

Essay/Personal Reflection

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Ellen had lived her life immersed in music. From the haunting strains of violins to the exuberant melodies of pianos, she experienced the world as an ever-evolving symphony. So, when she was diagnosed with choroidal melanoma, she thought of it as a discordant note in her life's composition.

By the time the doctors discovered her illness, the tumor had metastasized. It was a cruel twist of fate, but Ellen chose to approach her remaining time as a crescendo rather than a diminuendo.

She was moved to a palliative care facility overlooking a serene garden, with a room designed to make the last days of its residents as comfortable as possible. On the table next to her bed, there was always a small radio tuned to a classical music station.

One day, her primary nurse, Alex, entered the room to find Ellen looking contemplatively out of the window. The afternoon sun painted golden patterns on her face.

"Ellen, how do you feel today?" asked Alex, pulling up a chair beside her.

Ellen turned her head, her eyes dancing with mischief. "Alex, do you know what's beautiful about music?" she asked.

Alex smiled, "Tell me."

"It's timeless," she whispered. "When I close my eyes and listen, I can travel to any point in my life. Each note carries a memory, a moment."

As days turned into weeks, Ellen shared stories from her life that were triggered by the melodies that filled her room. From her childhood, dancing in her mother's kitchen, to the time she attended a grand concert in Vienna, music was her portal to the past.

Alex began to look forward to these sessions with Ellen. It was like attending a live concert, only instead of watching performers on stage, he was witnessing the life of an extraordinary woman unfold before him.

One particularly quiet evening, the soft strains of a cello permeated the room, and Ellen's eyes lit up with recognition. "Ah, the cello," she murmured, her voice tinged with nostalgia. "It reminds me of my first love, James."

James had been a cellist, and they met at a conservatory. Their romance was short-lived but passionate. Ellen recounted evenings spent by candlelight, listening to James play, his deep, resonant notes echoing her own heartbeats. Their paths diverged, but the memory of their love remained everlasting.

Listening to Ellen's tales, Alex felt privileged. He was witnessing not just the history of a woman but also the power of music, how it could hold, comfort, and transport.

One day, a letter arrived for Ellen. It was from a prestigious music school. Ellen had once donated a considerable sum to support aspiring musicians, and in gratitude, the school had composed an original piece in her honor. A recording was enclosed with the letter.

When the music played, it was beautiful, transcendent. Alex watched as Ellen closed her eyes, letting the music embrace her. The piece seemed to encapsulate her spirit, her journey, her love for music. It was an ode to a life well lived.

The days grew shorter, and Ellen's health began to decline rapidly. But her spirit remained undeterred. One evening, as the sun set and bathed the room in a warm glow, Ellen asked Alex to come closer. With effort, she whispered, "Promise me one thing."

"Anything," Alex replied, tears glistening in his eyes.

"Play music at my service. Let people remember me the way I lived, surrounded by melodies and memories."

Alex nodded, squeezing her hand gently.

Ellen passed away a few days later, leaving behind a legacy of stories and songs. True to his promise, Alex ensured that her service was filled with music. It was not a mourning of loss but a celebration of a life beautifully played.

People from all walks of Ellen's life came to pay their respects. And as the melodies flowed, so did the memories. For in every note played, Ellen lived on, reminding everyone of the timeless beauty of music and the moments it could capture.

Competing interests. None.