibelius's diaries and letters. These claims are themselves fictitious. In reality, the texts are not direct translations into English of anything that Sibelius wrote himself, but merely loose paraphrases.

With the obvious exception of the historical people referred to in the seven Sibelius lectures (and occasionally elsewhere), all characters in this publication are fictitious and their resemblance to any real persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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The front cover is a composite of photographs depicting Sibelius Park, Helsinki. In the background may be seen a glimpse of the Sibelius Monument, sculptured by Eila Hiltunen.

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This book is dedicated with all my love

to Leena

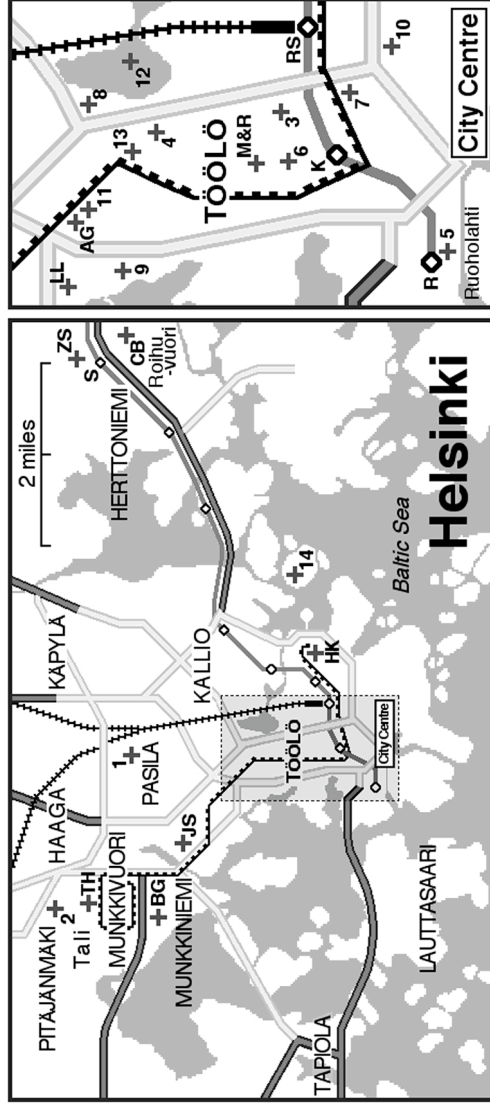
(who will never read it)

& with very special thanks

to Carolyn Brimley Norris

(without whose help and encouragement

I would never have written it)



- Motorway**
- Pasila HQ 1**
- Sibelius Academy**
- P-Block 2** (Pitäjänmäki)
- R-Block 3** (Rautatiekatu)
- T-Block 4** (Töölö)
- Conservatory 5**
- Other Locations**
- Ateljé Restaurant 6
- Huvudstadsbladet 7
- Opera House 8
- Sibelius Monument 9
- Swedish Theatre 10
- Töölö Library 11
- Töölönlahti (Bay) 12
- Töölöntori 13
- Zoo 14
- Main Road**
- No 18 Bus**
- Metro Line**
- Railway**
- Homes**
- Adrian Gamble AG
- Beatrice Gröndahl BG
- Christa Bäckström CB
- Hanna Kettunen HK
- Jaana Saari JS
- Liisa Louhi LL
- Miranda & Rosie M&R
- Tiina Holopainen TH
- Zoltan Szervánsky ZS

NOTES TO THE READER

When setting one's story in a **bilingual** (or, as here, **trilingual**) **environment**, there's always the problem of how to represent the changing languages within a monolingual narrative.

I ask the reader to follow these guidelines:

- (1) Discussion between native English speakers may be taken as is.
- (2) When Finns converse together, they are, in reality, using Finnish.
- (3) If a character employs a language other than his or her own, this will be clarified in the text.
- (4) The occasional use of Swedish (Finland's official minority language) will be specifically indicated.

Street names in Finland generally end with the suffixes -tie or -katu, as in *Mannerheimintie* & *Mariankatu*. These are roughly equivalent to the English-language 'Road' & 'Street'.

The **Finnish police ranks** of *ylikonstaapeli*, *komisario* and *ylikomisario* have been converted to their nearest British equivalents: Sergeant, Inspector and Chief Inspector.

Since the novel's conception more than five years ago, new buildings have sprung up in Helsinki where my narrative sees none. Mobile phones have grown in sophistication and ubiquity. As a result, *The Seven Symphonies* is already taking on characteristics of a **historical novel!**

The Sibelius Lectures

The concept of presenting fiction and non-fiction within the same volume is by no means new, but many would question the wisdom of incorporating a series of lectures on Jean Sibelius's life and music into an otherwise mainstream crime thriller. Of the dozen and a half people who generously read my draft manuscript, some complained that the lectures were an irrelevance and interfered with the plot line; others insisted that the lectures were an important and integral part of the reading experience and must on no account be omitted.

My original inspiration for writing this book was to combine two things that I love: Sibelius's music and the jigsaw-puzzle intricacies of the detective story. After reviewing the contradictory but valuable feedback from my reader guinea pigs, I've decided to attempt a compromise. The lectures remain, but **certain sections have been bracketed off as optional**. The reader must be the ultimate judge of whether this approach is a success or failure.

Simon Boswell: Helsinki, January 2005.

Visit <http://www.SevenSymphonies.com> where you can **order further copies** of this novel; download a **glossary of British spelling, idiom and slang** for US readers; download a **mini-dictionary** designed to assist foreign learners of English; explore the *Seven Symphonies* **interactive map of Helsinki**; test your knowledge with the **144-question Sibelius Quiz**; and **join the discussion** on the SevenSymphonies.com **cyber-discussion board**.

Symphony No 1
in E minor

I

Andante, ma non troppo—Allegro energico

* * *

[8.54 pm; Friday, 24th March]

***M**en are so weak. It doesn't mean a thing. Most of the time they can't help themselves. But how could I have been so stupid — to try and change your mind like that? It's only left me more humiliated. Damn you! Damn all men! Why do I keep getting myself in situations like this? And why did I have to threaten you? It was so cheap! I'd never follow through anyway. Oh, I know I did something of the sort once... but that time was completely different.*

The big question's 'What next?' I can't give you up! You have to give me another chance. What if I come back and apologize for being such a bitch? No, you've probably already left. And why do I always end up losing my temper? It hardly does me any favours. If I'd kept my head, you might've taken me with you... though I doubt it! Ashamed of what your precious friends would think.

And how ridiculous to play the diva — refusing to let you walk me home. Perhaps I could've persuaded you to come in for a while... made it hard for you to leave again. Then I wouldn't be wandering round here alone in the dark — alone in this freezing, miserable park. But I can't face an empty flat feeling like this... Though I suppose the cats are some kind of company. At least they'd pretend to listen. And the poor things need feeding. I should never've taken them on. I'm so damn irresponsible. I can't even look after myself.

Preoccupied with her own thoughts, she was unaware of the one

Symphony No 1

who'd been watching and had now followed her here. Only at the last moment did she experience a subliminal warning, a primordial flash of insight that someone or something was close behind. But, as so often in her less than twenty years of life — and now at the point of death — she had her timing wrong. The wire was slipping over her head and there could be no escape.

Such a level of fear was unknown to her. She was immobilized, outstretched toes grasping at the ground, back arched and frozen; in terror of making any movement that would pull the noose tighter. Only her fingers were active, tearing at her throat, trying to prise beneath the wire, to release the deadly pressure. With an enormous act of will she overcame the panic and pain, wriggling her body round in an attempt to reach the gloved hands that were making such a brutal assault on her future.

Thus it was, in the cool impersonal floodlighting which illuminated this small hallowed space beneath the trees, that she came face to face with her attacker. The shock of recognition was fleeting. Certainly the outward features were familiar. But that familiarity was contradicted by eyes unlike any she'd earlier seen or imagined: devoid of compassion, reptilian in their self-containment and single-mindedness — holes into a dark and empty place that surely no human soul could inhabit. With the last conscious moments allowed her, she recognized in those unblinking, unflinching eyes her imminent death... and abandoned all hope.

* * *

Hours passed. The natural silence was complete. There were no leaves on the trees to answer the chill, almost windless air. The only sound, muffled by the cold and distance, was man-made and came from the occasional passing car on one or other of the two roads which, west and east, flanked this modest area of unfenced urban parkland. Often crowded by day, especially in the summer months, it now stood empty... shunned by any living, breathing human presence. But this place, created to celebrate human excellence, must sooner or later draw to itself some other aspiring or despairing human spirit and, with one of time's gentle little ironies, the next to pass this

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way would be another in preoccupied self-torment.

He'd told himself so often over the last weeks that it couldn't go on. He had to put a stop to it. Of course, it would take a certain courage... though he persuaded himself that, looking back on his earlier life, he hadn't often been lacking in nerve, or even daring. He could surely summon up what was necessary. It was a problem that had to be faced and the sooner the better.

He nearly missed her. She was out of his immediate line of sight as he walked towards the shoreline. But, once his eyes locked onto that solitary and lifeless figure, set in an almost staged tableau before him, he was unable to turn away. He drew closer, responding with a tumult of emotions and thoughts: some irrelevant, others of an intensity that threatened to overwhelm him and seemed to be drawing him in surprising directions.

His normally reliable sense of time abandoned him. He would afterwards have no concept of how long he stood transfixed by this unexpected and cruelly compelling sight... But then he shook himself — physically and mentally. He couldn't stand here staring. He had to act.

"You're late, Miranda," said Tero as she passed his desk en route to her own.

She didn't need telling, thank you very much! Some forty minutes earlier, stepping onto the pavement outside the flat she shared with her younger sister, Rosie, Miranda had found her treasured, two-year-old Opel Corsa boxed in by a battered old van and a flashy red BMW. They'd left her no more than a few inches either end. And neither vehicle was even displaying a resident's parking permit! At first she'd tried to manoeuvre her way out by tacking back and forth. It was hopeless. Digging out her mobile, she phoned Leena in Registry. The van was from out of town — somewhere up north — and its owner didn't appear to have a cellphone. Fortunately, the BMW's owner did, and Miranda dialled the number. It rang for over a minute. She was wondering whether to give up and call a taxi, when an irritable male voice grunted something unintelligible. She didn't know what she was interrupting and didn't care. She threatened him with tow trucks, with swarms of traffic wardens crawling over him and his pretentious

Symphony No 1

penis-substitute, with an eternity of police harassment. He'd better get down here pretty damn quick and let her out! Grudgingly he agreed, but kept her waiting another ten minutes... with full malevolent intent, Miranda was sure. Having sat in her car and ignored him — to avoid any risk of getting physical — she pulled out into the traffic stream and focused on reining in her emotions. No way would a creep like that affect the quality of her driving.

But now she'd arrived at Pasila HQ almost half an hour late.

"The boss already left," Tero went on, prompting Miranda to halt by his desk. "Wants you at the crime scene, soon as poss'. Tasty one this morning. A murder."

Much as Miranda sympathized with Tero's enthusiasm for a professional challenge, she wished he'd show more sensitivity towards what was probably another tragic and unnecessary death.

"Only been gone ten minutes," Tero added. "It's over at the Sibelius Monument."

Miranda's eyes widened. "Won't be hard to find then. How come *you're* still here?"

"Paperwork. Going to court first thing Monday. Might be along later."

Not bothering to visit her own desk, Detective Inspector Miranda Lewis hitched her bag more securely over her shoulder and walked back the way she'd come.

The Sibelius Monument, in Sibelius Park, is less than two miles from Pasila Police Headquarters. Miranda took her own car and parked in a quiet residential street along the park's northern edge.

With the benefit of her bi-cultural background, she realized how hard it might be for a non-Finn to grasp the full national significance of the composer Jean Sibelius. In the Finnish psyche he occupies a place which, for most countries, would be reserved for kings, military heroes or saints. It's true that modern times have seen other popular figures rise to prominence in the Finnish iconography: extraordinary Olympic athletes like Paavo Nurmi and Lasse Viren; more recently, in motor racing, Keke Rosberg and Mika Häkkinen. But Sibelius towers over them all as the grand old grandfather-figure of the nation. He was there at its birth, nurturing the struggle for independence with

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his *Kullervo Symphony*, his *Karelia Suite* and *Finlandia*. Later his art would transcend geographical and political boundaries and reach out to all humanity, placing Finland, with its small isolated population, on the world's cultural map for all time.

The sculptress Eila Hiltunen's memorial was unveiled in 1967, ten years after the composer's death, and it followed the fashion for later-twentieth-century civic sculptures by puzzling many who saw it. A large stainless-steel relief of the composer's head, reassuringly comprehensible, now greets the onlooker from the face of a natural granite outcropping. But that was an afterthought — a bowing to public pressure. The main structure, which still dominates the scene, is more esoteric. Steel pipes of varying lengths and diameters are bundled together in a broad vertical array, at its tallest reaching to fivetimes human height. Many of the pipe ends are frayed, with deep irregular gashes reaching far up into their coarsely textured bodies. Despite the creator's claims that the design represented music in the abstract, for most people a visual association with organ pipes was hard to avoid. Some critics pointed out that, as Sibelius had written very little organ music, a reference to the symphony orchestra would have been more appropriate. Miranda didn't subscribe to such nitpicking. Her fondness for the monument was based on childhood visits with her Welsh father. They'd indulged in much less sanctimonious pursuits, chasing each other around the pipes and sticking their heads up inside to hoot, scream and laugh at the resonant echoes.

Approaching the monument on this biting subzero, late-March morning, Miranda saw that the Scenes Of Crimes Officers (the SOCOs) had already established themselves and were hard at work. The focus of the crime was screened off from public view, and just outside the screen she spotted the imposing figure and head of close-cropped white hair that identified her superior officer, Detective Chief Inspector Aleksi Ylenius. A police photographer standing beside him, though not a small man, seemed almost dwarfed in comparison.

Apart from his exceptional height, Ylenius was powerfully built with little excess fat for someone of his fifty-four years. And, unlike many tall men, conditioned by years of banging heads on structures designed by those of lesser stature, Ylenius had no tendency to stoop.

Symphony No 1

Amiable and avuncular features moderated the effect of this potentially intimidating size. Children warmed to him. Miranda had several times witnessed his ability to win their trust with a few soft-spoken and uncondescending words. As a boss he couldn't be faulted: fair-minded, supportive in times of crisis, never failing to give credit where it was due. Not much concerned with formality, he encouraged his subordinates to work together on a first-name basis. He would have been totally at ease with younger colleagues calling him Aleks, but for the most part, they preferred 'Chief Inspector', 'Chief' or simply 'boss'. Miranda held him in considerable respect, both as a person and as an experienced police officer. She was grateful for the last eighteen months under his command.

"Sorry I'm late, Chief."

"A rare event, Miranda. I'll tell you what we've got so far..."

The police photographer nodded to Miranda and disappeared behind the screen.

"...The call came in at 6.48 this morning. The victim was found by a man walking his dog. The duty officer alerted me at home, so I sent the SOCOs in first to do some of the preliminary work. The pathologist's been and gone. He estimates death occurred between eight and eleven yesterday evening. You'd better have a look."

Miranda wasn't squeamish, but such moments in her chosen career were always unpleasant. In a way, she hoped they would never become routine — preferring to keep her humanity unjaded and intact.

She followed Ylenius into the screened area and adjusted to the scene, letting professional training and experience take over. The victim was seated with her back propped against the rock face, little more than a yard to the left of the fourtimes-natural-size relief of Sibelius's head. Her legs were straight and splayed out at an angle of about thirty degrees. It was difficult to guess her age. Death had disfigured her youth, but she was clearly very young — somewhere between seventeen and twenty-five, Miranda supposed.

The girl's hair was thick and Nordic fair, gathered luxuriantly around her shoulders: beautiful, healthy hair which only accentuated the frightful distortion of the face it now framed. The eyes bulged; the tongue protruded slightly between pale, bluish lips. Cause of death

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was obvious. The girl's neck was tightly encircled by some kind of noose that bit viciously into the flesh of her throat and had entrapped large amounts of hair.

The victim's clothes had been interfered with. Her red and yellow quilted winter jacket was open and pushed back over her shoulders. A dark-red ribbed top and the bra beneath were pulled up to her armpits, exposing her breasts and stomach. Her jeans had been unzipped and tugged only part-way down her hips, as if the spread of her legs had prevented further removal. The fact that her pants were still more or less in place seemed to preclude outright rape, but the sexual implications were unavoidable.

"And there's this extra grisly little feature," said Ylenius, drawing Miranda's attention to the arm lying inert at the girl's right side. "Her fourth finger's been removed — severed from the right hand. Some kind of trophy, I suppose. The pathologist pointed out there's been very little bleeding, so she must've been dead when it was cut off. Let's be thankful for small mercies, shall we?"

"Any indication how it was amputated?"

"Nothing found yet that's suitable for the job. We'll be widening our search, of course."

"And the violin? Was it found like that?" She pointed to a violin case leaning against the rock just below Jean Sibelius's austere and impassive face.

"Yes, the SOCOs had a quick look inside, but I asked them to put it back in situ — so you could get an overall impression of the scene."

Both detectives now allowed themselves some greater distance from the victim, backing away to stand beside the monument's towering metal pipes.

"Any ID?" Miranda asked.

"Nothing useful on her. A solitary door key in her jeans pocket and a few coins in the jacket. No sign of a handbag."

"What about inside the violin case?"

"Address label, you mean? No, just the instrument and some printed music."

"A violin dealer might give us a lead on the instrument — suggest its provenance, help us find its owner. But how about the music? Can I have a look?"

Symphony No 1

"Forensics already bagged it. What've you got in mind, Miranda?"

"I'm not sure."

But the music was located and Miranda studied it through the clear plastic evidence sleeve.

"Debussy's Violin Sonata," she said.

"So?"

"On the whole it's a lyrical piece — not exactly virtuoso stuff. But it needs some technical skill to attempt. And she does seem to have been working on it. The music's covered in pencilled bowing marks. She could be a professional — though, judging by her age, I'd guess a music student. Perhaps at the Sibelius Academy."

"Worth looking into."

"But we've got a problem now it's Saturday. The Academy admin's closed for the weekend. A bit ghoulish to hawk a PM photo of her round random students in the corridors — the way she's looking now."

"You could at least try the porter on the door. Get the photographer to do a Polaroid of her face. Perhaps he can flatter her appearance a bit — keep the noose out of the picture. But, before you follow up on that, let's go and interview the man who found the body."

Martti Hakala lived close to where Miranda had left her car, in a block of flats overlooking Sibelius Park from its northern perimeter. More or less contemporary with the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games, the building looked in need of a major renovation. So did Martti Hakala. Although, according to his identity card, he was in his early forties, he could easily have passed for fifty. His face was colourless, drawn, conveying an impression of worry and fatigue. In his bearing there was a curious mixture of military preciseness and slouching indecision which gave Miranda the impression of an ex-soldier fallen on hard times. As he edged past her in the narrow hallway, she caught a whiff of stale vodka.

Hakala showed them into a living room cluttered with ugly furniture. An overweight golden Labrador was sprawled inside the door. Its only reaction to their arrival was a brief raising of one eyelid.

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"Wife's at the shops," Hakala said vaguely. "Like some coffee? Only take a moment."

"Not necessary, thank you," replied Ylenius.

They sat down and the Chief Inspector made a start: "Can you tell us, Mr Hakala, exactly how you found the body?"

"Okay, so I got up before dawn. Already been awake a couple of hours. Not sleeping too well lately. You know how it is... a lot on my mind. Anyway, I made some coffee and tried reading the paper. Couldn't concentrate. Looking at the words and nothing going in. So I went out for some fresh air. Took Saara with me, of course. She can't wait too long in the mornings. Her bladder isn't what it used to be."

Miranda assumed he was referring to the dog rather than his wife. Ylenius gave an encouraging nod.

"Usually we go for a slow stroll round Sibelius Park — seeing as it's so close — along the edge of the kiddies' playground, past the monument and down to the seashore. I almost didn't see her — the girl, I mean. Lost in my own thoughts probably."

"Was it the dog spotted her first?" Miranda asked.

"You must be joking," he said mildly. "Poor old Saara wouldn't spot a hare if it hopped up and bit her. Practically blind. Don't think her sense of smell's up to much either. Suppose I should have the vet put her to sleep. But she's still game for a walk, as long as I don't rush her. Difficult when you've been together so long. You get so attached. Just like a marriage. Better than a marriage, to be honest. The wife tells me I should just get on with it and have the poor thing put down. But there's not much me and her agree on nowadays."

Ylenius brought him back to the real issue. "Could you estimate the time when you found the body?"

"Must've been a bit after six-thirty. Can't be more precise than that, I'm afraid. Six-thirty-five or six-forty shouldn't be far from the truth."

"And did you go up to the girl when you saw her?"

"Not closer than a couple of yards. Obviously stone dead. No sense checking her pulse or anything. Not the first time I've seen a corpse, but it took me back a bit. Sort of rooted me to the spot. Her tongue sticking out and her eyes staring like that. There'd obviously been some funny business... With that thing round her neck and her

Symphony No 1

clothes all pulled about. I came straight home and called the police."

"You didn't touch her?"

"No, I just said that." Hakala was showing signs of irritation.

"Or anything else in the vicinity?"

"What kind of anything else?"

"You didn't pick anything up nearby? Or notice anything lying on the ground?"

"I came home, I made the call, and that's it... Well, there was a violin leaning against the rock. Is that what you're getting at?"

"No, I wondered if anything else caught your eye."

Hakala shook his head.

"And the dog didn't go anywhere near her?"

"Don't think she'd even noticed."

"Well, that seems clear enough," Ylenius said.

But Miranda had another question.

"You said you regularly walk the dog on the same route. Did you go that way yesterday evening?"

"Yes, I wanted to watch the ice-hockey on telly, so I took Saara out just before it started."

"And did you walk past the Sibelius Monument?"

"We came back that way — at about twenty to nine, I suppose."

"Did you see anybody in the park?"

"No, it was deserted for a Friday evening. Probably the cold. Not used to temperatures like this so close to April, are we?"

"And you're sure the girl wasn't already there by then?"

"No, we walked straight past the place. I'd've seen her, wouldn't I?"

Miranda and Ylenius exchanged glances. That narrowed down the time of the murder to later than eight forty.

Ylenius pushed himself up from the sagging sofa.

"Thanks for your cooperation, Mr Hakala. We'll send a constable round in a day or two to take a formal statement."

Hakala nodded... but then seemed to hesitate, as if he had something to add. Ylenius paused expectantly.

"There's one thing, Chief Inspector. I might not be here much longer. The wife and me, you see — we haven't been getting on too well recently... and I've found this little one-room-and-a-kitchen

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round the corner. It's up for rent. I thought I'd give it a try... and take Saara with me. Don't know if it'll work out. But things have got to such a head, I don't see as I can go on like this — not under the same roof."

When he appeared to have finished, Ylenius shifted position in the direction of the door.

"If you do decide to change address, Mr Hakala, you *will* inform us, won't you?"

"Yes, yes, of course. At once." He seemed relieved, and Miranda wondered if they were the first to hear of his impending escape.

Outside on the pavement, Ylenius stopped beside Miranda's car.

"What about the Sibelius Academy?" he asked.

"It'll be time-consuming. They've got three main buildings scattered round the city. Two in the centre and one out in Pitäjänmäki. And there are so many departments nowadays:" — she counted them off on her fingers — "Theory and Composition, Church Music, Performing Arts, Opera, Music Education, Folk Music, Jazz, Music Technology... Nearly two thousand students, and no way of knowing which department she might've been in. My guess is she'll turn out to be a Performing Arts student. They're the ones aiming at a solo career or hoping to join a professional orchestra — just like my sister Rosie, in fact. Officially they're based in R-block — the one on Rautatiekatu. But the dead girl could've visited any of the buildings on a regular basis — going to different classes or looking for an empty practice room."

Twenty yards behind Ylenius, Miranda noticed a tight-faced woman with two plastic bags of shopping turn into the apartment block entrance they'd just themselves exited. *Mrs Hakala?* she wondered.

"Okay, Miranda, this lead's going to keep you busy for a while," Ylenius said. "But identifying the girl's a priority. Could your sister give us some help?"

"To be honest, boss, I wouldn't want to put her through it. She's so sensitive. A PM photo like this could give her nightmares for months. Anyway, she's in London right now — on a Royal Academy cello scholarship. She won't be back for another fortnight."

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— * —

The rest of Miranda's day proved to be a series of cul-de-sacs. Showing the victim's photo to the porters at the three Academy buildings drew a blank; although she did get a list of personal phone numbers for the various department secretaries and student affairs officers. Miranda visited some of them at their homes. But no one could identify the dead girl.

At one point during these meanderings across the city, Miranda passed through Pasila to check her in-tray and email. She found Sergeant Tero Toivonen in their open-plan office peering at a selection of Sibelius Monument crime-scene photos that he'd laid panoramically across his desk. At the same time he was chewing on an outsize burger needing both of his hands for successful control. The amount of junk food he ingested, Miranda often wondered how he could retain the same lean and wiry build — 'rat-like' she privately described it to herself, corresponding to his pointed, somewhat sneering features.

"A lot of people'll be screaming sacrilege when this gets in the papers," Tero said, through a mouthful of burger. "Committing such a dastardly deed under the eyes of our beloved Jean."

Miranda stared back coolly. "The sacrilege, Tero, was on that poor young girl — whoever she might be. Her whole life ahead. You probably find the idea trite, but I think it's an appalling waste. And Sibelius would've agreed. He had six daughters of his own and loved them dearly."

"So you haven't managed to ID her?" he asked, ignoring the lecture.

"Not yet. Any luck with missing persons?"

"No one matches the description."

"Well, I've still got a few Academy personnel to visit."

"How's about taking me along? Get me out of the office for a while?"

"No, you'd better stay and hold the fort."

"Ah, the trials of a subordinate officer," he said, though without any sign of rancour.

This gave Miranda pause for thought. At twenty-nine, Tero was exactly her own age, but Miranda's university degree and resultant

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accelerated promotion had left him one clear rank behind. Many men would have resented taking orders from a woman under such circumstances. For all his faults — and he had plenty — Miranda considered herself fortunate that Tero was in some ways so unambitious. He seemed content to just drift through life doing his job commendably enough from day to day; then, in his free time, playing endless computer games over the internet while listening to *Nirvana* on one of the largest, most expensive hi-fi systems Miranda had ever seen outside an arena rock concert.

"How did the press conference go?" she asked.

"Caused a bit of a stir. Of course, we suppressed most of the details: the missing finger, the tampering with the clothes, the ligature, the placing of the violin. They know she was strangled, but not how."

This was standard procedure. Knowledge of such facts by a later suspect could indicate guilt. Conversely, the police needed some way to eliminate false confessions that always attended a crime of this nature.

"When's the PM?" asked Miranda.

"Tomorrow morning. The boss wants us here by ten for a conference of war."

"So much for a quiet Sunday at home."

Tero nodded. "Yeah, I was looking forward to a relaxing one hundred decibels of Kurt Cobain."

Miranda went trekking off again in search of someone who could identify the dead girl. But, throughout this fruitless and frustrating day, her thoughts turned repeatedly to an altogether more private matter — to events in her own life over the last three days, and especially to the Wednesday evening Sibelius lecture where she and the Englishman had first met. . .

II

Andante (ma non troppo lento)

"**J**ohan Julius Christian Sibelius was born on the 8th of December 1865, in Hämeenlinna. Johan, or Janne as his family and friends would always call him, was only two years old when his father, a regimental doctor, was struck down by typhus — presumably contracted from one of his patients. Although Janne never knew his father, he appears to have inherited from him a kind-hearted, engaging character and a love of social gatherings. Janne could be lively and amusing, but there was a complementary dark side to his personality: an unpredictable moodiness or moroseness; a tendency to withdraw into a world of his own which others found disconcerting."

Miranda had made it into the Sibelius Academy Wegelius Hall only moments before the lecture began. It was her boss's considerate dismissal from a late-afternoon-stretching-tediously-into-early-evening brainstorming session with the Community Relations Committee that had made it possible for her to get here at all for the seven-thirty start. In his empathetic way, Ylenius had remembered the upcoming English language lecture series on the seven symphonies of Sibelius and the reason why Miranda was especially keen to attend. As she dropped into the last remaining aisle seat in the fifth row, she received a welcoming smile from a tall, darkly moustached man in his early- to mid-thirties on the adjacent chair. Miranda then managed to embarrass herself by upsetting her shoulder bag and scattering personal items around and about his feet. With reassuring humour he helped her gather them up. He spoke in English, so she thanked him in the same language. His response was a melodramatic tip of the head...

"Do I detect a lilt of the hills and valleys in your delightful,

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velvety voice?" he enquired. "A resonance from the great Land of Song? A reminder of the bardic realm of..."

Before he could finish, or Miranda could adjust to this extraordinary manner of speech and frame an answer, the evening's speaker had climbed onto the lecture platform, and the audience was sprinkling the hall with polite and expectant applause.

Dr Nicholas Lewis was something of a celebrity in the world of music literature. He'd written several well-researched and critically acclaimed books that had explored the symphonic cycles of, among others, Brahms, Bruckner and Mahler. His ability to combine erudite scholarship, a strongly personal musical sense, and an appealingly readable and approachable style had won him a small but enthusiastic following. On his return to Finland, a country in which he'd spent nearly three earlier decades of his life, he was at last focusing his attention on Sibelius. This Wednesday lecture series would embody developing plans for a new volume he hoped to have ready for publication by the end of the year. He had begun this first lecture by introducing himself to the audience, and now he was giving a brief account of Sibelius's early years.

"Apart from the untimely loss of his father, Janne was fortunate in his childhood. He grew up in a small and attractive provincial town, in the warm and loving embrace of a cultured middle-class household. The whole family was musical, especially on his mother's side, and they actively played chamber music together. Although clearly talented, Janne didn't exhibit the gifts of a child prodigy. His musical development would be slower than that of a Mozart or a Mendelssohn but nonetheless inexorable. At twenty years old, Janne dutifully followed his family-elders' wishes by entering the Faculty of Law at the University of Helsinki. After only two terms, he abandoned an academic career in favour of the Helsinki School of Music. His mother bowed to the inevitable with an apprehensive heart. How could she have known that, as a consequence, this very school would one day change its name to hers and become the Sibelius Academy.

"Janne's ambition of becoming a professional violinist was painfully thwarted — probably because of his late start... not taking formal lessons until the age of fourteen. But his talent for composition was spotted by Martin Wegelius, the director of the Conservatory, and

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Janne's career was set on its proper course."

Miranda watched the speaker with affection. He was a man of short but stocky build who had, she knew, achieved success in his younger years as a prop forward for one of the better South Wales rugby teams. His hair bore traces of its original dark colour, though now almost overtaken by grey. He also sported a thick grizzly beard which, in combination with his body shape, reinforced the impression of an ageing teddy bear.

"At this point," he went on, "I should mention the composer's Uncle Johan, who was a sea captain by profession. In those days it was customary for such international travellers to adopt a French form of their name when abroad and, one day, Janne stumbled on a stack of old visiting cards bearing the name Jean Sibelius. The ring of this combination so impressed the younger Johan that he decided to follow his uncle's example."

* [Having completed this short biographical introduction, Dr Lewis chose to explore more provocative ground...

"I'll now ask you to follow me on a small detour — one that I personally find of great interest. Let us consider the concept of Sibelius, the Finnish composer...

"His music is so Finnish. This is a statement one often hears, especially in the land of his birth... so often that it seems to be a truism. But what exactly do people mean by this claim? *Sibelius's music is so Finnish.* It's very easy to feel sympathy for a Finn wishing to express an affinity with his or her own cultural heritage. I, myself, am deeply proud of the fact that I was born on the same island as William Shakespeare, and that the language he moulded into such extraordinary dramatic and evocative forms is also my own. No matter that Shakespeare's genius is separated from my mediocrity by a geographical distance in birthplace of one hundred miles and a temporal separation of about four hundred years. I feel a proprietary sense of oneness, of somehow being myself a part of his genius. Why then should I be surprised if, for example, a thirty-five-year-old systems engineer, working for Nokia in a present-day Helsinki that Sibelius would scarcely have recognized, takes comfort in associating

* As suggested in the introductory **Notes to the Reader**, these bracketed sections of the Sibelius lectures may be treated as optional.

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himself with his own national giant of creative genius? Sibelius was indeed one of the great geniuses of Western musical civilization, and he was most certainly born a Finn. This doesn't however, in itself, help us to answer the question of what is really meant by the statement: *Sibelius's music is so Finnish*.

"In what ways is his music Finnish? Wherein does this Finnishness lie? Is it a product of the musical culture into which he was born? Hardly... In 1865, the concert music tradition in Finland was mainstream European. Janne grew up in an environment of Bach, Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; of Schubert, Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. There was no Finnish composer, past or present, who hadn't trained in and modelled himself on this predominantly Teutonic tradition. The same musical influences were paramount in Janne's formative years. He played many works of these masters with the family trio: consisting of himself, his brother and his sister. Should we then be calling Sibelius's music Austro-Germanic? No, let's withhold judgment for the time being and look elsewhere. Let's turn our attention to Finnish ethnic music.

"Finland has a long tradition of folk music covering a wide range — from the genial dances of the 'pelimanni' violinists to the grief-laden cries of the professional lamenters. So perhaps this is where Sibelius's Finnishness derives: from Finnish folk music. Unfortunately not! Sibelius isn't a nationalist composer in the way that could be claimed for such figures as Grieg, Smetana or Bartók. Incidentally, Bartók was a composer that Sibelius would, in later years, come to admire, so I'll take the Hungarian as an example... Bartók's music, although not relying directly on quotations from ethnic sources, is imbued with Hungarianness in its rhythms and scale structures. There is ample justification for calling his music Hungarian. In Sibelius's case, however, although the composer had a fair knowledge of the Karelian folk-music tradition, relatively little seems to have found its way into his own work."

Miranda looked surreptitiously around the lecture hall. The majority of the audience would undoubtedly be Finns, and what the speaker appeared to be implying was tantamount to treason. She detected puzzlement on some of the faces but nothing more.

"Sibelius himself denied any direct influence from Finnish folk melodies and wrote a rebuttal to anyone he discovered making such claims for his music. But can't we anyway reassure ourselves by considering the composer's fascination for the *Kalevala*: Finland's national epic poem? The titles of many of his pieces testify to it: *The*

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Kullervo Symphony, Lemminkäinen's Return, The Swan of Tuonela, Pohjola's Daughter, Luonnotar, Tapiola. Surely these literary sources of inspiration demonstrate the Finnishness of Sibelius's music? Well, if they do, by the same logic we are forced to declare that the incidental music he wrote for Maeterlinck's *Pelleas et Melisande* demonstrates Belgianness and the incidental music for Shakespeare's *The Tempest* demonstrates Englishness! We have clearly gone astray.

"Of course, we might still resort to Sibelius's patriotism. Everyone knows that he composed *Finlandia* as a stirring thumb-on-the-nose at nearly a century of Czarist rule. Yes, that's true, as far as it goes. However, politics is politics and, although music can sometimes be drawn into the service of political creeds, music of itself does not, indeed *cannot* express political thoughts. Its language is of a totally different nature."]*

But now Dr Lewis announced that it was time to embark on a detailed study of the composer's First Symphony, opus 39, in E minor...

Glancing to her left, Miranda caught her neighbour's eye. He grinned broadly, and whispered: "Intriguing stuff!" His face was curiously irregular, with one eye noticeably higher than the other and a nose that looked as if it had at some stage been broken. Although his style of dress was conventional, the impression he made on Miranda had something piratical about it. His voice had been a sonorous baritone — an actor's voice — its accent plainly English. She wondered about his connection to Finland and if he'd been in the country long.

"It's something of a tired joke," Dr Lewis continued, "that Sibelius's First Symphony should really be called Tchaikovsky's Seventh... and, yes, there *are* clear traits inherited from the Russian composer. In his autumnal years, Sibelius acknowledged a 'youthful' fascination for the cosmopolitan Tchaikovsky. He was, however, less ready to admit any debt to the more nationalistic Russian composers like Borodin or Rimsky-Korsakov. Perhaps he felt it would be 'politically incorrect' for a Finn whose patriotism had come to be considered a cornerstone of his country's recently won independence."

The remainder of the lecture provided an analysis of each of the four movements, effectively illustrated with short examples — some

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played enthusiastically at the piano by the speaker himself, and others on CD in a full orchestral version. Dr Lewis held his listeners spellbound. And, on drawing his presentation to a close, invited everyone to join him the following Wednesday evening for an exploration of the *Second* Symphony. The audience showed its appreciation with vigorous applause.

As they were all standing to leave, the Englishman leant over and asked Miranda: "Have you heard Dr Lewis lecture before?"

"You could say that," she laughed. "At breakfast and dinner for most of my childhood."

The Englishman's brown eyes twinkled. "Am I encouraged to suppose that finding two persons of the druidic persuasion sheltering under the same far-flung roof is no mere coincidence?"

Miranda gave herself a few moments to interpret this idiosyncratic verbal style, and nodded: "He's my father."

"Tempting to be wise after the event," said the Englishman, "but I believe I *do* detect a plausible resemblance to the illustrious doctor — especially around the mouth. Not the colouring, of course... not your flaming Titian red hair and striking green eyes, Ms Lewis." He hesitated. "Or perhaps I err in assuming your name conforms to that of your paternal lineage?"

Again she made the necessary mental translation, and smiled. "I did try another name for a while, but Lewis turned out better after all. I'm Miranda... Miranda Lewis."

"Wonderful to make your acquaintance. And if I may introduce *myself*?" He offered his hand... "Phillip Burton — though I'd be grateful if you limited your usage to the Phillip bit. And while we're participating in the social graces, allow me to introduce a fellow countryman." He turned to the man now hovering beside him: "Vagabond and composer extraordinaire, Adrian Gamble."

And that was it. Not love, of course. Miranda wasn't naive. But powerful attraction at first sight — admittedly a rare occurrence for her in recent years — was entirely possible; though nothing to do with Hollywood screen-star looks. This man wasn't tall — not as tall as Phillip, for example; nor as dark. His eyes were strikingly blue. And his hair was a halo of tight curls. When he spoke — "Yes, I'm Adrian

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Gamble. Nice to meet you, Miranda" — he had a soft, reticent, tenor voice. His boyish smile came in appealing contrast to his otherwise manly features, and she suddenly realized how much he reminded her of a whirlwind teenage romance ten summers ago on the island of Crete.

Miranda offered to introduce the two Englishmen to her father. They eagerly took up the offer, and were soon praising Dr Lewis on his lecture — Phillip hyperbolically, Adrian more directly. Both were obvious Sibelius enthusiasts, and Nick Lewis suggested they all four visit the nearest pub for a quick "post-proscenium pint"; adding that, although he and Miranda had a prior dinner engagement *à deux* — having not seen each other for several months — all his prattling on about Sibelius had left him with a raging thirst which he'd enjoy quenching right now *à quatre*.

Phillip and Adrian protested they didn't want to impose on a family reunion; but Nick, with Miranda's unspoken endorsement, overrode their objections.

"Blissfully resident in this 'Pearl of the Baltic' for a couple of years now," Phillip Burton explained. "No plans to leave. Suits me admirably."

"And you, Adrian?" asked Miranda.

"I only got here last autumn. Spent last year in Stockholm."

"Why change to Helsinki?"

"*Cherchez la femme*," said Phillip archly. "Or, in this case, *la femme cherchée*."

Adrian looked disconcerted: "Don't be absurd, Phillip. You know I only came to keep a parental eye on you — that and the lure of the Sibelius Academy." He turned back to the other two. "I won an Arts Council scholarship in Sweden for composition and decided to bring it over here. Now I've got a couple of part-time teaching jobs to supplement the grant, so things are working out fine. Meanwhile Phillip's pursuing his career as an English teacher," he added, shifting the focus from himself.

"Yes, spreading our winsome tongue to the natives," Phillip agreed. "Immense good fortune, don't you think? A worldwide market demand for something we acquired effortlessly in the cradle. Potential

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for travel and personal enrichment! Been exploiting it most of my adult life."

"You and adult life strike me as incompatible concepts," quipped Adrian.

"I admit I've been a slow developer," Phillip responded. "But subtle depths of maturity await discovery for the trained observer."

"Why do I get the impression you two've known each other more than just a few months?" asked Miranda.

"You've penetrated our guilty secret!" exclaimed Phillip. "We do go back a long way — as far, one might say, as the redbrick halls of Edgbaston — the confluence point of our fateful first meeting so many life-enhancing years ago."

"What Phillip's trying to say is we met at Birmingham University. I was doing Civil Engineering, and he was doing English Literature and Modern Languages. We seem to have been recrossing paths ever since."

Nick turned to Phillip. "You're a linguist, eh? So how's your Finnish?"

"Ah... well, I can manage in French, German and Italian," Phillip replied, "and pass muster in five other world languages. But Finnish, I humbly admit, still defeats me!"

Miranda picked up on *Adrian's* degree subject: "Civil engineering to composition? That's quite a leap!"

"Maybe not," said Nick. "Bach might've made a stunning mathematician if he'd been born in another time and place."

Adrian nodded. "Yes, I've always felt a close affinity between compositional and mathematical processes. But, Phillip, shouldn't we be making a move?"

"Quite so," Phillip agreed. "We'll leave you to your family tête-à-tête and wend our separate way. Although might I suggest another occasion to further this agreeable acquaintance? Adrian and I shall imbibe two days hence at the Ateljé Restaurant. Any chance of joining us?"

"Personally, I'm off to the country for the weekend," Nick said, "to our lakeside cottage. It's been locked up the whole winter. But I'd like to set myself up there for the summer months and work on my Sibelius book. Though I'll be back in Helsinki for my Wednesday

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lectures. I'm sure we can find another chance. But, Miranda, nothing to stop *you* this Friday, is there?"

"I've got an eight o'clock start Saturday morning. But, I suppose if we don't make too long an evening of it..."

"Hope you didn't mind me putting your name forward, my dear, for meeting our new English friends again."

Father and daughter had by now settled themselves at a corner table in a restaurant nearby: one specializing in traditional Finnish farmhouse cuisine.

"No problem, Dad. Could be fun. Phillip's quite a character, isn't he?"

"Gay, do you suppose?"

"I doubt it. I know he talks like a frenzied Shakespearean actor, but it doesn't come across especially 'camp'. More Lord Byron than Oscar Wilde."

"Just asking. Women are better judges of these things. But I got the impression Adrian interested you more."

"Was it *that* obvious?"

"I've known you a long time, darling."

"And was there a hidden motive for setting me up on Friday evening? Trying some match-making, are you?"

"And why not? You've been alone too long. Time to put the past behind you, Miranda. I've had to do it. Any news from Johannes by the way?"

"Someone told me he's in Brussels."

"I never thought you were a good match. You'll find someone better. But only if you put yourself in the path of opportunity. I know your job's important to you. Just try getting out a bit more."

"It's not that bad, Dad!" Miranda objected. "I've still got the string quartet." This was an amateur ensemble she'd played in since university. "Though we only manage once a month nowadays. Haven't done a recital for ages."

"Did you get your viola sorted?"

"It only needed an adjustment to the sound post... Hey, we're running through Opus 76, No 2 tomorrow — just for fun, of course."

"One of Haydn's best. Can I tag along and listen?"

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"Of course! And why don't you join us more actively sometimes? We could do a Piano Quintet together."

"Tempting thought. How about the Brahms F Minor? Are we up to it?"

"There'll be nobody else to hear us. We can make as big a mess of it as we like."

The waitress came for their order. Both chose the braised liver with cowberry sauce.

"See how it compares with your mother's culinary skills, shall we? Always was one of my favourites."

Miranda leant forward, resting her chin on interlocked fingers.

"Are you coping, Dad?"

"Ups and downs. Sometimes I think I'll be fine. Then everything comes flooding back. Work's excellent therapy. I'm keeping myself busy with this new book."

"It's wonderful to have you back in Finland. I'm glad we'll see more of each other, but I wish things could've gone better for you in Edinburgh."

Nick reached out to touch Miranda's cheek. Tears had formed in the corners of his eyes and she felt her own burning in sympathy.

"You and Rosie have been wonderful daughters," he said, summoning up an affectionate smile. "I've often wondered if I should've left you so soon after your mother passed away."

"Dad, we both understood. You had to take that second chance. And we weren't babies anymore. I only wish you and Eleanor could've had more time together."

She studied her father intently. The pain of nursing two successive wives through terminal cancer in less than five years had left its mark. She realized how hard it would be for him to risk a third commitment.

"Tell me, Dad, did you see Rosie while you were in London?"

Nick rallied at once. "Yes, she was radiant, and making excellent progress. She proved it to me with a private recital in my hotel room: Bach's C Minor Cello Suite."

Miranda laughed. "I wish I'd been there. She said in her last letter she'll be back in a fortnight."

"So how about us meeting her at the airport?"

"Dad, that's a great idea."

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Over the following two days, Miranda's work was largely routine: domestic violence, a couple of bar brawls. Nothing out of the ordinary. But, at last, on Friday evening Miranda arrived at the Ateljé Restaurant — no more than a few minutes past the agreed time of 8 o'clock — for her triangular date with the two Englishmen. Phillip spotted her at the door and rushed gallantly over.

"Miranda, you look stunning. I'm bowled over." He escorted her to the table, pulled out a chair and tucked it under her with practised skill. Miranda found the attention mildly amusing. Somehow he managed to be neither obsequious nor overfamiliar.

"May I order you a drink?" he suggested. "Something to eat? Or shall we wait for Adrian? He's invariably late. It's the artistic temperament, so we must endeavour to excuse him. In the company of his creative muse he's oblivious to the passing hours."

Miranda accepted a glass of red wine and gazed at the surroundings. The Ateljé, a restaurant much frequented by professional musicians and music students, was more popular for drinking than for eating. Apart from the nearby television, whose volume was turned mercifully low, the place retained much of its original 1940s atmosphere.

"A long time since I was here," Miranda said. "I'd forgotten the sensation of stepping through a time warp."

"A little gloomy — even a little seedy. But, yes, it has a certain aura of old-fashioned Bohemianism, does it not? Talking of which, I was treated to an extravagant dinner at the Kämp last week."

Miranda was impressed: the Kämp being the only 5-star hotel in Finland with 5-star prices to match.

"Courtesy of a company that employs my English teaching services," Phillip went on. "Some top management wining and dining me as they practised their English skills — all on the company expense account, naturally."

"The perks of a language teacher?"

"Exactly! Of course, the Kämp was a regular haunt of Sibelius and his cronies back in the 1890s," Phillip said. "The new owners have striven to recreate that *fin de siècle* image — with excellent results, I must say. Easy to picture Jean at a corner table: the painter Gallen-

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Kallela to his left, the conductor Robert Kajanus to his right — discussing the human condition, peeling back the layers of illusion to reveal the innermost secrets of life, death, hope and despair. Well, that's the Romantic version. All probably just pissed as wombats most of the time."

In spite of herself, Miranda grinned at the change of register.

But still there was no sign of Adrian Gamble. Several times Miranda drew the conversation round to Phillip's missing friend, quizzing him about Adrian's previous and present life. If Phillip felt disappointment or envy at not being the focus of Miranda's interest, he concealed it very well, fielding her questions with attentive good humour.

Miranda learned that the *femme cherchée* Adrian had followed from Sweden to Helsinki was a young and rising opera star: an exceptionally gifted Finnish soprano who'd been studying in Stockholm. Unfortunately, back in the singer's home country their relationship became tempestuous and survived little more than a month. She ran off to Milan with an Italian tenor and, according to Phillip, it was two or three months before Adrian was able to compose again.

"Never seen him so affected by a member of the very much fairer sex," Phillip admitted.

Miranda might've preferred being spared some of the more delicate details of the romance, but Phillip's manner of recounting them was highly entertaining.

At exactly nine o'clock, Adrian phoned Phillip's mobile to say he was on his way. He finally appeared twenty minutes later.

"Good heavens, Adrian," Phillip chided, "this is extremely tardy, even by *your* long-practised standards."

"I'm really sorry. Something came up I had to deal with right away. I'm glad you're still here, Miranda. I was afraid I'd missed you."

Miranda now found *herself* the focus of both men's curiosity. They were predictably intrigued to learn about her job at the Homicide Unit, and pressed her to give an outline of her daily duties as a detective inspector. She found the chore less irksome than with most new acquaintances, but was still relieved when the discussion turned to Wednesday's Sibelius lecture.

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"Have you noticed," said Phillip, at one point, "a family resemblance between the First Symphony's opening clarinet melody and the main theme for Coppola's *The Godfather*?"

Adrian considered this proposition. "Yes, if you give it to the trumpet. Though I doubt Sibelius ever saw the film. Something that interested me, Miranda, was your father's reference to Bruckner in the third movement. He's right, of course, about the opening scherzo passage — though Sibelius's touch is lighter, much less megalithic. That insistent pulse, those ambiguous cross-rhythms — they could almost be lifted from a previously unknown Bruckner symphony. The trio section's another matter. Nothing could be more idiosyncratically Sibelius, could it?"

Speaking on a subject that truly interested him, Adrian took fire. Miranda found herself drawn by his enthusiasm and more than anything by his eyes — such vividly blue eyes, of a hue seldom seen in Finland where a much greyer blue was commonplace. Some would find the intensity of those eyes unsettling. Miranda thought them extraordinarily attractive.

By half past eleven, she knew she'd have to leave if she wanted to function successfully the next day.

"You've been fantastic company," Miranda told them, "but I promised myself I'd be home by midnight."

"In that case, fair Cinderella," Phillip declared, "I trust you'll allow these two ugly sisters to escort you to your home portals. Didn't you say earlier your flat overlooks the Church in the Rock? 'Tis but a stone's throw from here, and 'twould be an enormous privilege. I'm convinced Adrian feels the same. Speak up, Adrian!"

"Yes, of course," Adrian nodded.

Some fifteen minutes later, as they were saying their goodbyes outside Miranda's apartment block, Phillip proposed they met again the following Monday at Mamma Rosa's Italian restaurant. Miranda had been wondering how to ensure her association with Adrian — such as it was — wouldn't end right here and now. Fortunately Phillip had taken the initiative.

And as she climbed the stairs to her flat, she experienced a sensation unfamiliar in recent years: a glow of anticipation — a feeling that her life was moving in a promising new direction.

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Of course, she had no way of knowing how tomorrow morning would bring discovery of that young woman's body at the Sibelius Monument, and how this event would begin an unfolding sequence of horror overshadowing her life and numerous others for many weeks to come. . .

III

Scherzo: Allegro—Lento (ma non troppo)—Tempo I

At ten-thirty on Sunday morning, Miranda and Tero sat down in Chief Inspector Aleksi Ylenius's cosy, though unspacious office. Miranda often wondered how this colossal man could be content with such a tiny place of work, or how he managed to keep everything in order without the limited surfaces becoming permanently littered by papers and files.

"The preliminary post-mortem and forensic reports on the Sibelius Monument murder," Ylenius said, handing each a folder. Miranda and Tero studied the contents in silence...

The pathologist estimated the girl's age at around twenty. She was healthy, well-nourished, and had never given birth. She was 5' 5" tall and lightly built — a mere 7 stone (98 pounds). The cause of death was no surprise to anyone: strangulation performed with a length of lightweight electrical cable fashioned into a simple noose. The knot, situated at the back of the neck, had been designed to make the tightening process difficult to reverse. The remaining free end of the cable had then been tied into a fixed loop, presumably for hooking over the killer's wrist. The cable itself was of little help, consisting of two parallel grey strands fused along the middle — typical for connecting loudspeakers to domestic stereos, and *as common as spaghetti* the report wryly commented in a hand-written footnote.

Apart from the neck area, there were no obvious signs of bruising on the body. The position of the ligature knot at the back of the neck suggested the victim had been taken by surprise from behind with little chance of defending herself. The skin and blood found beneath her fingernails were her own — the result of a fruitless attempt to tear the noose away.

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Despite no obvious signs of rape, sexual intercourse had recently taken place. A semen sample was being processed to generate a DNA profile.

And there was evidence to indicate the kind of tool used for amputating the little finger. Under a magnifying lens, the bone and cartilage remaining at the severed joint showed clear marks of a blade with extremely fine concave serrations (approximately three to a millimetre) suggesting either kitchen scissors or garden secateurs. But a detailed search of the crime scene area had turned up no such item — nor, in fact, anything else relevant to the investigation.

A study of the body's hypostasis indicated that the sitting position the victim was found in had been adopted soon after — if not immediately after — death. The time of death itself was now given more accurately: between 8.15 and 10.00 pm.

And then there was the door key found in the girl's jeans pocket. It was attached to a clear plastic tag advertising a popular brand of Finnish beer — so common as to offer no viable leads in itself. But the surface of the plastic bore two clear fingerprints: an index finger on one side, a thumb on the other. Neither belonged to the victim, nor disappointingly to any known felon on record.

"Not much to go on, is there?" complained Tero.

Ylenius sighed. "And we still don't know who she is. Missing Persons can't offer us a match. If she lives alone, it's possible nobody's even noticed her absence. Any luck with the door-to-door enquiries?"

"Not yet," said Tero. "Seems the cold snap and the ice hockey on telly kept everyone tucked up at home with the curtains drawn."

Miranda flicked back through her folder. "According to the report, there's no evidence the victim was forced to have intercourse. But, once he'd got the noose in place, she could've been frightened enough to comply. The most likely sequence would've been the rape first, the murder by strangulation second, and the removal of the finger last. So something doesn't add up."

"The clothes," said Ylenius.

"Exactly, boss. Her jeans and pants were more or less pulled back up. Why would he bother with that after he'd raped her? Seems curiously prudish under the circumstances."

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"Perhaps the girl did it herself," suggested Ylenius. "A reflex action to hide her nakedness afterwards."

"But she didn't get them all the way up," Tero added, "because he started tightening the noose and she had other things to worry about."

Miranda grimaced at the image.

The meeting broke up a few minutes later. Being a Sunday, and with so few leads available, Miranda and Tero settled for completing the paperwork on their outstanding cases so they'd be free to concentrate on the Sibelius Monument murder tomorrow.

In fact, when Monday came, Miranda had no greater success at the Sibelius Academy than on Saturday. She could find no one able to identify the dead girl, and felt her next best bet would be the Helsinki Conservatory: a rather less prestigious music school recently drawn under the umbrella category of 'polytechnic college'. Most of its students were training to become instrumental or music-playschool teachers. After decades confined to cramped and unsuitable premises in the centre of the city, the Conservatory had, the previous autumn, moved into a brand-new building located a convenient twenty yards from Ruoholahti metro station.

It was already 3 pm when Miranda pushed her way through the clear-glass entrance doors. The porter's cubicle and the concert hall cloakroom lay to the left beyond a stairwell and a branching corridor. A large cafeteria opened up to the right, reaching as far as the building's glass-fronted facade. Few people were in sight. The lunch-time rush was over, and only a handful of the cafeteria tables were occupied. Behind the cloakroom desk a tall, heavily-built man was pulling on his jacket. Miranda approached him, her eyes drawn involuntarily to the long strands of fair hair combed from one side across the pink dome of his otherwise bald head.

"Are you the porter?" she asked.

"That's the one you want," he said, and nodded towards a much older man nearing the porter's cubicle from the direction of the stairwell. Miranda followed him as far as the threshold and introduced herself. He smiled back crookedly, and apologized for the fact that talking intelligibly might be a problem.

"Just came from the dentist," he explained, gingerly massaging his

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jaw. "Anaesthetic hasn't worn off yet. Gave me hell last week when it flared up. Didn't sleep a wink. Rushed straight to the dentist next morning. But she's been digging around again today. Says she can't do a root filling till the antibiotics've got the infection under control. Mind you, I always think the most painful bit's the bill at the end, don't you? Oh, sorry, Inspector. Rambling on as usual. How can I help?" He was about sixty, with friendly eyes and a wispy salt-and-pepper beard. Miranda warmed to him instantly.

"We're trying to identify a dead girl we think might've been a student here."

His cheery expression clouded. "Dead, you say?"

"I've got a postmortem photo. Not pleasant, I'm afraid. But, if you wouldn't mind taking a look... perhaps you'll recognize her."

"True, I know all the students here. Deal with them on a daily basis — passing on messages, booking practice and rehearsal rooms."

He took out a pair of reading-glasses and perched them on his nose. His response to the photo was immediate.

"This is Liisa Louhi. She's a first-year violin student."

"Are you sure?"

"No doubt about it. What happened to the poor girl?" He made a sudden connection. "Was she that one found at Sibelius Park?"

Miranda nodded.

"Oh, my goodness! I read about it in the newspaper. Never occurred to me she might be one of ours."

"I'm trying to trace her movements over the days leading up to her death. Can you help in any way?"

"I don't remember her being here much last week. Maybe she was in on Friday... Yes, I saw her in the afternoon. She was just leaving the building."

"What time would that've been?"

"We were just changing shifts — me and the other porter. We overlap shifts mid-afternoon, and we'd just made the changeover when I saw her going out. So it must've been three o'clock, or very soon after."

"Did she have her violin with her?"

"Yes, I think so."

"How about a handbag?"

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He considered for a while. "Sorry, I can't remember."

Miranda scanned the ceiling of the hallway and located a video camera trained on the main entrance. "Could we check the security tapes for Friday afternoon?"

"There aren't any! The cameras are up, but the recording room's not fitted out yet. They didn't plan a security system for this building at first. But there've been so many problems since it was opened last autumn — kids wandering in off the streets stealing the students' instruments. So now one's being installed, but it won't be ready till next week."

"Pity," said Miranda. "But you've been an enormous help, Mr..."

"Koskinen. Olli Koskinen."

"If you think of anything else, please get in touch." She handed him a card, and asked for directions to the student affairs office where she hoped to get more details about the murdered girl.

Passing the cafeteria, Miranda noticed a group of female students chatting at one of the tables. On impulse she joined them.

There was initial shock at the news of Liisa Louhi's death. But they were all willing to talk. Unfortunately, getting background on the dead girl proved difficult. It seemed that Liisa Louhi hadn't confided much in her fellow students.

"No close girl friends here as far as I know," said one of the group. "Kept to herself. And that's unusual. We're a tightknit bunch in this place."

"How about boyfriends?"

"The boys took an interest in *her* all right. But she stayed sort of aloof — like she thought they were too young for her or something."

"That didn't stop her taking advantage when it suited her," said a second girl. "She could turn on the helpless-little-woman act at a moment's notice. Had them running round fetching and carrying, helping her with her music theory homework, stuff like that. But I'm pretty sure she wasn't dating any of the students here. We'd've heard about it."

A third girl, very blonde, with a face — so it struck Miranda — like a picture-postcard angel suddenly spoke up: "I was in here last week sitting at the next table to her, and I overheard a phone conversation she was having. Sounded like a boyfriend. She was

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talking to him in English."

"How do you know it was a man?"

"Well... the tone of voice, a bit flirtatious, sort of bantering. Sounded like trying to talk him into letting her visit him. But without much success. She was getting a bit annoyed. And then she gave up. Said she'd phone again later."

"When was this?"

"Could've been last Monday. Yes, that's right. I'd just had my horn lesson."

"Did she ever refer to this person by name?"

"Not that I remember. I only picked up the general feel of it all."

"Thanks, anyway. I'm trying to build up an overall picture of her life, so everything helps."

"There was some kind of scandal last autumn," said a girl with short henna-ed hair and a stud in her lower lip. "Some trouble between Liisa and her violin teacher. Rumour was she'd been having an affair with him. Frowned on, of course: teachers consorting with their students."

"I heard something different," said Angel-Face. "That he came on too strong and made a pass at her during a lesson."

"That could've been it. Anyway the teacher left. Don't know if he resigned or was kicked out."

Sounds promising, thought Miranda. "So who was this teacher?"

"Not a Finn. From Eastern Europe."

"Hungarian," someone else chipped in. "Don't remember his name."

"No, it was something unpronounceable," said Studded-lip. "He was only here a few weeks. Dishy to look at, I can tell you that much," she grinned. "I expect the office'll give you his name."

The secretary-of-studies was a prim, conservatively dressed woman of about sixty who allowed Miranda into her office with a minimum of fuss but no more than sufficient politeness to maintain professionalism. Miranda assumed she was annoyed at having her Monday afternoon routine disturbed. With a moue of distaste, the secretary confirmed Liisa Louhi's identity from the photograph, and then provided the dead girl's full name, birth-date, address, next of

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kin, etc. To Miranda's surprise, there was also a photograph — taken for an upcoming concert programme. She studied the lovely face that posed smiling for the studio camera. It was hard to recognize the distorted parody that death had left at the Sibelius Monument. The girl looked so young: a child's face, though with more than a hint of womanly sensuality. The secretary allowed Miranda to fax the photo and other details straight to Pasila.

Nineteen-year-old Liisa Louhi was originally from Turku: Finland's third-largest city, a hundred miles to the west of Helsinki. Her mother still lived there, and somebody from the local Turku station would have the unenviable task of telling the woman about her daughter's death. Liisa's address in Helsinki was a flat close to Sibelius Park in the same network of streets as lived Martti Hakala — the dog owner who'd found her body.

Full student attendance records weren't submitted to the Conservatory office until the end of term, but the secretary prepared a hand-written list of Liisa's teachers and their telephone numbers. Miranda immediately spotted Adrian Gamble's name near the top. She also noted that the replacement violin teacher was a woman. A calculated move to avoid further problems?

In fact, the secretary refused to be drawn into any discussion about Liisa's previous violin teacher, Zoltán Szervánszky, or his sudden departure from the Conservatory, saying simply that one of the Helsinki orchestras had offered him employment, so he'd decided to give up teaching for the time being. The secretary also declined to comment on the rumours of impropriety in the Hungarian's behaviour, although she did agree to look up his address.

Miranda managed to interview three of Liisa's teachers presently in the building. The solfège teacher had a look at his attendance lists and confirmed his recollection that Liisa had been absent from both the Tuesday and the Thursday sessions. The harmony and figured bass teacher hadn't seen her either at his Wednesday lesson. On the other hand, Liisa had managed to turn up for her personal violin tuition at a quarter past one on Friday — albeit more distracted and unprepared than usual, having left most of her music at home. They'd been able to work extensively on only one of her pieces — the Debussy sonata — and the lesson had ended at two o'clock.

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Miranda would have welcomed the excuse to speak to Adrian Gamble as well, but apparently he didn't come in on Mondays. Never mind, she'd be seeing him this evening at *Mamma Rosa's*.

Before leaving the building, Miranda visited the Conservatory library and learned that Liisa had dropped in at about twenty to three on Friday afternoon to enquire about a symphonic score for a future form-analysis project. No copies remained on the shelf, so the librarian had checked on the internet and located one at the public library in Töölö. This was only four or five hundred yards from Liisa's flat and would have been directly on her route home, so Miranda decided to drive straight there and ask if anybody remembered the dead girl.

Miranda's luck held. The young librarian in the music department looked up Liisa Louhi on his computer.

"Yes, she borrowed a miniature score of Mozart's 'Jupiter' Symphony on Friday at 3.41 pm. I remember her," he added. "I helped her find it on the shelves."

The wistful look in his eye suggested he'd been another male victim to the aura that Miranda was beginning to suspect had accompanied Liisa wherever she went.

"Was she carrying a violin?"

"Yes."

"And a bag?"

"Perhaps... Yes, she took her library ticket out of it. Dug around for ages. Made some joke about old ladies and their handbags. And she put the score in there afterwards."

"Could you describe this handbag?"

"I'm not exactly an expert on ladies' handbags. But she did have it up on the counter." He frowned, trying to summon up an image. "A shoulder bag, about this big..." He indicated something the size of an encyclopaedia... "in a sort of light-brown suedey material. Soft-looking. Lots of tassels on it. Sort of like Indian moccasins."

Miranda nodded. He'd managed quite well for a non-expert.

"Do you remember what she was wearing?"

This he found easier, describing the same clothes Liisa had been wearing at the murder scene.

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But the young librarian had even more to offer: "Don't know if it helps, but I saw her later on — after she'd left the library. I went out on the balcony for a smoke. Spotted her down on the street. She was over on the other side, walking back down Humalistonkatu. Then she went into the corner café."

"How long was this after she left you?"

"Less than ten minutes."

"Was she still carrying the bag and violin?"

"Not sure about the bag... but I can picture the violin in her hand."

Miranda considered the implications. The library had no side entrance, so Liisa must have left by the front door and doubled back along the side of the building — up Humalistonkatu towards her own flat. Why then was she coming back *down* the street so soon? Her own flat was a good third of a mile away. If the librarian's estimate of less than ten minutes was correct, she wouldn't have had time to get home and back — even if she'd run the whole way. So where had she been in the meantime? Perhaps she'd started walking home but changed her mind and decided to go to the café instead.

Before Miranda left the library, she made a formal request that Friday afternoon's security videos be retained, promising to send an officer round for them later with the necessary paperwork. Her own next move would be the corner café. But the staff there proved unhelpful: Yes, they'd both been working on Friday afternoon. No, they couldn't remember anyone fitting that description. The place was always full on Fridays. No way could they be expected to remember one particular girl. But, as Miranda noted, the café staff were both girls themselves.

By now Ylenius and Tero would probably be at Liisa's flat with a forensic team. Miranda wondered whether to join them. She was already close by. But it was getting late, and her meeting with Adrian and Phillip was scheduled for 8 o'clock. The most productive way to spend the remaining time might be following up on the Hungarian violinist.

She called Chief Inspector Ylenius on his mobile and brought him up to date. She also asked about Liisa's flat...

"Have you come across her handbag, boss?"

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"No, but we found two desperate cats. Obviously hadn't been fed since Friday. The smell of ammonia from the litter tray practically knocked us out. But there was *something* interesting. One of the speaker cables on the stereo's been chewed up — presumably by the cats. The other one's missing altogether. Seems to be the same kind of cable Liisa was strangled with."

"Doesn't that suggest the killer had access to her flat?"

"Maybe, but I don't think we should read too much into it. As Forensics already pointed out, this kind of cable's very common. Anyway, after you've interviewed this Hungarian fellow, call it a day." — *Thanks, boss, but I already intended to!* — "No need to rush in early tomorrow. We've all been putting in a lot of overtime. Get yourself a good night's sleep."

Miranda dropped in at Pasila HQ. The interview with Zoltán Szervánszky might turn out more than just a fact-finding mission. She'd better take another officer with her. While in the building, she checked her email. Nothing of significance. But as she was leaving her desk to find a suitable backup, the phone rang...

"Inspector Lewis? I'm Jaana Saari from the Conservatory. You came over to our table this afternoon... gave us all your card. I was the one who overheard that phone call of Liisa's."

"Yes, Jaana. I remember you." It was Angel-Face.

"You see, something sort of popped into my head on the way home. You asked me if Liisa called the guy on the phone by his name."

"You've remembered it?"

"No, no! Not exactly. But I did remember something peculiar," she said, and hesitated... "I'm not sure if this'll make any sense."

"Try me."

"While she was talking to him, a few times she said stuff like '*Come on, eh!*' or '*What about it, eh!*' and then once '*Hey, eh!*' It sounded really odd. I remember wondering if she was saying "*eh*" to make a question — you know, like you stick on the end to get a reaction. But most of the time it didn't sound like a question. And then I wondered if she was throwing in the Finnish word "*ei*" — instead of using the English "*no*" — sort of mixing the two languages

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together. But that didn't seem to work either. Now I've thought of another explanation... and this is the really silly bit. Try not to laugh. What if "*eh*" was his name? I don't mean his whole name. Just a nickname. Or the first letter 'A' of his name — like calling somebody by their initial." She paused again. "Sounds far-fetched, doesn't it? I expect you think I'm crazy. Wasn't sure whether to tell you or not."

"I'm glad you did, Jaana. Everything's worth considering."

Miranda took the girl's phone number, and ended the call. In truth, she didn't see how Jaana's information would help much. But as Miranda stood up to leave, and before she could even grab her bag, the phone rang again.

The caller introduced herself as Hanna Kettunen...

"I heard you've been asking about Liisa Louhi, so I thought I'd better let you know she came to visit me on Friday afternoon. We rehearsed a violin sonata at my place. I've got my own Steinway, so I prefer to play at home rather than on a Conservatory instrument."

A rich mummy and daddy somewhere, Miranda supposed.

"How long was she at your place?"

"From half past four. We played for an hour and a half. So she must've left at ten or quarter past six."

"Where do you live, Hanna?"

"In Mariankatu."

An expensive area! *And doubtless an expensive flat*, Miranda speculated, *to provide a suitable setting for the Steinway.*

Mariankatu would have been a twenty or thirty-minute ride from Töölö library on a number 18 bus. If the librarian saw Liisa going into the corner café at about ten to four, and she stayed long enough to drink a cup of coffee, then she must have travelled directly to Hanna's flat to arrive by four-thirty.

"Did Liisa seem in any way different from usual?"

"Not that I noticed. She was always a bit distant — sort of scatty. But she liked the piece we were playing. We were going to perform it in a couple of weeks. Anyway, we started practising, and she really got in to it. She played the second movement beautifully."

"You mean the *Intermède*?"

Hanna paused. "Yes, that's right." She seemed bemused by Miranda's clairvoyance. But Miranda didn't bother to explain how

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she'd guessed the piece was the Debussy sonata.

"Did Liisa tell you where she was going next?"

"No, she wasn't very forthcoming about her private life. With people like that, you give up asking after a while. I offered her some coffee, but she was in a hurry to get away."

Hanna confirmed that Liisa owned a suede shoulder bag, but she hadn't noticed it on that final Friday visit...

"She would've left it by the door with her coat. Anyway somebody phoned me just after our practice session, so Liisa ended up letting herself out."

Miranda had now managed to construct a picture of Liisa's movements between one o'clock and quarter past six on the afternoon of her death. But what had happened in those last few critical hours?

Zoltán Szervánszky lived in Herttoniemi, five miles east of the city centre. Since the element of surprise could be a useful tool for gauging a suspect's veracity, Miranda took a chance and didn't phone him beforehand. As backup she took along a chatty, twenty-year-old constable from the uniformed branch. Only six months on the force, Riitta was full of enthusiasm, and reminded Miranda of herself at the same stage in her own career. That was probably why she'd chosen Riitta.

The Hungarian's apartment block, although convenient to the metro line — only 150 yards north of Siilitie station — was an ugly box-shape, painted in a drab olive-green. As they climbed the stairs to his second-floor flat, Miranda heard strains of the Sibelius Violin Concerto permeating onto the landing. Not a recording: the real thing — though, of course, lacking an orchestral accompaniment. Miranda waited for a breathing space in the musical line before ringing the doorbell. She knew how irritating an interruption could be when you were concentrating on a fine piece of music. No need to aggravate the violinist before the interview even began.

When Szervánszky answered the door, he'd decided to be annoyed anyway, making it plain that he wished to rid himself of these unexpected callers — whoever they might be — as soon as possible. He was forced to amend this attitude when their identity and purpose were explained, and begrudgingly invited them in. His sitting room

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furniture looked shabby: most likely acquired from second-hand shops and the Salvation Army. Apart from the kitchen and the bathroom, this seemed to be the only room. There was no sign of a bed. Probably the sofa performed a dual function. But despite the meanness of his domestic surroundings, Szervánszky took obvious pains with his personal appearance. His clothes were immaculate — almost dandified — and his dark wavy hair was expensively cut to create an impression of casual bohemianism. One heavy lock fell across his forehead and he frequently brushed it aside with his left hand in a graceful but, Miranda felt, overly self-conscious gesture. She suspected him of having perfected it in front of a mirror. Difficult to guess his age. Mid-thirties, perhaps? Undeniably good-looking, with a swarthy complexion and dark, fiery eyes. His features were sharply drawn: an 'artistic face' one would have to say. But Miranda also detected arrogance, even insolence, and the near-perfection suggested more than a hint of effeminacy. Although she realized how some women would be reduced to whimpering jelly at the mere sight of this man — Riitta was already showing dangerous symptoms — he only made Miranda squirm inwardly.

"We're trying to learn as much as possible about the dead girl," Miranda began brusquely once they were all seated. "I understand you were Liisa Louhi's violin teacher last autumn."

"That is correct. I taught her for two months, perhaps for three months. She was not a satisfactory pupil." Szervánszky spoke Finnish well enough, though with a clear Hungarian accent.

"Why do you say that, Mr Szervánszky?" Miranda felt her back stiffen in Liisa's defence.

"She had much talent, but she did not like to work. She was lazy. I gave her good teaching, and she wasted it. I set her many excellent études to make her technique better, but she did not practise them. She made little progress. It was not my fault."

"Did you have any other problems with her? Personal problems, I mean?"

Szervánszky sighed theatrically with pinched lips, and cast his eyes back and forth across the room before answering.

"So this is why you have come. Can I never be free of ugly gossip? She was not a nice person. She was difficult. It is true that I

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allowed temptation to control me once. But only once. It was to be excused. I drank some wine that evening. It was a celebration. I had been taken into the Tapiola Sinfonietta to be leader of the second violins. That was a good thing for me."

Miranda noticed his fingers. Long and tapering, with scrupulously manicured nails.

"Are you telling us you had a relationship with Liisa?"

"It was not a relationship," he said irritably. "I slept with her once. That does not make a relationship. But afterwards she thought she could own me. She would not leave me alone. At the end I lost my temper. I told my true opinion of her. That was a mistake. She went to the principal with a story that I had tried to make sex advances. It was the opposite. But the principal — I think she did not believe me. And you will not believe me, either. You are also a woman." He stared a challenge at Miranda, but she held his gaze until he broke eye contact first.

"So you left the Conservatory because of this 'problem' with Liisa," Miranda suggested.

"No, I did not leave the Conservatory because of Liisa," he replied with emphasis. "I left because I had a job in the Sinfonietta. I did not want to teach so much. And now I want time to practise my instrument. I will enter the Sibelius Violin Competition this year. It is my last chance. I will perhaps win it."

At least he didn't lack self-confidence! But Miranda now had to correct her estimate of his age. Candidates for this famous international violin competition weren't accepted beyond their thirty-first birthday.

"Did you stay in contact with Liisa?"

"Of course not. I did not wish to see her again. That is obvious."

"And she didn't try to phone you?"

"Once she did. Two weeks after I left the Conservatory. Very late. She awoke me. I think she had too much to drink. She told me she was happy I had lost my job. I did not lose my job. I left because I did not want to stay. I took the telephone plug out of the wall. She never called me again."

"And you haven't met her since?"

"Never."

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"And can you tell us, Mr Szervánszky, what you were doing last Friday evening, between eight and ten o'clock?"

The Hungarian stood up abruptly and threw his arms in the air with affected exasperation. "So now you think that it is certainly I who killed her." He walked round to the back of the sofa and leaned across it. "You are quite mad. I have not seen Liisa for a half year. I have no wish to see her. You say she is dead. Such a pity! But I did not kill her."

"Please answer my question, Mr Szervánszky." Miranda's voice sharpened. "Can you account for your movements on Friday evening?"

"Yes, I can tell you what I did." He turned momentarily to Riitta, and gave her a conspiratorial smile. She blushed like a schoolgirl. "On Friday evening I sat in the orchestra of the Finnish National Opera House. Sometimes a player is sick and they ask me to take the place. It is not a permanent work, but I have done it often. It brings extra money. I did it last Friday. I hope I do not make you very unhappy, Inspector."

Miranda had to admit some disappointment that this odious person might have an alibi for the evening of the murder. They'd, of course, check it, but there was now no point in pursuing the interview. Miranda made her escape, with a reluctant Riitta trailing behind.

Back at HQ, Miranda paid her desk a final visit. Tero was still in the office, typing up a report with one hand and grasping a Mars bar in the other. Miranda told him about the interview in Herttoniemi.

"What d'you reckon?" he said. "Are all Hungarians like him?"

"I've met plenty of others and had no trouble liking any of them. Obnoxious people can be born in any country, Tero. Even in Finland," she added pointedly.

But Tero seemed oblivious to the irony.

"Will you check out his alibi tomorrow?" Miranda went on brusquely.

"And tear it down in shreds for you?"

"That's just wishful thinking. But since you've probably never set foot in the Opera House, it'll be an educational experience for you — a broadening of your cultural horizons. Something might even rub off

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while you're there."

"That's just wishful thinking," Tero echoed, and then brought Miranda up to date on the search of Liisa Louhi's flat...

Little had been found that might generate any new lines of enquiry, although the forensic team had lifted two unknown sets of fingerprints: one of them from the cats' food bowl.

"There's something else that might interest you," Tero went on. "Guess who we bumped into on the stairs outside Liisa's flat? Martti Hakala with his moth-eaten Labrador! The Chief introduced us. He's moved into a bedsit on the floor above. Bit of a coincidence, eh? That's probably all it is, though. Hard to see what connection there could be. He didn't move in there till yesterday — three days *after* the murder."

When Miranda arrived at *Mamma Rosa's* that evening, she found Adrian sitting alone. He explained that Phillip was standing in for a sick colleague, and would be ten or fifteen minutes late. Miranda was glad to have Adrian to herself for a while.

"Thanks for taking me home on Friday," she began. "Did you go on somewhere afterwards?"

"No, we just walked to my place. Phillip came up for a nightcap."

Miranda steered the conversation round to Adrian's composition: "Phillip told me you use synthesizers a lot."

"Yes, there's been this desperate struggle over the last decades to discover new timbres, to somehow squeeze out the last drops of novelty from the traditional concert instruments. Some composers seem worried nobody'll take them seriously if they don't experiment with more and more extreme uses of the violin or the flute or whatever. Personally I don't find many of these so-called 'novel' sounds attractive. They're hardly ever as expressive as the more traditional uses of the instruments. No, the whole approach seems a cul-de-sac to me. Rather pointless too, because there's a wide range of beautiful new timbres available from electronic instruments — synthesizers, and so on. It's true that synthesizers have earlier tended to sound — well, synthetic — at worst, mechanical. But let's face it, nothing could be more mechanical than the piano. The piano's basically just a complicated piece of machinery. But that hasn't

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stopped great music being written for it. It's all a question of adapting to each new medium. Synthesized sounds are getting more malleable every day — more under the spontaneous control of the player. What can't be done on the spot can be added to or adjusted later with computer software, so your imagination's the only real limit. Anyway, I like to combine electronic sounds with real players on *traditional* instruments — especially the ones with a wide range of emotional nuance like violins, saxophones, and electric guitars. That way you get the best of both worlds: exciting new timbres forming a backdrop to the immediacy of live musicians."

Miranda was acutely aware of a warm ache somewhere low in her stomach. It was intensifying with every moment she sat near this man. There seemed no reasonable excuse for doing so, but she wanted to reach out and touch him — to place her hand against his face or his neck.

Later perhaps...

"And how's the world of detecting?" Adrian asked suddenly.

Miranda was unwilling to change the subject, but answered his question: "We're investigating a murder. A girl's body was found at the Sibelius Monument on Saturday morning. She'd been strangled."

"I heard something about that. In fact, I live quite near there — just beside the library."

"We only found out today who the girl was. A student at the Helsinki Conservatory. Her name's Liisa Louhi."

If Miranda had been looking in Adrian's direction, she might have seen the blood drain from his face. But she was distracted by Phillip's flamboyant entrance at the far end of the restaurant. Phillip threw them a wave and was immediately sidetracked by an acquaintance sitting near the door. By the time Miranda turned back to Adrian, he'd recovered his composure.

"I think you must've known her, " Miranda went on. "You teach at the Conservatory, don't you?"

"Only a couple of counterpoint classes."

"Don't you recognize her name? Liisa Louhi," she repeated. "Perhaps you can tell me something about her. She seems to have been a rather secretive person."

"Well, I have a lot of trouble remembering all these Finnish

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names. And the classes are quite big."

Phillip arrived noisily at their table.

"News from the fatherland, or should I say from motherland?" He waved a page of computer print-out at Adrian. "An email from your darling sister. She informs me the long-awaited addition to the Gamble clan has issued forth mewling and puking into this desolate world we unconvincingly call home. And she bids me convey the glad tidings to her errant brother. Shall I read it to you?"

Miranda frowned. "How come it's *you* that gets the momentous news, Phillip? Why not Adrian?"

"Because, Miranda, Adrian prefers to cold-shoulder the twenty-first century, to forego mobiles and modems, to turn his back on micro and radio waves and exist purely on the artistic plane of his own inspirational brain waves."

Miranda turned to Adrian. "A moment ago you were telling me how deeply you're into music tech. Is Phillip saying you don't even own a mobile phone?"

Adrian shrugged. "I like my privacy. There are too many ways for the world to break in on one's personal thoughts these days. On the other hand, music tech lets my thoughts break out on the world — which is another matter altogether. Anyway, Phillip's exaggerating. I've got an email address at the Sibelius Academy. Trouble is I usually forget to check my inbox."

"Come on, you two! Do you want to hear this email or not?" Phillip asked, in mock impatience.

"Yes, of course. Go ahead."

Phillip began reading:

"Little Lily was born on Saturday morning at 4.09 local time. By that I mean the clock on the delivery room wall. James insists the real time was 4.06 — according to his tediously reliable personal chronometer. The last couple of hours were heavy-going, but everything turned out okay. 8 pounds and 4 ounces okay! Such a darling little girl. Just like her Mummy. She makes warning noises when her next meal's due, but in general she's a cheerful, alert, artistic, mathematical genius — just like her Mummy. She practises her t'ai chi exercises daily,

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wriggling her arms and fingers around in graceful, meaningful movements. And, at regular intervals, she tests out her rear-end jet-propulsion capabilities — just like her Daddy. Before long she'll be reaching supersonic speeds round the corridors of the maternity hospital.

Can't get to a computer right now, so James has promised to type this lot in for me when he gets home.

*Love and kisses
from mother Theresa.*

P.S. Please pass on the news to A., at your earliest. I've tried calling him, but he's never home. He'd better be delighted, or else!"

Phillip handed the paper across the table.

"So, what *do* you think, A.? Sufficiently delighted?"

"Of course," said Adrian, studying the email for himself. "Fantastic news!"

"Personally," Phillip went on, "I'm inclined to go for *James's* estimate of the magical moment. Allowing for the time difference between the UK and Finland, it would, from our point of view, place the minutes and seconds of birth exactly synchronous with my own. Quite a coincidence, wouldn't you say? If it had been a boy, do you think they might've named him accordingly — after myself, I mean?"

Miranda wasn't listening to Phillip's garbled rigmarole. She felt suddenly and shockingly distanced from the celebratory proceedings. "What did you call Adrian just now?" she interrupted.

He looked puzzled for a moment... "Oh, you mean 'A.'?"

Miranda nodded.

"Dear Theresa's nickname for him," Phillip explained. "Short for Adrian, of course. She's called him that since they were nippers."

"And Phillip gets the urge too, sometimes," added Adrian. "When he's feeling especially sisterly."

Miranda's face still carried an amused smile, but now it felt like a rictus. This had to be coincidence. It didn't make sense... But that was the trouble — it made altogether too much sense. Too many connections: the Helsinki Conservatory, the phone call in English, the

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nickname, the location of the body near Adrian's flat, his turning up unexpectedly late at the *Ateljé* on Friday evening.

The anticipatory glow Miranda had been basking in earlier drained away, leaving a hard knot in her solar plexus.

Phillip was meanwhile expounding on his feelings for Adrian's sister...

"Yes, Theresa and I have enjoyed a wonderful and rewarding relationship for many, many years. Purely platonic, you understand. A rare occurrence in my colourful and multifaceted life, it's true, but when you meet a kindred spirit... Are you all right, Miranda? You're looking rather tense."

"I think I've got a migraine coming on," she lied. "Flashing lights and stuff. Only get them a couple of times a year, but they can be absolute blinders."

Adrian looked concerned. "Would you like to leave? I can take you home if you like."

"No, no, I'll hang on for a bit, thanks. Perhaps it'll come to nothing. By the way, Adrian, did you say you live somewhere near Töölö library? "

"In Humalistonkatu — the street running alongside the library building. You know it, I suppose?"

She certainly did.

A few minutes later, while Adrian was visiting the toilet, and Phillip was engaged in conversation with someone at the next table, Miranda picked up Adrian's empty beer glass. Gripping the lip carefully between forefinger and thumb, she dropped it into her handbag — registering the inappropriateness of her behaviour in view of her station in life as an upholder of the sanctity of private property.

When Adrian returned, she made her excuses and left in a taxi. But she didn't go home. She went straight to Pasila HQ where she transferred the glass to a plastic evidence bag. This would have to be done discreetly as a personal favour from one of the fingerprint team. The whole thing was too unlikely — too tenuous to go official.

Unfortunately, her instincts were telling her otherwise.

IV

Finale (Quasi una Fantasia): Andante— Allegro molto

Miranda put the phone down and returned to the kitchen table. She stared out of the window, her coffee getting steadily colder.

So, there it was. The fingerprints matched. Adrian had definitely handled the key found in Liisa's pocket. The identification was decisive and, if necessary, she'd been assured, would stand up in court. It was already past nine o'clock and, although Aleksi Ylenius had suggested she made a later start this morning, she should go in at once to inform her boss of this new development. They'd have to bring Adrian in — possibly even charge him.

Twenty minutes later Miranda was still sitting there, her coffee now completely cold. She was at last raising it to her lips when the front doorbell rang jarringly. Who the hell was that? At this time of the morning?

Miranda went to the door and peered through the spy-hole. She could only see the closed door of the flat opposite. Whoever had rung the bell had either left or was standing somewhere out of sight. She released the latch and pushed the door open.

"Ah, Miranda. I thought you must've left for work already." He was halfway down the first flight of stairs, but now climbed back up to the landing. "You left your credit card on the table last night — when you paid for your drink. Thought I should drop it in on my way to the Academy."

Miranda stared at Adrian with a sense of unreality. He was the last person she'd expected to find on her doorstep.

"Your flat number was on the list of residents downstairs," he

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explained superfluously.

Miranda still said nothing, and Adrian began to look uncertain.

"Are you in a hurry? I've got some time before my composition seminar. I could stay for a while. But if it's inconvenient..."

Against all better judgment, Miranda turned and walked back into the kitchen, leaving Adrian to follow her and close the apartment door himself.

"Nice," he said, looking round. "These older buildings have a special solidity, don't they? Thick, strong walls. And the high ceilings are marvellous. Gives a sense of space and airiness."

Miranda didn't sit down. She stared at him, leaning back against the kitchen worktop, shoulders hunched forward, arms folded tightly and protectively across her chest.

Adrian clearly found her silence disconcerting, but he tried again.

"How's your migraine? Did it pass off all right?"

"You knew her, didn't you?"

"Knew who?"

"The dead girl found in the park... Liisa Louhi. You knew her."
What in heaven's name are you doing, Miranda? Confronting a possible murderer alone in your kitchen! This should be happening in an interrogation room.

Adrian gazed back, alert but outwardly calm. He said nothing.

"Did you know her, Adrian?"

He seemed to reach a decision: "Yes, as you pointed out yesterday, she was in one of my counterpoint classes."

"Were you having an affair with her?"

Another hesitation... But then he nodded. "...Yes."

"Did you murder her?"

"Good God no, Miranda! What on earth are you saying?" His calm had evaporated.

"Your index finger and thumb prints were found on her door key."

"I can explain that," he said, showing no curiosity as to how Miranda had made the match.

"Did you have sex with her on the evening of her death?"

No answer.

"Somebody did."

She waited again for a response.

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"Look, Adrian, they can do a DNA analysis with the semen. They can find out, you know."

"She seduced me."

Miranda's mouth opened; then closed again.

"I beg your pardon," she said, at last. "Would you care to rephrase that?"

"Okay, so it sounds pathetic, but you've got to realize she was a sexual terrorist. She took no prisoners. She knew all the tricks — exactly how to draw a man on. For goodness sake, Miranda, try to understand. She was only nineteen, and she was sexy. I'm not a saint. There aren't many men could've resisted her."

"Are you saying you were a rape victim?" Miranda was startled by the wave of jealousy that swept over her.

Adrian had turned away. But not for long. Pulling a chair from under the kitchen table, he sat down, speaking with quieter intensity: "All right, I won't try to justify myself. I'll tell you, as objectively as I can, everything that happened. Okay?"

Miranda gave a cursory half-nod, and slipped behind a fragile veneer of professionalism. She didn't join him at the table.

"It started three or four weeks ago. We met a couple of times on the bus — on the way home from the counterpoint class. I usually catch the metro to Kamppi and change to a number 18. She was on the same bus. Her flat's not that far from mine, so we got off at the same stop. The first time was probably an accident, but I suspect she engineered the next meeting. When we got off the bus that second time, at Töölö library, she asked me to walk her home. Claimed some bloke had been following her around and she was afraid he might be lurking somewhere. Probably made the whole thing up. She never mentioned him again. Anyway, when we got to her place she offered to make us an omelette. I hadn't eaten anything all day, so I said yes."

"What about your other appetites?"

"All right, so we ended up in bed."

"And she engineered that too, did she?"

Adrian ignored the question. "But, you see, I didn't want it to become a habit. Fact is I regretted the whole thing. Not clever getting involved with your students. I tried to keep a healthy distance after that — without hurting her feelings, of course. But she was very

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clinging. Immature, I suppose. Not that she ever made any scenes at the Conservatory... Thank God! But anyway she kept phoning me and turning up at my flat unannounced. It was starting to interfere with my composition work. Then, last week, she went off to Turku for a few days. Her mother was coming out of hospital — after an operation or something — so Liisa went to give her a hand."

Miranda realized how that could explain Liisa's absence from the Conservatory those three or four days just before her death.

"But she needed someone to feed her cats," Adrian went on. "Quite frankly I was pleased to get rid of her for a while, so I agreed to do it. That's why she gave me the key."

"Incidentally," said Miranda, "did she phone you that Monday morning?"

Adrian considered for a moment. "Yes, sometime between nine and ten. That was when she asked me about the cats. She wanted to come round straight away with the key, but I knew it would break my concentration. I told her no. But, hey! Why the hell is this important, Miranda?"

"I'm tying up loose ends. And while we're at it... Did she call you A., like your sister does?"

This question seemed to puzzle him even more. "Well, yes, she found a letter on my desk one day — a letter from Theresa. Just picked it up and started reading it. No permission asked, of course. That's what she was like. As usual the letter was sprinkled with what Theresa calls my 'fratronymic'. It was A. this and A. that. Theresa's got this chatty style when she writes. I ended up having to explain the whole thing to Liisa. So then she decided she'd use it too. Probably thought that would bring us closer together. Truth is it irritated me to hell."

"But let's get back to Monday. She phoned you that morning, and you put her off."

"Yes, but she came round later anyway. That must've been about six. I think the key business was more of a pretext than anything."

"An excuse to seduce you again?"

"Something like that," Adrian admitted. "The next morning she left for Turku."

"So when did you see her again?"

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"At the end of the week, on Friday. I'd been at the Academy working on some tubular bell samples. They've got fantastic software at R-block. So I lost track of the time and suddenly realized I'd have to rush home to shower and change. I was supposed to meet you and Phillip at eight o'clock. Well, I'd just got out of the shower when Liisa turned up. She was in a right old state. Claimed somebody had stolen her handbag. Said she'd got back from Turku around midday and taken her luggage home. Then she'd tried to locate me. But I wasn't at home yet, so she went to the Conservatory for her violin lesson, and afterwards to Forum shopping centre. She put her violin and handbag down to try on a coat, and that was when the bag disappeared. God, she was in a total panic when she got to my place! Carried on and on about losing her credit cards, and that the thief might try to use them. Said she ought to phone and report the theft."

"Did she?"

"Not to my knowledge. She was all over the place — mentally, I mean. Couldn't focus on anything for more than a few seconds."

"Did she tell you which clothes shop it was?"

"No."

"And did she report the theft to the shop?"

"No idea. It would've been the logical thing to do, but she was unpredictable when she got herself worked up over something."

"So when did she arrive at your place?"

"Half past seven. It could've been twenty-five or twenty to eight. Like I said, I was about to leave."

"Did she mention anything about a rehearsal at another student's flat?"

"For God's sake, Miranda! Are all these questions necessary? Can't I tell everything in the proper sequence without you continually interrupting me?"

"Sorry," she said curtly.

"The main thing's what happened *after* she arrived at my place, isn't it?"

"Perhaps, but I need a proper picture of everything she did that last day. By the way, it seems she tried visiting your flat at around quarter to four on Friday afternoon."

"How the hell do you know that?"

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"Because I'm a detective! She'd just been to the library. Of course, you weren't home at the time. But let's carry on with your story."

Adrian stared back for several seconds before complying: "Okay, so I tried to calm Liisa down. But she wasn't having any of it. Not to start with. Stormed round my flat ranting and raving. Then suddenly she sort of collapsed into my arms. I held her for a while. But she started wanting more. I told her we should be trying to slow the relationship down, but it wasn't a very opportune moment to bring that up, was it? Anyway, she didn't take any notice. Told me I didn't really mean it, did I? And then... well, she sort of..." He fell silent.

"No need to act so bashful, Adrian! I get the picture." Miranda recalled his first words on arriving late at the *Ateljé* last Friday: *Something came up I had to deal with right away...*

"The next bit was really unpleasant," Adrian went on. "I told her I had to go — that I was already late meeting you and Phillip. You'd said you wouldn't be able to stay long, Miranda, and I didn't want to miss seeing you." He paused, perhaps hoping for some positive response. Miranda remained stony-faced.

With an audible sigh, Adrian continued his story: "After that she completely lost her rag. Leapt out of bed. Started throwing her clothes back on. Screaming what a bastard I was. How I'd just been using her."

And hadn't you? screamed Miranda, in silent sympathy.

"I offered to walk her home, but she just grabbed her violin and ran out of the flat. She slammed the door right in my face. A few moments later she was back again, ringing the doorbell. When I opened the door she just pushed past me and grabbed her spare key off the hall table. Of course, she needed it. Her other keys were lost with the handbag. But I've been thinking... perhaps, if I'd walked her home — insisted on it — she'd still be alive today."

He looked up, suddenly boyish and vulnerable, searching Miranda's eyes for a hint of clemency or détente. In spite of her suppressed anger, she felt a surge of desire for him.

"So what time did Liisa finally leave?" she asked, letting a fraction more warmth into her voice, though still resisting the urge to sit opposite him.

"About quarter to nine."

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"Did she threaten you with exposure?"

"What does that mean?"

"Did she threaten to tell the Conservatory admin about your affair? Or accuse you publicly of sexual harassment?"

"Of course, she didn't."

But there'd been a slight delay. Miranda was inclined to believe everything Adrian had told her so far. Why did she suddenly feel he was lying?

"Look, Adrian, you'll have to go to the police station. Right now!"

"Turn myself in, you mean?"

"Go and make a statement."

"Go and make a confession is what you'd prefer, I suppose."

Miranda's pent up anger burst out: "Hey, I want to believe you — and your version of what happened. As far as it goes, it fits in with what I already know. But you shouldn't have lied to me yesterday evening. And you can't go on trying to withhold evidence. It makes you look guilty as hell. I'm not absolutely sure I believe you, but you can be damn certain no one else will if you don't get your shrinking-violet arse down to Pasila police station posthaste and tell them everything you know. You can say you only found out who the girl was this morning — from the newspaper or something. That'll throw a better light on the delay. But, for heaven's sake, don't let on we've had this conversation at my place. They'll crucify me for not doing things by the book and with another officer present. So this is what happens next. We leave straightaway in my car and I drop you off near the police station. But we go in separately, okay? And then you tell them everything you've just told me. Everything!"

On the journey, they spoke only once. Miranda asked: "Have you never heard of protected sex, Adrian?"

He turned his head, but Miranda wasn't looking at him. She was concentrating on the road.

"With Liisa," he said, "there wasn't always time for such niceties."

Tero Toivonen was just stepping into the little kiosk across the square from Pasila Police HQ to purchase his daily three packets of chocolate-coated raisins, when he spotted Miranda dropping somebody off twenty yards down the road. He paused and watched as

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the man walked up to the police station entrance and went in. Miranda meanwhile drove round to the other side of the square and down into the underground car park. Tero was naturally curious about the identity of this stranger, but he was anyway about to find that out.

The interrogation was carried out by Detective Chief Inspector Aleksi Ylenius and Detective Sergeant Tero Toivonen. Miranda was present as a passive witness. The whole interview was recorded on tape, and Adrian presented his reasons for coming in exactly as Miranda had suggested: that he'd only just heard about Liisa Louhi's death. It reassured Miranda that the story he told deviated in no way from the version she'd already heard.

Ylenius asked Adrian if he'd visited Sibelius Park on Friday evening.

"No," came the reply, "but I do go there quite often. The last time was probably Wednesday afternoon. I like to walk through the park and along the seashore. It helps if I get a creative block. Always useful to put some physical distance between yourself and your work when things aren't going well."

They kept Adrian at the police station for a full twenty-four hours. During the day he gave a blood sample to allow a DNA check. Although he admitted to having sex with Liisa on the evening of the murder, confirmation was needed that the semen was really his. His fingerprints were also taken, this official procedure overriding the informal (and highly irregular) test on the beer glass from *Mama Rosa's*. With much relief, Miranda realized that her ally in Forensics intended keeping last night's print comparison to himself.

Apart from being on the door key, Adrian's prints also matched samples taken from Liisa's flat. No surprise there. He'd been in her flat on several occasions — most recently to feed the cats.

When Ylenius requested permission to search Adrian's Humalistonkatu flat, the Englishman agreed. He wasn't so foolish as to think the police couldn't get a search warrant. He did however insist they were careful with his music tech equipment.

It must have struck Tero as odd that, during the interview, Adrian

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Gamble failed to mention how Miranda had brought him to Pasila in her own car. The fact that Miranda and Adrian knew each other had come out clearly enough. Their meeting with Phillip Burton at the *Ateljé* was discussed at length. Why, then, had Adrian given the impression his arrival at the police station was entirely under his own steam? If Tero harboured any thoughts on this matter, he kept them to himself.

That same afternoon, while her colleagues were at Adrian's flat, Miranda faced the grim task of taking Liisa Louhi's mother through the formal identification of her daughter's body.

Mrs Louhi was driven the hundred-mile journey from Turku in a police car. Ylenius had deemed it appropriate to give her every support at this distressing moment in her life — especially so soon after a major operation. But Miranda's apprehensions about the ordeal didn't fully materialize. Liisa's mother was quietly composed and, although she appeared frail, was perfectly capable of holding her emotions in check. Her back and neck were poised and straight. Her face was impassive. She looked Miranda unflinchingly in the eye, but maintained a tranquil detachment that gave away nothing of her emotional state. Miranda had met this personal bearing before, and associated it with the Finnish rural population, especially with the smallholding farmer or farmer's wife. She'd theorized that such stoicism was a necessary protection against the unpredictable elements that could buffet the worker of these northern lands through more lean times than fair.

Miranda placed the woman's age at sixty. Her hair was white with no sign of its original colouring. And she wore inexpensive but well-cared-for garments, favouring muted colours and sober traditional lines.

After they'd exchanged a few quiet words about the journey, Miranda escorted Mrs Louhi to the small mortuary in the basement where Liisa's body had been laid in readiness for viewing. The stark simplicity of the room was alleviated by vases of fresh flowers at the head and foot of the bier, and by several candles burning with motionless flames on a small table in one corner. Mrs Louhi drew close and stood for a long time staring down at the dead girl's face.

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Miranda waited for a full minute before asking, in the gentlest tones she could muster: "Is this your daughter, Mrs Louhi?"

There was a further delay before the woman answered in the same carefully modulated voice. "No. This is not my daughter."

Miranda was taken aback. She'd been so sure.

But Mrs Louhi hadn't raised her head and, after a while, she spoke again, hesitating between each sentence.

"My daughter was full of life... She was restless... She tired herself out searching for novelties — for something to believe in."

There was an even longer silence, but Miranda understood not to interrupt.

"It's Liisa's body, of course... But only the empty shell... My daughter is gone."

Mrs Louhi turned to Miranda and asked: "May I sit here for a while? Is it permitted?"

Miranda nodded and withdrew to the furthest corner of the room where she stood perfectly still, hands clasped formally in front of her. She wasn't at liberty to leave the dead alone with the living, but she endeavoured to make her presence as unobtrusive as possible.

After ten or fifteen minutes, Mrs Louhi rose placidly and still dry-eyed, indicating that she was ready to leave. Miranda took her to a small conference room on the third floor with an east-facing window that overlooked the multiple tracks and platforms of Pasila railway station. A constable provided them with a Thermos of hot water, two cups and saucers, and tea bags of various blends. Miranda poured some water and they each selected a tea bag to tear open and methodically immerse in their cups. It was a comfort to follow this commonplace ceremony.

Mrs Louhi was clearly a woman of few words who would speak only when she had something of importance to say. That she now began, with no further prompting, to talk at length about her daughter was, Miranda realized, a truer indicator of the woman's feelings than her tightly reined-in appearance. It was almost as if she were holding a conversation with herself — carefully working through this necessary process to retrace the route that had brought her and her daughter to such a bleak, final confrontation. The task seemed unfamiliar but, once begun, the unfolding of her story became a

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steady, unrestrainable flow...

"Liisa was a beautiful child, but perhaps I never really knew her. She came to me late in life. I was already more than forty. Her father was a dance-restaurant musician. I suppose that's how she came by her musical gifts. He was ten years younger than myself, and I was foolishly flattered. I'd lived a sheltered life. I wasn't used to the attentions of such a man. But when he learned I was pregnant, he disappeared. We neither saw nor heard from him again. Liisa never met him. Well, if he was so ready to leave us, I was just as ready to be rid of him. But life wasn't easy alone with a child. My own parents had recently died. I was left with a small farm to manage on my own. But that became too much for me, so I sold up and moved into the town to find other work."

She went on to speak of an affectionate but temperamental child who grew up into an intelligent and wayward teenager. Liisa was considered bright by her teachers, but consistently failed to fulfil their expectations. Her innate musicality was spotted by a primary-school teacher, and Mrs Louhi economized and denied herself all luxuries to finance years of violin lessons, and to invest in better and better instruments. Liisa practised minimally, but she made surprising progress. Violin-playing was, in fact, the only unbroken thread through her fretful adolescence — the one thing that reliably held her interest and provided the emotional outlet she seemed unable to find elsewhere. Leaving school with indifferent grades was probably one reason why, despite her musical talent, she failed to gain admission to the Sibelius Academy. Instead, she enrolled at the Helsinki Conservatory to train as a violin teacher.

Although Liisa was capricious, she could occasionally be a dutiful daughter — as when she'd spent several days the previous week tending her convalescent mother. But there was little personal communication between parent and child. Liisa's life in Helsinki had remained a closed book to Mrs Louhi, who confessed knowing nothing of her daughter's men friends. Liisa hadn't brought a boy home since the age of fourteen.

Miranda's overall conclusion was that Liisa had become a precarious composite of her mother's reserve and her father's impetuosity. Her interest in men significantly older than herself

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complied with the fashionable psycho-theories — whose insights Miranda didn't necessarily buy into — that Liisa had been seeking a father figure: although the idea of Zoltán Szervánszky being *anybody's* father, either now or in the future, struck Miranda as appalling!

Saying goodbye at the police station entrance, Mrs Louhi expressed gratitude for the consideration that had been shown her; and she climbed into the car that would take her back to Turku, displaying the same controlled dignity with which she had arrived. Miranda wondered if, in the privacy of her own home, she would finally give way to grief.

Ten minutes later, Ylenius and Tero returned from their search of Adrian's flat. The forensic team were still there, but nothing incriminating had turned up: "No extraneous fingers in the fridge", Tero said, with obvious disappointment. And Ylenius was doubtful that anything useful now would.

"We've taken various items of clothing for analysis," he explained, "and samples from the furniture and rugs. But our problem is Gamble doesn't deny Liisa was in his flat — or even in his bed. And he's told us how he regularly takes innocent walks down to the Sibelius Monument. It could hardly make things more difficult. Any defence lawyer worth his salt can explain away our trace evidence as transferred between Gamble and the victim or between Gamble and the murder scene on some other occasion than the crime itself."

Adrian was released the following morning with instructions to keep himself available for further questioning. Meanwhile, attempts were made to locate the shop where Liisa might have lost her bag, and to find out if she'd informed the relevant authorities about losing her credit cards. Neither line of enquiry was successful, so there was no corroboration for Adrian's version of how the handbag had disappeared. The only certainty was that it was still missing.

There were, however, two significant contributions to the investigation later that Wednesday, and Miranda was witness to both.

At half past three, a teenage couple approached the front desk of Pasila police station and explained that they'd like to speak to

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someone about the Sibelius Park murder, because they thought they might've seen something important. Miranda and Tero sat the youngsters down in a comfortable conference room — a less intimidating environment than a poky interrogation room in the basement.

Tommi was a friendly open-faced boy of sixteen who seemed immediately at ease with the situation. But fourteen-year-old Laura, despite Miranda's efforts, remained nervous.

"Please promise you won't tell my dad," she begged. "I didn't want to come, but Tommi said we had to. If my dad finds out I was in the park with Tommi, he'll murder me." She stopped, and flushed bright pink. One hand moved involuntarily to her mouth. "I didn't mean it like *that*. I'm not trying to be funny or anything. It's just I was late home on Friday and I told Dad I stopped off at a girlfriend's place. If he knows where I really was, he'll go ballistic. You won't tell him, will you?"

Without making any false promises, Miranda tried to reassure her: "We wouldn't want to get you in trouble with your father, Laura, but this is a murder investigation. It's a very serious matter. So if you can tell us something that might help..." she tailed off, and Laura dropped her head in resignation.

It was Tommi who decided to take up the story: "You see, last Friday evening we were at the Töölö sports hall. I was training with my floor-ball team, and Laura was doing aerobics. We finished about quarter to eight, and met up for a burger. Then we went for a walk in Sibelius Park. That's how we ended up going past the monument."

"So this would've been about half past eight by now, would it?" asked Tero.

"No, well... we weren't going that fast. We kind of stopped from time to time."

Laura blushed crimson this time, and Miranda moved on quickly: "Did you see something special in the park?"

"Two people over at the monument," said Tommi, "kind of squatted down on the ground up against the rock — just next to the big metal head. I thought they were a couple of drunks, so I didn't pay much attention."

"Can you describe them?"

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"We weren't close enough — we weren't on the path going nearest to the monument. But one of them was sort of sitting back against the rock. I think it was a woman because she had a lot of hair — very blonde hair."

"Can you describe her clothes?"

"She had a coat with bright colours — red perhaps, or blue."

"Red and yellow," said Laura. "But we couldn't see her properly because the other one — a man, I suppose — he was kneeling down in front of her."

"Was he tall? Was he short?"

"He was all hunched up, so you couldn't tell."

"Was he blond, too?"

The youngsters looked doubtful.

"I think he was wearing a hat," Tommi said. "A woollen hat. All his clothes were dark."

"And he didn't turn round," said Laura. "So we didn't see his face."

"But a bit later on," Tommi added, "I looked back, and he wasn't there any more. He'd disappeared. I thought he might've gone for a leak in the bushes."

"Could you see the girl more clearly this time?"

"No, we'd walked down the hill by then. There were some bushes in the way."

"What about her clothes? Were they pulled open? Was she fully dressed?"

The teenagers seemed puzzled by Miranda's question, so she didn't pursue it. "And now there's something very important I have to ask you both," she said. "Do you think the girl was still alive when you saw her? Did she cry out? Did you see her move at all?"

They shook their heads. No, she hadn't done either of those things.

Miranda watched the implications sink in. On Friday night, they'd witnessed the immediate aftermath of a murder, and they'd been only a few dozen yards from a dangerous killer! Laura looked especially unnerved. But Tero — certainly without realizing it — came to the rescue: "Can you estimate what time it was when you saw them?" he asked.

"We can do better than that," said Tommi, brightening at once. "We can tell you the *exact* time. Just before we spotted them, I asked

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Laura, shouldn't I be getting her home? I checked my watch and it was dead on nine o'clock. Then Laura said the ice-hockey was just starting, and her father'd be so fixated on the telly, he wouldn't notice whether she was there or not. And my watch is really accurate." He showed it to them across the table. "I check it every morning with the radio. It hasn't lost or gained a second since Dad gave it to me."

Tero eyed Miranda curiously. She was smirking like a Cheshire cat. Of course, this was valuable information, but her reaction seemed a little over the top. Some kind of private joke perhaps? Anyway, prompted by his own enthusiasm for ice-hockey, Tero then turned to Tommi and asked: "Didn't you want to watch the match yourself?"

The boy shrugged. "I wasn't that bothered."

Miranda could guess why. Laura was a pretty little thing, and for a sixteen-year-old boy with romance on his mind, even a match between arch-rivals Finland and Sweden might have to take second place.

"Did you walk straight past the monument?" Miranda asked. "Or did you stop at all... between when you first saw them and when you looked back and the man had gone?"

Laura stared at her lap, but Tommi gave a sheepish grin: "I suppose we did hang around there for a minute or two."

The sequence of events was becoming clearer in Miranda's mind.

"What's got into *you*?" Tero asked, as soon as they'd seen the young couple off. "Won the National Lottery?"

Miranda at once toned down her buoyant mood...

"Useful stuff, though, wasn't it, Tero? Narrows the murder down to just before nine o'clock. We already knew it had to be after eight-forty because that's when Hakala walked his dog past the monument. But now we can pinpoint the murderer at the crime scene at exactly 9 pm. Let's tell the boss."

Ylenius was also pleased with the information, but regretted they still had no useful description of the killer.

"The way I see it," said Miranda, "the murderer was interrupted when the kids came past. They stopped for a while in sight of the killer — presumably for a snog — so he probably thought they were watching him and ran off."

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"Which might explain why he'd only just started removing her jeans," Ylenius considered.

Miranda pulled a face.

"So you reckon he was planning a bit of 'necro'?" asked Tero, with no compunction about voicing what Miranda had merely been thinking.

"No, something *still* doesn't fit," Miranda objected. "It's the order of events. If he ran away before he got her clothes off, he must already have amputated the finger, because he took it with him. But you'd expect him to do the rape first and take the finger as a trophy afterwards. It's the wrong way round."

"Unless," said Ylenius, "removing the finger had some special sexual significance for him."

Tero nodded approval: "Yes, to get himself in the mood. It's obvious we're dealing with a total 'loony' here."

Miranda picked up smoothly on this last comment: "Some kind of psychopath," she said. "A random killer. The setup doesn't suggest a definite motive or even a *crime passionel* in the traditional sense — by someone who knew the victim. So I don't see how Adrian Gamble fits the profile anymore."

"You reckon?" Tero stared at her long and hard.

"Especially," Miranda went on, "as he's now got an alibi."

Both of her colleagues looked baffled. Ylenius tilted his head in enquiry. "Could you explain that for us please, Miranda?"

"Okay, now we can place the murderer at the crime scene at exactly 9 pm. At that same time, I was sitting in the *Ateljé* with Phillip Burton. In fact, we noticed the ice-hockey match starting on the TV, and Phillip suggested that was the reason Adrian hadn't turned up — that he'd stayed home to watch the ice-hockey. Phillip found the idea amusing, because apparently Adrian has no interest in sport at all. Anyway, just seconds later, Phillip's mobile rang, and it was Adrian calling to say he'd been held up but was now leaving home. He got to the restaurant less than twenty minutes later. So, if he was phoning from his flat at exactly nine o'clock, he couldn't have been the one Tommi and Laura saw at the Sibelius Monument, could he?"

Ylenius massaged his temples, considering. But Tero wasn't

Symphony No 1

anywhere near convinced; perhaps because he'd remembered Miranda's strange high of half an hour ago and was growing suspicious about her motives for wanting Adrian out of the frame.

"What about Gamble's mobile phone?" he challenged.

"He hasn't got one. He can't stand the things. Go ahead and check if you don't believe me," she said, a touch too defiantly; but catching herself out in this revealing 'you versus me' faux pas, added: "As a matter of routine, of course... But I think you'll find I'm right. And there's no public telephone anywhere near the murder scene. If Adrian called Phillip that close to 9 o'clock, he couldn't have been at the Sibelius Monument, and he can't be the killer."

Tero left immediately for his computer terminal, and soon confirmed that Adrian Gamble held no account with any mobile phone operator in Finland. He even checked Swedish and UK operators but came up with the same result.

At the first opportunity, Miranda slipped off to an empty conference room and telephoned Adrian. It seemed only fair to set his mind at rest — to let him know at once he was no longer a suspect.

"Does that mean I'm off the hook, so to speak?" Adrian asked.

"Looks that way. At least, for now." Miranda's voice was playful. "Though perhaps we can conjure up something else incriminating... if you give us time."

This weak attempt at humour met a stony silence; so she tried a different tack: "Are you coming to Dad's lecture this evening?"

"Yes, and Phillip too. We've talked a lot about last Wednesday's session. No way we'll miss any of the series from now on."

"Look, Adrian..." Miranda hesitated... "I'm feeling uncomfortable about all this business with Liisa..." Then the rest came out in a rush: "Would you let me take you for a meal sometime? A kind of peace offering? Do you like Indian? My treat, of course. What do you think? Is it a good idea?"

She expected him to punish her with a series of prior engagements, but he agreed at once — although he insisted on paying his own way. He even suggested they follow up the plan that same evening after the lecture. Miranda had been visualizing just the two of them sitting there across the restaurant table... But never mind. If it

THE SEVEN SYMPHONIES

had to be another *ménage à trois* with Phillip, so be it.

"I'm afraid Phillip won't be able to join us," Adrian added. "He's got something else on straight after the lecture — some kind of company cocktail do. How about your father? Do you think he'd like to come?"

"I think he's made other plans too."

"So I hope that doesn't matter? If it's just the two of us?"

"No, that'll be okay," she said.

Miranda was returning to the office, when Tero rushed up in the corridor.

"There's been another development," he said, steering her towards Ylenius's room.

The Chief Inspector stood up as they entered, passing Miranda two transparent plastic sleeves across the desk.

"The Järvenpää police just couriered us these," he said.

Inside one sleeve was a plain white envelope — addressed, stamped and postmarked. It was already torn open, and Miranda supposed its contents was the short letter displayed in the second sleeve. Both the envelope address and the text of the letter were in Swedish — Finland's official minority language spoken by six percent of the population. The address was curious:

Helsinki City Police Force / Homicide Unit
c/o The Ainola Residence
Järvenpää, FINLAND

Ainola was the name of the Sibelius home where Jean and his wife, Aino, had lived together for most of their married life. Situated twenty miles north of Helsinki, it was now a museum and much visited by the public.

The letter itself appeared to be a computer print-out; not only curious but disturbing:

Symphony No 1

*Sibelius Park
Friday, 24th March*

Symphony No 1 in E minor

*Dear A.
Let the voice of my inner being and the spectres of dream and
fantasy direct me. There are things to be done that cannot be
delayed. Life is so very fleeting!*

At the bottom was an initialed signature: *JS*. And beside that was the most striking detail of all: a single, darkly-inked fingerprint with all of its lines and whorls perfectly defined.

Miranda glanced up at her colleagues. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

Both nodded.

Taking the lift to the fourth-floor lab, they soon had their suspicions verified. The inked impression matched a sample lifted from the heel of Liisa Louhi's violin bow. There could be no doubt that the letter bore a print from the murdered girl's missing fourth finger.

Symphony No 2
in D major

I

Allegretto

Dressing for the evening took unusually long. After several false starts, Miranda settled for a demure, creamy-coloured silk blouse and a dark skirt that just covered her knees. She applied her make-up with care but kept it discreet and simple: a quiet, almost natural shade of lipstick; a subtle hint of emphasis to the eyes. Standing in front of the full-length bathroom mirror, she appraised the results.

Miranda was a genetically genuine redhead and had the pale complexion and freckles to prove it. She'd often considered cutting her hair shorter. It would have been easier to handle than the present wavy tangle reaching almost to her shoulders. It would certainly have looked more business-like. But she was aware of how it flattered her face and body shape. Somewhat less than average height, Miranda was compactly built — rather like her father, but with a considerably more female result. Her waist and hips were on the boyish side, but her breasts were relatively fuller. Soon after puberty she'd noticed how men of all ages had difficulty holding their gaze at the level of her face. Not that her face wasn't worthy of attention: the large cat-like green eyes had been inherited from her mother but, as Phillip noticed at their first meeting, her mouth was completely her father's — Pan-like, too wide to be classically beautiful, and prone to a transforming impish smile.

Adding a last hint of green eye shadow, she decided that would have to do, and turned from the mirror. Still a quarter of an hour too early. She paced round the flat, glancing at her watch every couple of minutes and staring at intervals out of the window. The latest events in the Liisa Louhi case were tugging at her thoughts. That strange message, apparently from the murderer himself, had arrived at the

Symphony No 2

Ainola Museum on Tuesday. But the part-time secretary who dealt with Ainola's correspondence had Tuesdays off. Her first reaction on opening the letter the next day was to take it as a meaningless prank. She'd tossed it to one side. Not until later in the afternoon, as she was tidying her desk ready to leave, did she reconsider and make a connection between the place and date heading and the Sibelius Park murder reported in her Sunday newspaper. Feeling somewhat foolish, she phoned the local police. To her surprise, the officer on duty took the matter seriously enough to send someone over for a look. This act of professional caution had led to the letter reaching its intended destination: the Pasila Homicide Unit, where it was now being forensically processed. Miranda didn't expect any revelations. Unlikely that the sender would be stupid enough to get his fingerprints or saliva on the stamped envelope or its contents.

But what should they think about the letter's contents? The message was cryptic, although Miranda already had suspicions about its origin, and wondered if her father might be able to help. She intended showing him a transcript after this evening's lecture.

Leaving the flat — in fact, half-way through the door — Miranda turned back. Rushing into the bedroom, she changed into a scoop-necked, figure-hugging, knitted dress in a rich dark green that threw her hair into relief and highlighted her eyes. It was considerably shorter than the skirt now discarded on the bed. Slamming the apartment door behind her, she ran downstairs.

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Contact: simon.boswell@siba.fi