

WIND WILL ROVE

Sarah Pinsker

Sarah Pinsker tells us, “I don’t play fiddle, but I’ve chunked along on guitar at old-time jams. This story was borne out of a New Year’s Eve old-time jam where I played along on guitar behind the fiddlers. I’m always amazed by their knowledge and memory, so I thought I’d put them on a generation ship and see what happened. I brought a draft to Sycamore Hill in 2015 but it took me another year and a half to find my way through.”

There’s a story about my grandmother Windy, one I never asked her to confirm or deny, in which she took her fiddle on a spacewalk. There are a lot of stories about her. Fewer of my parents’ generation, fewer still of my own, though we’re in our fifties now and old enough that if there were stories to tell they would probably have been told.

My grandmother was an engineer, part of our original crew. According to the tale, she stepped outside to do a visual inspection of an external panel that was giving anomalous readings. Along with her tools, she clipped her fiddle and bow to her suit’s belt. When she completed her task, she paused for a moment, tethered to our ship the size of a city, put her fiddle to the place where her helmet met her suit, and played “Wind Will Rove” into the void. Not to be heard, of course; just to feel the song in her fingers.

There are a number of things wrong with this story, starting with the fact that we don’t do spacewalks, for reasons that involve laws of physics I learned in school and don’t remember anymore. Our shields are too thick, our velocity is too great, something like that. The Blackout didn’t touch ship records; crew transcripts and recordings still exist, and I’ve listened to all the ones that might pertain to this legend. She laughs her deep laugh, she teases a tired colleague about his date the night before, she even hums “Wind Will Rove” to herself as she works—but there are no gaps, no silences unexplained.

Even if it were possible, her gloves would have been too thick to find a fingering. I doubt my grandmother would’ve risked losing her instrument, out here where any replacement would be synthetic. I doubt, too, that she’d have exposed it to the cold of space. Fiddles are comfortable at the same temperatures people are comfortable; they crack and warp when they aren’t happy. Her fiddle, my fiddle now.

My final evidence: “Wind Will Rove” is traditionally played in DDAD tuning, with the first and fourth strings dropped down. As much as she loved that song, she didn’t play it often, since re-tuning can make strings wear out faster. If she had risked her

fiddle, if she had managed to press her fingers to its fingerboard, to lift her bow, to play, she wouldn't have played a DDAD tune. This is as incontrovertible as the temperature of the void.

And yet the story is passed on among the ship's fiddlers (and I pass it on again as I write this narrative for you, Teyla, or whoever else discovers it). And yet her nickname, Windy, first appears in transcripts starting in the fifth year on board. Before that, people called her Beth, or Green.

She loved the song, I know that much. She sang it to me as a lullaby. At twelve, I taught it to myself in traditional GDAE tuning. I took pride in the adaptation, pride in the hours I spent getting it right. I played it for her on her birthday.

She pulled me to her, kissed my head. She always smelled like the lilacs in the greenhouse. She said, "Rosie, I'm so tickled that you'd do that for me, and you played it note perfectly, which is a gift to me in itself. But 'Wind Will Rove' is a DDAD tune, and it ought to be played that way. You play it in another tuning, it's a different wind that blows."

I'd never contemplated how there might be a difference between winds. I'd never felt one myself, unless you counted air pushed through vents, or the fan on a treadmill. After the birthday party, I looked up "wind" and read about breezes and gales and siroccos, about haboobs and zephyrs. Great words, words to turn over in my mouth, words that spoke to nothing in my experience.

The next time I heard the song in its proper tuning, I closed my eyes and listened for the wind.

* * *

"Windy Grove"

Traditional. Believed to have traveled from Scotland to Cape Breton in the nineteenth century. Lost.

"Wind Will Rove"

Instrumental in D (alternate tuning DDAD).

Harriet Barrie, Music Historian:

The fiddler Olivia Vandiver and her father, Charley Vandiver, came up with this tune in the wee hours of a session in 1974. Charley was trying to remember a traditional tune he had heard as a boy in Nova Scotia, believed to be "Windy Grove." No recordings of the original "Windy Grove" were ever catalogued, on ship or on Earth.

"Wind Will Rove" is treated as traditional in most circles, even though it's relatively recent, because it is the lost tune's closest known relative.

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The Four Deck Rec has the best acoustics of any room on the ship. There's a nearly identical space on every deck, but the others don't sound as good. The Recs were designed for gatherings, but no acoustic engineer was ever consulted, and there's nobody on board with that specialty now. The fact that one room might sound good and another less so wasn't important in the grander scheme. It should have been.

In the practical, the day to day, it matters. It matters to us. Choirs perform there, and bands. It serves on various days and nights as home to a Unitarian church, a Capoeira hoda, a Reconstructionist synagogue, a mosque, a Quaker meetinghouse, a half dozen different African dance groups, and a Shakespearean theater, everyone clinging on to whatever they hope to save. The room is scheduled for weeks and months and years to come, though weeks and months and years are all arbitrary designations this far from Earth.

On Thursday nights, Four Deck Rec hosts the OldTime, thanks to my grandmother's early pressure on the Recreation Committee. There are only a few of us on board who know what OldTime refers to, since everything is old time, strictly speaking.

Everyone else has accepted a new meaning, since they have never known any other. An OldTime is a Thursday night, is a hall with good acoustics, is a gathering of fiddlers and guitarists and mandolinists and banjo players. It has a verb form now. “Are you OldTiming this week?” If you are a person who would ask that question, or a person expected to respond, the answer is yes. You wouldn’t miss it.

On this particular Thursday night, while I wouldn’t miss it, my tenth graders had me running late. We’d been discussing the twentieth and twenty-first century space races and the conversation had veered into dangerous territory. I’d spent half an hour trying to explain to them why Earth history still mattered. This had happened at least once a cycle with every class I’d ever taught, but these particular students were as fired up as any I remembered.

“I’m never going to go there, right, Ms. Clay?” Nelson Odell had asked. This class had only been with me for two weeks, but I’d known Nelson his entire life. His great-grandmother, my friend Harriet, had dragged him to the OldTime until he was old enough to refuse. He’d played mandolin, his stubby fingers well fit to the tiny neck, face set in a permanently resentful expression.

“No,” I said. “This is a one way trip. You know that.”

“And really I’m just going to grow up and die on this ship, right? And all of us? You too? Die, not grow up. You’re already old.”

I had heard this from enough students. I didn’t even wince anymore. “Yes to all of the above, though it’s a reductive line of thinking and that last bit was rude.”

“Then what does it matter that back on Earth a bunch of people wanted what another group had? Wouldn’t it be better not to teach us how people did those things and get bad ideas in our heads?”

Emily Redhorse, beside Nelson, said, “They make us learn it all so we can understand why we got on the ship.” She was the only current OldTime player in this class, a promising fiddler. OldTime players usually understood the value of history from a young age.

Nelson waved her off. “We’ didn’t get on the ship. Our grandparents and great-grandparents did. And here we are learning things that were old to them.”

“Because, stupid.” That was Trina Nguyen.

I interrupted. “Debate is fine, Trina. Name-calling is not.”

“Because, Nelson.” She tried again. “There aren’t new things in history. That’s why it’s called history.”

Nelson folded his arms and stared straight at me. “Then don’t teach it at all. If it mattered so much, why did they leave it behind? Give us another hour to learn more genetics or ship maintenance or farming. Things we can actually use.”

“First of all, history isn’t static. People discovered artifacts and primary documents all the time that changed their views on who we were. It’s true that the moment we left Earth we gave up the chance to learn anything new about it from newly discovered primary sources, but we can still find fresh perspectives on the old information.” I tried to regain control, hoping that none of them countered with the Blackout. Students of this generation rarely did; to them it was just an incident in Shipboard History, not the living specter it had been when I was their age.

I continued. “Secondly, Emily is right. It’s important to know why and how we got here. The conventional wisdom remains that those who don’t know history are doomed to repeat it.”

“How are we supposed to repeat it?” Nelson waved at the pictures on the walls. “We don’t have countries or oil or water. Or guns or swords or bombs. If teachers hadn’t told us about them we wouldn’t even know they existed. We’d be better off not knowing that my ancestors tried to kill Emily’s ancestors, wouldn’t we? Somebody even tried to erase all of that entirely, and you made sure it was still included in the

new version of history.”

“Not me, Nelson. That was before my time.” I knew I shouldn't let them get a rise out of me, but I was tired and hungry, not the ideal way to start a seven hour music marathon. “Enough. I get what you're saying, but not learning this is not an option. Send me a thousand words by Tuesday on an example of history repeating itself.”

Before anyone protested, I added, “You were going to have an essay to write either way. All I've done is changed the topic. It doesn't sound like you wanted to write about space races.”

They all grumbled as they plugged themselves back into their games and music and shuffled out the door. I watched them go, wishing I'd handled the moment differently, but not yet sure how. It fascinated me that Nelson was the one fomenting this small rebellion, when his great-grandmother ran the OldTime Memory Project. My grandmother was the reason I obsessed over history, why I'd chosen teaching; Harriet didn't seem to have had the same effect on Nelson.

As Nelson passed my desk, he muttered, “Maybe somebody needs to erase it all again.” “Stop,” I told him.

He turned back to face me. I still had several inches on him, but he held himself as if he were taller. The rest of the students flowed out around him. Trina rammed her wheelchair into Nelson's leg as she passed, in a move that looked 100 percent deliberate. She didn't even pretend to apologize.

“I don't mind argument in my classroom, but don't ever let anyone hear you advocating another Blackout.”

He didn't look impressed. “I'm not advocating. I just think teaching us Earth history—especially broken history—is a waste of everybody's time.”

“Maybe someday you'll get on the Education Committee, and you can argue for that change. But I heard you say ‘erase it all again.’ That isn't the same thing. Would you say that in front of Harriet?”

“Maybe I was just exaggerating. It's not even possible to erase everything anymore. And there's plenty of stuff I like that I wouldn't want to see erased.” He shrugged. “I didn't mean it. Can I go now?”

He left without waiting for me to dismiss him.

I looked at the walls I'd carefully curated for this class. Tenth grade had always been the year we taught our journey's political and scientific antecedents. It was one of the easier courses for the Education Committee to recreate accurately after the Blackout, since some of it had still been in living memory at the time, and one of the easier classrooms to decorate for the same reason. I'd enlarged images of our ship's construction from my grandmother's personal collection, alongside reproductions of news headlines. Around the top of the room, a static quote from United Nations Secretary-General Confidence Swaray: “We have two missions now: to better the Earth and to better ourselves.”

Normally I'd wipe my classroom walls to neutral for the continuing education group that met there in the evening, but this time I left the wall displays on when I turned off the lights to leave. Maybe we'd all failed these children already if they thought the past was irrelevant.

The digital art on the street outside my classroom had changed during the day. I traced my fingertips along the wall to get the info: a reimagining of a memory of a photo of an Abdoulaye Konaté mural, sponsored by the Malian Memory Project. According to the description, the original had been a European transit station mosaic, though they no longer knew which city or country had commissioned it. Fish swam across a faux-tiled sea. Three odd blue figures stood tall at the far end, bird-like humanoids. The colors were soothing to me, but the figures less so. How like the original was it? No way to tell. Another reinvention to keep some version of our past

present in our lives.

I headed back to my quarters for my instrument and a quick dinner. There was always food at the OldTime, but I knew from experience that if I picked up my fiddle I wouldn't stop playing until my fingers begged. My fingers and my stomach often had different agendas. I needed a few minutes to cool down after that class, too. Nelson had riled me with his talk of broken history. To me that had always made preserving it even more important, but I understood the point he was trying to make.

By the time I got to the Four Deck Rec, someone had already taken my usual seat. I tuned in the corner where everyone had stashed their cases, then looked around to get the lay of the room. The best fiddlers had nabbed the middle seats, with spokes of mandolin and banjo and guitar and less confident fiddlers radiating out. The only proficient OldTime bass player, Doug Kelly, stood near the center, with the ship's only upright bass. A couple of his students sat behind him, ready to swap out for a tune or two if he wanted a break.

The remaining empty seats were all next to banjos. I spotted a chair beside Dana Torres from the ship's Advisory Council. She was a good administrator and an adequate banjo player—she kept time, anyway. I didn't think she'd show up if she were less than adequate; nobody wants to see leadership failing at anything.

She had taken a place two rings removed from my usual seat in the second fiddle tier. Not the innermost circle, where my grandmother had sat, with the players who call the tunes and call the stops; at fifty-five years old, I hadn't earned a spot there yet. Still, I sat just outside them and kept up with them, and it'd been a long time since I'd caught a frown from the leaders.

A tune started as I made my way to the empty chair. "Honeysuckle." A thought crossed my mind that Harriet had started "Honeysuckle" without me, one of my Memory Project tunes, to punish me for being late. A second thought crossed my mind, mostly because of the conversation with my students, that probably only three other people in the room knew or cared what honeysuckle was: Tom Mvovo, who maintained the seed bank; Liat Shuster, who worked in the greenhouse—in all our nights together, I never thought to ask her about the honeysuckle plant; Harriet Barrie, music historian, last OldTime player of the generation that had left Earth. To everyone else, it was simply the song's name. A name that meant this song, nothing more.

When I started thinking that way, all the songs took on a strange flat quality in my head. So many talked about meadows and flowers and roads and birds. The love songs maintained relevance, but the rest might as well have been written in other languages as far as most people were concerned. Or about nothing at all. Mostly, we let the fiddles do the singing.

No matter how many times we play a song, it's never the same song twice. The melody stays the same, the key, the rhythm. The notes' pattern, their cadence. Still, there are differences. The exact number of fiddles changes. Various players' positions within the group, each with their own fiddle's timbral variances. The locations of the bass, the mandolins, the guitars, the banjos, all in relation to each individual player's ears. To a listener by the snack table, or to someone seeking out a recording after the fact, the nuances change. In the minutes the song exists, it is fully its own. That's how it feels to me, anyway.

Harriet stomped her foot to indicate we'd reached the last go-round for "Honeysuckle," and we all came to an end together except one of the outer guitarists, who hadn't seen the signal and kept chugging on the last chord. He shrugged off the glares.

"Oklahoma Rooster," she shouted, to murmurs of approval. She started the tune, and the other fiddles picked up the melody. I put my bow to the strings and closed my eyes. I pictured a real farm, the way they looked in pictures, and let the song tell

me how it felt to be in the place called Oklahoma. A sky as big as space, the color of chlorinated water. The sun a distant disk, bright and cold. A wood-paneled square building, with a round building beside it. A perfect carpet of green grass. Horses, large and sturdy, bleating at each other across the fields. All sung in the voice of a rooster, a bird that served as a wake-up alarm for the entire farm. Birds were the things with feathers, as the old saying went.

It was easy to let my mind wander into meadows and fields during songs I had played once a week nearly my whole life. Nelson must have gotten under my skin more than I thought: I found myself adding the weeks and months and years up. Fifty times a year, fifty years, more or less. Then the same songs again alone for practice, or in smaller groups on other nights.

The OldTime broke up at 0300, as it usually did. I rolled my head from side to side, cracking my neck. The music always carried me through the night, but the second it stopped, I started noticing the cramp of my fingers, the unevenness of my shoulders.

"What does 'Oklahoma Rooster' mean to you?" I asked Dana Torres as she shook out her knees.

"Sorry?"

"What do you think of when you play 'Oklahoma Rooster'?"

Torres laughed. "I think C-C-G-C-C-G-C. Anything else and I fall behind the beat. Why, what do you think of?"

A bird, a farm, a meadow. "I don't know. Sorry. Weird question."

We packed our instruments and stepped into the street, dimmed to simulate night.

Back at my quarters, I knew I should sleep, but instead I sat at the table and called up the history database. "Wind Will Rove."

Options appeared: "Play," cross-referenced to the song database, with choices from several OldTime recordings we'd made over the years. "Sheet music," painstakingly generated by my grandmother and her friends, tabbed for all of the appropriate instruments. "History." I tapped the last icon and left it to play as I heated up water for soporific tea. I'd watched it hundreds of times.

A video would play on the table. A stern looking white woman in her thirties, black hair pulled back in a tight ponytail, bangs flat-cut across her forehead. She'd been so young then, the stress of the situation making her look older than her years.

"Harriet Barrie, Music Historian," the first subtitle would say, then Harriet would appear and begin, "*The fiddler Olivia Vandiver and her father, Charley Vandiver came up with this tune in the wee hours of a session in 1974. . .*" Except when I returned, the table had gone blank. I went back to the main menu, but this time no options came up when I selected "Wind Will Rove." I tried again, and this time the song didn't exist.

I stared at the place where it should have been, between "Winder's Slide" and "Wolf Creek." Panic stirred deep in my gut, a panic handed down to me. Maybe I was tired and imagining things. It had been there a moment ago. It had always been there, my whole life. The new databases had backups of backups of backups, even if the recordings we called originals merely recreated what had been lost long ago. Glitches happened. It would be fixed in the morning.

Just in case, I dashed off a quick message to Tech. I drank my tea and went to bed, but I didn't sleep well.

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"Wind Will Rove"

Historical reenactment. Windy Green as Olivia Vandiver, Fiddler:

"We were in our ninth hour playing. It had been a really energetic session, and we were all starting to fade. Chatting more between songs so we could rest our fingers. I can't remember how the subject came up, but my father brought up a tune called

“Windy Grove.” Nobody else had ever heard of it, and he called us all ignorant Americans.

He launched into an A part that sounded something like “Spirits of the Morning,” but with a clever little lift where “Spirits” descends. My father did things with a fiddle the rest of us could never match, but we all followed as best we were able. The B part wasn’t anything like “Spirits,” and we all caught that pretty fast, but the next time the A part came round it was different again, so we all shut up and let him play. The third time through sounded pretty much like the second, so we figured he had remembered the tune, and we jumped in again. It went the same the fourth and fifth times through.

It wasn’t until we got up the next day that he admitted he had never quite remembered the tune he was trying to remember, which meant the thing we had played the night before was of his own creation. We cleaned it up, called it ‘Wind Will Rove,’ and recorded it for the third Vandiver Family LP.”

* * *

My grandmother was an astronaut. We are not astronauts. It’s a term that’s not useful in our vocabulary. Do the people back on Earth still use that word? Do they mention us at all? Are they still there?

When our families left they were called Journeyers. Ten thousand Journeyers off on the Incredible Journey, with the help of a genetic bank, a seed bank, an advisory council. A ship thirty years in the making, held together by a crew of trained professionals: astronauts and engineers and biologists and doctors and the like. Depending on which news outlet you followed, the Journeyers were a cult or a social experiment or pioneers. Those aren’t terms we use for ourselves, since we have no need to call ourselves anything in reference to any other group. When we do differentiate, it’s to refer to the Before. I don’t know if that makes us the During or the After.

My mother’s parents met in Texas, in the Before, while she was still in training. My grandfather liked being married to an astronaut when the trips were finite, but he refused to sign up for the Journey. He stayed behind on Earth with two other children, my aunt and uncle, both older than my mother. I imagine those family members sometimes. All those people I have no stories for. Generations of them.

It’s theoretically possible that scientists on Earth have built faster ships by now. It’s theoretically possible they’ve developed faster travel while we’ve been busy traveling. It’s theoretically possible they’ve built a better ship, that they’ve peopled it and sent it sailing past us, that they’ve figured out how to freeze and revive people, that those who stepped into the ship will be the ones who step out. That we will be greeted when we reach our destination by our own ancestors. I won’t be there, but my great-great-great-great-great-great-grandchildren might be. I wonder what stories they’ll tell each other.

* * *

This story is verifiable history. It begins, “There once was a man named Morne Brooks.” It’s used to scare children into doing their homework and paying attention in class. Nobody wants to be a cautionary tale.

There once was a man named Morne Brooks. In the fourth year on board, while performing a computer upgrade, he accidentally created a backdoor to the ship databases. Six years after that, an angry young programmer named Trevor Dube released a virus that ate several databases in their entirety. Destroyed the backups too. He didn’t touch the “important” systems—navigation, life support, medical, seed and gene banks—but he caused catastrophic damage to the libraries. Music gone. Literature, film, games, art, history: gone, gone, gone, gone. Virtual reality simulation banks, gone, along with the games and the trainings and the immersive recreations of places on Earth. He killed external communications too. We were alone, years earlier than we expected to be. Severed.

For some reason, it’s Brooks’ name attached to the disaster. Dube was locked up,

but Brooks still walked around out in the community for people to point at and shame. Our slang term “brookied” came from his name. He spent years afterward listening to people say they had brookied exams and brookied relationships. I suppose it didn't help that he had such a good name to lend. Old English, Dutch, German. A hard word for a lively stream of water. We have no use for it as a noun now; no brooks here. His shipmates still remembered brooks, though they'd never see one again. There was a verb form already, unrelated, but it had fallen from use. His contemporaries verbed him afresh.

It didn't matter that for sixteen years afterward he worked on the team that shored up protection against future damage, or that he eventually committed suicide. Nobody wanted to talk about Dube or his motivations; all people ever mentioned was the moment the screens went dark, and Brooks' part in the whole disaster when they traced it backward.

In fairness, I can't imagine their panic. They were still the original Journeyers, the original crew, the original Advisory Council, save one or two changes. They were the ones who had made sure we had comprehensive databases, so we wouldn't lose our history, and so they wouldn't be without their favorite entertainments. The movies and serials and songs reminded them of homes they had left behind.

The media databases meant more to that first generation than I could possibly imagine. They came from all over the Earth, from disparate cultures; for some from smaller sub-groups, the databases were all that connected them with their people. It's no wonder they reacted the way they did.

I do sometimes wonder what would be different now if things hadn't gone wrong so early in the journey. Would we have naturally moved beyond the art we carried, instead of clinging to it as we do now? All we can do is live it out, but I do wonder.

* * *

I don't teach on Fridays. I can't bounce back from seven hours of fiddling, or from the near-all-nighter, the way I did at twenty or thirty or forty. Usually I sleep through Friday mornings. This time, I woke at ten, suddenly and completely, with the feeling something was missing. I glanced at the corner by the door to make sure I hadn't left my fiddle at the Rec.

I showered, then logged on to the school server to see if any students had turned in early assignments—they hadn't—then checked the notice system for anything that might affect my plans for the day. It highlighted a couple of streets I could easily avoid, and warned that the New Shakespeare and Chinese Cultural DBs were down for maintenance. Those alerts reminded me about the database crash the night before. My stomach lurched again as I called up “Wind Will Rove,” but it was there when I looked for it, right where it belonged.

The door chimed. Fridays I had lunch with Harriet. We called it lunch, even though we'd both be eating our first meal of the day. She didn't get up early after the OldTime either. Usually I cut it pretty close, rolling out of bed and putting on clothes, knowing she'd done the same. I glanced around the room to make sure it was presentable. I'd piled some dirty clothes on the bed, but they were pretty well hidden behind the privacy screen. Good enough.

“You broke the deal, Rosie,” she said, eyeing my hair as I opened my door. “You showered.”

“I couldn't sleep.”

She shrugged and slid into the chair I'd just been sitting in. She had a skullcap pulled over her own hair, dyed jet black. Harriet had thirty years on me, though she still looked wiry and spry. It had taken me decades to stop considering her my grandmother's friend and realize she'd become mine as well. Now we occupied a place somewhere between mentorship and friendship. History teacher and music

historian. Fiddle player and master fiddler.

I handed her a mug of mint tea and a bowl of congee, and a spoon. My dishware had been my grandmother's, from Earth. Harriet always smiled when I handed her the chipped "Cape Breton Fiddlers Association" mug.

She held the cup up to her face for a moment, breathing in the minty steam. "Now tell me why you walked in late last night. I missed you in the second row. Kem Porter took your usual seat, and I had to listen to his sloppy bow technique all night."

"Kem's not so bad. He knows the tunes."

"He knows the tunes, but he's not ready for the second row. He was brooking rhythms all over the place. You should have called him out on it."

"I wouldn't!"

She cradled the mug in her hands and breathed in again. Liat and I hadn't been a couple for years, but she still brought me real mint from the greenhouse, and I knew Harriet appreciated it. "I know. You're too nice. There's no shame in letting someone know his place. Next time I'll do it."

She would, too. She had taken over the OldTime enforcer job from my grandmother and lived up to her example. They'd both sent me back to the outer circles more than once before I graduated inward.

"I'll tell you when you're ready, Rosie," my grandmother said. "You'll get there."

"You know Windy would have done it," Harriet said, echoing my thoughts.

The nickname jogged my memory again. "Wind Will Rove!" I said. "Something was wrong with the database last night. The song was missing."

She pushed the cups to the side and tapped the table awake.

"Down for maintenance," she read out loud, frowning. She looked up. "I don't like that. I'll go over to Tech myself and ask."

She stood and left without saying goodbye.

Harriet had a way of saying things so definitively you couldn't help agreeing. If she said you didn't belong in the second row, you weren't ready yet. If she said not to worry over the song issue, I would have been willing to believe her, even though it made me uneasy. Hopefully it was nothing, but her reaction was appropriate for anyone who'd lived through the Blackout. I hadn't even gotten around to answering her first question, but I wasn't really sure what I would have told her about Nelson in any case.

I went to pick up my grandchildren from daycare, as I always did on Friday afternoons, Natalie's long day at the hospital. If anything could keep me out of my head, it was the mind-wiping exhaustion of chasing toddlers.

"Goats?" asked Teyla. She had just turned two, her brother Jonah four.

"Goats okay with you, too, buddy?" I asked Jonah.

He shrugged stoically. He didn't really care for animals. Preferred games, but we'd played games the week before.

"Goats it is."

The farm spread across the bottom deck, near the waste processing plant. We took two tubes to get there, Jonah turning on all the screens we passed, Teyla playing with my hair.

I always enjoyed stepping from the tube and into the farm's relatively open spaces, as big as eight rec rooms combined. The air out here, pungent and rich, worked off a different circulator than on the living decks. It moved with slightly more force than on the rest of the ship, though still not a wind. Not even a breeze. The artificial sun wasn't any different than on the other decks, but it felt more intense. The textures felt different too, softer, plants and fur, fewer touch screens. If I squinted I could imagine a real farm, ahead or behind us, on a real planet. Everything on every other deck had been designed to keep us healthy and sane; I always found it interesting to spend time in a place dedicated to keeping other animals alive.

The goats had been a contentious issue for the planners in my grandmother's generation. Their detractors called them a waste of food and space and resources. Windy was among those who argued for them. They could supplement the synthetic milk and meat supplies. They'd provide veterinary training and animal husbandry skills that would be needed planetside someday, not to mention a living failsafe in case something happened to the gene banks. It would be good to have them aboard for psychological reasons as well, when people were leaving behind house pets like cats and dogs.

She won the debate, as she so often did, and they added a small population of female African Pygmy goats to the calculations. Even then there were dissenters. The arguments continued until the Blackout, then died abruptly along with the idea the journey might go as planned.

She told me all of that three weeks after my mother left, when I was still taking it personally.

"Have you ever tried to catch a goat?" she asked.

I hadn't. I'd seen them, of course, but visitors were only supposed to pet them. She got permission, and I spent twenty minutes trying to catch an animal that had zero interest in being caught. It was the first thing that made me laugh again. I always thought of that day when I brought my grandchildren to pet the goats, though I hoped I never had any reason to use the same technique on them.

I had wrapped up some scraps for Jonah and Teyla to feed the nippy little things. Once they'd finished the food, the goats started on Teyla's jersey, to her mixed delight and horror. I kept an eye on goat teeth and toddler fingers to make sure everybody left with the proper number.

"Ms. Clay," somebody said, and I glanced up to see who had called me, then back at the babies and the fingers and the goats. They looked vaguely familiar, but everyone did after a while. If I had taught them, I still might not recognize a face with twenty more years on it, if they didn't spend time on the same decks I did.

"Ms. Clay, I'm Nelson's parent. Other parent. Lee. I think you know Ash." Ash was Harriet's grandkid. They'd refused to play music at all, to Harriet's endless frustration.

Lee didn't look anything like Nelson, but then I recalled Harriet saying they had gone full gene-bank. The incentives to include gene variance in family planning were too good for many people to pass up.

"Nice to meet you," I said.

"I'm sorry if he's been giving you any trouble," Lee said. "He's going through some kind of phase."

"Phase?" Sometimes feigning ignorance got more interesting answers than agreeing.

"He's decided school is teaching the wrong things. Says there's no point in learning anything that doesn't directly apply to what will be needed planetside. That it puts old ideas into people's heads, when they should be learning new things. I have no idea where he came up with it."

I nodded. "Do you work down here?"

Lee gestured down at manure-stained coveralls. "He likes it here, though. Farming fits in his worldview."

"But history doesn't?"

"History, classic literature, anything you can't directly apply. I know he's probably causing trouble, but he's a good kid. He'll settle down once he figures out a place for himself in all this."

Teyla was offering a mystery fistful of something to a tiny black goat. Jonah looked like he was trying to figure out if he could ride one; I put a hand on his shoulder to hold him back.

* * *

"Tell me about the Blackout," I say at the start of the video I made while still in

school. Eighteen-year-old me, already a historian. My voice is much younger. I'm not on screen, but I can picture myself at eighteen. Tall, gawky, darker than my mother, lighter than my father.

"I don't think there was anybody who didn't panic," my grandmother begins. Her purple hair is pulled back in a messy bun, and she is sitting in her own quarters—mine now—with her Cape Breton photos on the walls.

"Once we understood that the glitch hadn't affected navigation or the systems we rely on to breathe and eat, once it became clear the culprit was a known virus and the damage was irreparable, well, we just had to deal with it."

"The 'culprit' was a person, not a virus, right?"

"A virus who released a virus." Her face twisted at the thought.

I moved back to safer ground. "Did everyone just 'deal with it'? That isn't what I've heard."

"There are a lot of people to include in 'everyone.' The younger children handled it fine. They bounced and skated and ran around the rec rooms. The older ones—the ones who relied on external entertainments—had more trouble and got in more trouble, I guess." She gave a sly smile. "But ask your father how he lost his pinkie finger if you've never done so."

"That was when he did it?"

"You bet. Eighteen years old and some daredevil notion to hitch a ride on the top of a lift. Lucky he survived."

"He told me a goat bit it off!"

She snorted. "I'm guessing he told you that back when you said you wanted to be a goat farmer when you grew up?"

No answer from younger-me.

She shrugged. "Or maybe he didn't want to give you any foolish ideas about lift-boys."

"He's not a daredevil, though."

"Not anymore. Not after that. Not after you came along the next year. Anyway, you asked who 'just dealt with it,' and you're right. The kids coped because they had nothing to compare it to, but obviously the main thing you want to know about is the adults. The Memory Projects."

"Yes. That's the assignment."

"Right. So. Here you had all these people: born on Earth, raised on Earth. They applied to be Journeyers because they had some romantic notion of setting out for a better place. And those first years, you can't even imagine what it was like, the combination of excitement and terror. Any time anything went wrong: a replicator brooked, a fan lost power, anything at all, someone started shouting we had set our families up for Certain Death." She says "certain death" dramatically, wiggling her fingers at me. "Then Crew or Logistics or Tech showed them their problem had an easy fix, and they'd calm down. It didn't matter how many times we told them we had things under control. Time was the only reassurance."

"By ten years in, we had finally gotten the general populace to relax. Everyone had their part to do, and everyone was finally doing it quietly. We weren't going to die if a hot water line went cold one day. There were things to worry over, of course, but they were all too big to be worth contemplating. Same as now, you understand? And we had this database, this marvelous database of everything good humans had ever created, music and literature and art from all around the world, in a hundred languages."

"And then Trevor Dube had to go and ruin everything. I know you know that part so I won't bother repeating it. Morne Brooks did what he did, and that Dube fellow did what he did, and all of a sudden all of these Journeyers, with their dream of their

children's children's children's etcetera someday setting foot on a new planet, they all have to deal with their actual children. They have to contemplate the idea the generations after them will never get to see or hear the things they thought were important. That all they have left is the bare walls. They wait—we wait—and wait for the DB to be restored. And they realize: hey, I can't rely on this database to be here to teach those great-great-great-grandchildren."

She leans forward. "So everyone doubles down on the things that matter most to them. That's when some folks who didn't have it got religion again. The few physical books on board became sacred primary texts, including the ones that had been sacred texts to begin with. Every small bit of personal media got cloned for the greater good, from photos to porn—don't giggle—but it wasn't much, not compared to what we'd lost.

"Cultural organizations that had been atrophying suddenly found themselves with more members than they'd had since the journey started. Actors staged any show they knew well enough, made new recordings. People tried to rewrite their favorite books and plays from memory, paint their favorite paintings. Everyone had a different piece, some closer to accurate than others. That's when we started getting together to play weekly instead of monthly."

"I thought it was always weekly, Gra."

"Nope. We didn't have other entertainments to distract us, and we were worried about the stories behind the songs getting lost. The organized Memory Projects started with us. It seemed like the best way to make sure what we wanted handed down would be handed down. The others saw that we'd found a good way to approach the problem and keep people busy, so other Memory Projects sprung up too. We went through our whole repertoire and picked out the forty songs we most wanted saved. Each of us committed to memorizing as many as we could, but with responsibility for a few in particular. We knew the songs themselves already, but now people pooled what they knew about them, and we memorized their histories, too. Where they came from, what they meant. And later, we were responsible for re-recording those histories, and teaching them to somebody younger, so each song got passed down to another generation. That's you, incidentally."

"I know."

"Just checking. You're asking me some pretty obvious stuff."

"It's for a project. I need to ask."

"Fine, then. Anyhow, we re-recorded all our songs and histories as quick as possible, then memorized them in case somebody tried to kill the DBs again. And other people memorized the things important to them. History of their people—the stuff that didn't make it into history books—folk dances, formulae. Actors built plays back from scratch, though some parts weren't exactly as they'd been. And those poor jazz musicians."

"Those poor jazz musicians? I thought jazz was about improv."

"It's full of improv, but certain performances stood out as benchmarks for their whole mode. I'm glad we play a music that doesn't set much stock in solo virtuosity. We recorded our fiddle tunes all over again, and the songs are still the songs, but nobody on board could play 'So What' like Miles Davis or anything like John Coltrane. Their compositions live on, but not their performances, if that makes sense. Would have devastated your grandfather, if he'd been on board. Anyway, what was I saying? The human backup idea had legs, even if it worked better for some things than others. It was a worst case scenario."

"Which two songs did you memorize history for?"

"Unofficially, all of them. Officially, same as you. 'Honeysuckle' and 'Wind Will Rove.' You know that."

"I know, Gra. For the assignment."

* * *

“Windy Grove”

Historical Reenactment: Marius Smit as Howie McCabe, Cape Breton Fiddlemaker: Vandiver wasn't wrong. There was a tune called “Windy Grove.” My great-grandfather played it, but it was too complicated for most fiddlers. I can only remember a little of the tune now. It had lyrics, too, in Gaelic and English. I don't think Vandiver ever mentioned those. There was probably a Gaelic name too, but that's lost along with the song.

My great-grandfather grew up going to real milling frolics, before machines did the wool-shrinking and frolics just became social events. The few songs I know in Gaelic I know because they have that milling frolic rhythm; it drives them into your brain. “Windy Grove” wasn't one of those. As far as I know it was always a fiddle tune, but not a common one because of its difficulty.

All I know is the A part in English, and I'm pretty sure I wouldn't get the melody right now, so I'm going to sing it to the melody of “Wind Will Rove”:

We went down to the windy grove

Never did know where the wind did go

Never too sure when the wind comes back

If it's the same wind that we knew last.

* * *

Nelson's essay arrived promptly on Monday. It began “Many examples of history repeating itself can be seen in our coursework. There are rulers who didn't learn from other ruler's mistakes.”

I corrected the apostrophe and kept reading. “You know who they are because you taught us about them. Why do you need me to say them back to you? Instead I'm going to write about history repeating itself in a different way. Look around you, Ms. Clay.

“I'm on this ship because my great-grandparents decided they wanted to spend the rest of their lives on a ship. They thought they were being unselfish. They thought they were making a sacrifice so someday their children's children's children to the bazillionth or whatever would get to be pioneers on a planet that people hadn't started killing yet, and they were pretty sure wouldn't kill them, and where they're hoping there's no intelligent life. They made a decision that locked us into doing exactly what they did.

“So here we are. My parents were born on this ship. I was born here. My chromosomes come from the gene bank, from two people who died decades before I was born.

“What can we do except repeat history? What can I do that nobody here has ever done before? In two years I'll choose a specialty. I can work with goats, like my parents. I could be an engineer or a doctor or a dentist or a horticulturist, who are all focused on keeping us alive in one way or another. I can be a history teacher like you, but obviously I won't. I can be a theoretical farmer or a theoretical something else, where I learn things that will never be useful here, in order to pass them on to my kids and my kid's kids, so they can pass them on and someday somebody can use them, if there's really a place we're going and we're really going to get there someday.

“But I'm never going to stand on a real mountain, and I can't be a king or a prime minister or a genocidal tyrant like you teach us about. I can't be Lord Nelson, an old white man with a giant hat, and you might think I was named after him but I was named after a goat who was named after a horse some old farmer had on Earth who was named after somebody in a book or a band or an entertainment who might have been Lord Nelson or Nelson Mandela or some other Nelson entirely who you can't teach me about because we don't remember them anymore.

“The old history can't repeat, and I'm in the next generation of people who make no impact on anything whatsoever. We aren't making history. We're in the middle of the ocean and the shore is really far away. When we climb out the journey should

have changed us, but you want us to take all the baggage with us, so we're exactly the same as when we left. But we can't be, and we shouldn't be."

I turned off the screen and closed my eyes. I could fail him for not writing the assignment as I had intended it, but he clearly understood.

* * *

"Wendigo"

Traditional. Lost.

Harriet Barrie:

Another tune we have the name of but not much else. I'm personally of the belief "Wendigo" and "Windy Grove" are the same song. Some Cape Bretonians took it with them when they moved to the Algonquins. Taught it to some local musicians who misheard the title and conflated it with local monster lore. There's a tune called "When I Go" that started making the rounds in Ontario not long after, though nobody ever showed an interest in it outside of Ontario and Finland.

* * *

If we were only to play songs about things we knew, we would lose a lot of our playlist. No wind. No trees. No battles, no seas, no creeks, no mountaintops. We'd sing of travelers, but not journeys. We'd sing of middles, but not beginnings or ends. We would play songs of waiting and longing. We'd play love songs.

Why not songs about stars, you might ask? Why not songs about darkness and space? The traditionalists wouldn't play them. I'm not sure who'd write them, either. People on Earth wrote about blue skies because they'd stood under grey ones. They wrote about night because there was such a thing as day. Songs about prison are poignant because the character knew something else beforehand and dreamed of other things ahead. Past and future are both abstractions now.

When my daughter Natalie was in her teens, she played fiddle in a band that would be classified in the new DB as "other/undefined" if they had uploaded anything. Part of their concept was that they wouldn't record their music, and they requested that nobody else record it either. A person would have to be there to experience it. I guess it made sense for her to fall into something like that after listening to me and Gra and Harriet.

I borrowed back the student fiddle she and I had both played as children. She told me she didn't want me going to hear them play.

"You'll just tell me it sounds like noise or my positions are sloppy," she said. "Or worse yet, you'll say we sound exactly like this band from 2030 and our lyrics are in the tradition of blah blah blah, and I'll end up thinking we stole everything from a musician I'd never even heard before. We want to do something new."

"I'd never," I said, even though a knot had formed in my stomach. Avoided commenting when I heard her practicing. Bit my tongue when Harriet complained musicians shouldn't be wasting their time on new music when they ought to be working on preserving what we already had.

I did go to check them out once, when they played the Seven Dec Rec. I stood in the back, in the dark. To me it sounded like shouting down an elevator shaft, all ghosts and echoes. The songs had names like "Because I Said So" and "Terrorform"; they shouted the titles in between pieces, but the PA was distorting and even those I might have misheard.

I counted fifteen young musicians in the band, from different factions all over the ship: children of jazz, of rock, of classical music, of zouk, of Chinese opera, of the West African drumming group. It didn't sound anything like anything I'd ever heard before. I still couldn't figure out whether they were synthesizing the traditions they'd grown up in or rejecting them entirely.

My ears didn't know what to pay attention to, so I focused on Nat. She still had

decent technique from her childhood lessons, but she used it in ways I didn't know how to listen to. She played rhythm rather than lead, a pad beneath the melody, a staccato polyrhythm formed with fiddle and drum.

I almost missed when she lit into "Wind Will Rove." I'd never even have recognized it if I had been listening to the whole instead of focusing on Nat's part. Hers was a countermelody to something else entirely, the rhythm swung but the key unchanged. Harriet would have hated it, but I thought it had a quiet power, hidden as it was beneath the bigger piece.

I never told Nat I'd gone to hear her that night, because I didn't want to admit I'd listened.

I've researched punk and folk and hip-hop's births, and the protest movements that went hand in hand with protest music. Music born of people trying to change the status quo. What could my daughter and her friends change? What did people want changed? The ship sails on. They played together for a year before calling it quits. She gave her fiddle away again and threw herself into studying medicine. As they'd pledged, nobody ever uploaded their music, so there's no evidence it ever existed outside this narrative.

* * *

My grandmother smuggled the upright bass on board. It's Doug Kelly's now, but it came onto the ship under my grandmother's "miscellaneous supplies" professional allowance. That's how it's listed in the original manifest: "Miscellaneous Supplies—1 Extra-Large Crate—200 cm x 70 cm x 70 cm." When I was studying the manifest for a project, trying to figure out who had brought what, I asked her why the listed weight was so much more than the instrument's weight.

"Strings," she said. "It was padded with clothes and then the box was filled with string packets. For the bass, for the fiddles. Every cranny of every box I brought on board was filled with strings and hair and rosin. I didn't trust replicators."

The bass belonged at the time to Jonna Rich. In my grandmother's photo of the original OldTime players on the ship, Jonna's dwarfed by her instrument. It's only a 3/4 size, but it still looms over her. I never met her. My grandmother said, "You've never seen such a tiny woman with such big, quick hands."

When her arthritis got too bad to play, Jonna passed it to Marius Smit, "twice her size, but half the player she was." Then Jim Riggins, then Alison Smit, then Doug Kelly, with assorted second and third stand-ins along the way. Those were the OldTime players. The bass did double duty in some jazz ensembles, as well as the orchestra.

Personal weight and space allowances didn't present any problems for those who played most instruments. The teams handling logistics and psychological welfare sparred and negotiated and compromised and re-compromised. They made space for four communal drum kits (two each: jazz trap and rock five-piece), twenty-two assorted amplifiers for rock and jazz, bass and guitar and keyboard. We have two each of three different Chinese zithers, and one hundred and three African drums of thirty-two different types, from djembe to carimbo. There's a PA in every Rec, but only a single tuba. The music psychologist consulted by the committee didn't understand why an electric bass wasn't a reasonable compromise for the sake of space. Hence my grandmother's smuggling job.

How did a committee on Earth ever think they could guess what we'd need fifty or eighty or one hundred and eighty years into the voyage? They set us up with state of the art replicators, with our beautiful, doomed databases, with programs and simulators to teach skills we would need down the line. Still, there's no model that accurately predicts the future. They had no way of prognosticating the brooked database or the resultant changes. They'd have known, if they'd included an actual musician on the committee, that we needed an upright bass. I love how I'm still surrounded by

the physical manifestations of my grandmother's influence on the ship: the upright bass, the pygmy goats. Her fiddle, my fiddle now.

* * *

I arrived in my classroom on Thursday to discover somebody had hacked my walls. Scrawled over my photo screens: "Collective memory \neq truth," "History is fiction," "The past is a lie." A local overlay, not an overwrite. Nothing invasive of my personal files or permanent. Easy to erase, easy to figure out who had done it. I left it up.

As my students walked in, I watched their faces. Some were completely oblivious, wrapped up in whatever they were listening to, slouching into their seats without even looking up. A few snickered or exchanged wide-eyed glances.

Nelson arrived with a smirk on his face, a challenge directed at me. He didn't even look at the walls. It took him a moment to notice I hadn't cleaned up after him; when he did notice, the smirk was replaced with confusion.

"You're wondering why I didn't wipe this off my walls before you arrived?"

The students who hadn't been paying attention looked around for the first time. "Whoa," somebody said.

"The first answer is that it's easier to report if I leave it up. Vandalism and hacking are both illegal, and I don't think it would be hard to figure out who did this, but since there's no permanent damage, I thought we might use this as a learning experience." Everyone looked at Nelson, whose ears had turned red.

I continued. "I think what somebody is trying to ask is, let's see, 'Ms. Clay, how do we know that the history we're learning is true? Why does it matter?' And I think they expect me to answer, 'because I said so,' or something like that. But the real truth is, our history is a total mess. It's built on memories of facts, and memories are unreliable. Before, they could cross-reference memories and artifacts to a point where you could say with some reliability that certain things happened and certain things didn't. We've lost almost all of the proof."

"So what's left?" I pointed to the graffitied pictures. "I'm here to help figure out which things are worth remembering, which things are still worth calling fact or truth or whatever you want to call it. Maybe it isn't the most practical field of study, but it's still important. It'll matter to you someday when your children come to you to ask why we're on this journey. It'll matter when something goes wrong and we can look to the past and say 'how did we solve this when we had this problem before' instead of starting from scratch. It matters because of all the people who asked 'why' and 'how' and 'what if' instead of allowing themselves to be absorbed in their own problems—they thought of us, so why shouldn't we think of them?"

"Today we're going to talk about the climate changes that the Earth was experiencing by the time they started building this ship, and how that played into the politics. And just so you're not waiting with bated breath through the entire class, your homework for the week is to interview somebody who still remembers Earth. Ask them why they or their parents got on board. Ask them what they remember about that time, and any follow-up questions you think make sense. For bonus points upload to the oral history DB once you've sent your video to me."

I looked around to see if anyone had any questions, but they were all silent. I started the lesson I was actually supposed to be teaching.

* * *

I'd been given that same assignment at around their age. It was easier to find original Journeymen to interview back then, but I always turned to my grandmother. The video is buried in the Oral History DB, but I'd memorized the path to it long ago.

She's still in good health in this one, fit and strong, with her trademark purple hair. For all our closeness, I have no idea what her hair's original color was.

"Why did you leave?" I ask.

“I didn’t really consider it leaving. Going someplace, not leaving something else behind.”

“Isn’t leaving something behind part of going someplace?”

“You think of it your way, I’ll think of it mine.”

“Is that what all the Journeymen said?”

My grandmother snorts. “Ask any two and we’ll give you two different answers. You’re asking me, so I’m telling you how I see it. We had the technology, and the most beautiful ship. We had—have—a destination that reports perfect conditions to sustain us.”

“How did you feel about having a child who would never get to the destination?”

“I thought ‘my daughter will have a life nobody has ever had before, and she’ll be part of a generation that makes new rules for what it means to be a person existing with other people.’” She shrugs. “I found that exciting. I thought she’d live in the place she lived, and she’d do things she loved and things she hated, and she’d live out her life like anybody does.”

She pauses, then resumes without prompting. “There were worse lives to live, back then. This seemed like the best choice for our family. No more running away; running toward something wonderful.”

“Was there anything you missed about Earth?”

“A thing, like not a person? If a person counts, your grandfather and my other kids, always and forever. There was nothing else I loved that I couldn’t take with me,” she says, with a faraway look in her eyes.

“Nothing?” I press.

She smiles. “Nothing anybody can keep. The sea. The wind coming off the coast. I can still feel it when I’m inside a good song.”

She reaches to pick up her fiddle.

* * *

There was a question I pointedly didn’t ask in that video, the natural follow-up that fit in my grandmother’s pause. I didn’t ask because it wasn’t my teacher’s business how my mother fit into that generation “making new rules for what it means to be a person existing with other people,” as my grandmother put it. If I haven’t mentioned my mother much, it’s because she and I never really understood each other.

She was eight when she came aboard. Old enough to have formative memories of soil and sky and wind. Old enough to come on board with her own small scale fiddle. Fourteen when she told my grandmother she didn’t want to play music anymore.

Eighteen when the Blackout happened. Nineteen when she had me, one of a slew of Blackout Babies granted by joint action of the Advisory Council and Logistics. They would have accepted anything that kept people happy and quiet at that point, as long as the numbers bore out its sustainability.

My grandmother begged her to come back to music, to help with the OldTime portion of the Memory Project. She refused. She’d performed in a Shakespeare comedy called *Much Ado About Nothing* just before the Blackout, while she was still in school. She still knew Hero’s lines by heart, and the general dramatists and Shakespeareans had both reached out to her to join their Memory Projects; they all had their hands full rebuilding plays from scratch.

The film faction recruited her as well, with their ridiculously daunting task. My favorite video from that period shows my twenty-year-old mother playing the lead in a historical drama called *Titanic*. It’s a recreation of an old movie, and an even older footnote in history involving an enormous sea ship.

My mother: young, gorgeous, glowing. She wore gowns that shimmered when she moved. The first time she showed it to me, when I was five, all I noticed was how beautiful she looked.

When I was seven, I asked her if the ocean could kill me.

"There's no ocean here. We made it up, Rosie."

That made no sense. I saw it there on the screen, big enough to surround the ship, like liquid, tangible space, a space that could chase you down the street and surround you. She took me down to the soundstage on Eight Deck, where they were filming a movie called *Serena*. I know now they were still triaging, filming every important movie to the best of their recollection, eight years out from the Blackout, based on scripts rewritten from memory in those first desperate years. Those are the only versions I've ever known.

She showed me how a sea was not a sea, a sky was not a sky. I got to sit on a boat that was not a boat, and in doing so learn what a boat was.

"Why are you crying, Mama?" I asked her later that evening, wandering from my bunk to my parents' bed.

My father picked me up and squeezed me tight. "She's crying about something she lost."

"I'm not tired. Can we watch the movie again?"

We sat and watched my young mother as she met and fell in love with someone else, someone pretend. As they raced a rush of water that I had already been assured would never threaten me or my family. As the ship sank—it's not real, there's no sea, nothing sinks anymore—and the lifeboats disappeared and the two lovers were forced to huddle together on a floating door until their dawn rescue.

* * *

When I was sixteen, my mother joined a cult. Or maybe she started it; NewTime is as direct a rebuttal to my grandmother's mission as could exist. They advocated erasing the entertainment databases again, forever, in the service of the species.

"We're spending too much creative energy recreating the things we carried with us," she said. I listened from my bunk as she calmly packed her clothes.

"You're a Shakespearean! You're supposed to recreate." My father never raised his voice either. That's what I remembered most about their conversation afterward: how neither ever broke calm.

"I was a Shakespearean, but more than that, I'm an actress. I want new things to act in. Productions that speak to who we are now, not who we were on Earth. Art that tells our story."

"You have a family."

"And I love you all, but I need this."

The next morning, she kissed us both goodbye as if she was going to work, then left with the NewTime for Fourteen Deck. I didn't know what Advisory Council machinations were involved in relocating the Fourteen Deck families to make room for an unplanned community, or what accommodations had to be made for people who opted out of jobs to live a pure artistic existence. There were times in human history where that was possible, but this wasn't one of them. Those are questions I asked later. At that moment, I was furious with her.

I don't know if I ever stopped being angry, really. I never went to any of the original plays that trickled out of the NewTime; I've never explored their art or their music. I never learned what we looked like through their particular lens. It wasn't new works I opposed; it was their idea they had to separate themselves from us to create them. How could anything they wrote actually reflect our experience if they weren't in the community anymore?

They never came back down to live with the rest of us. My mother and I reconciled when I had Natalie, but she wasn't the person I remembered, and I'm pretty sure she thought the same about me. She came down to play with Nat sometimes, but I never left them alone together, for fear the separatist idea might rub off on my kid.

The night I saw Natalie's short-lived band perform, the night I hid in the darkness all those years ago so she wouldn't get mad at me for coming, it wasn't until I recognized "Wind Will Rove" that I realized I'd been holding my breath. Theirs wasn't a NewTime rejection of everything that had gone before; it was a synthesis.

* * *

"Wind Will Roam"

Historical Reenactment: Akona Mvovo as Will E. Womack:

My aunt cleaned house for some folks over in West Hollywood, and they used to give her records to take home to me. I took it all in. Everything influenced me. The west coast rappers, but also Motown and pop and rock and these great old-timey fiddle records. I wanted to play fiddle so bad when I heard this song, but where was I going to get one? Wasn't in the cards.

The song I sampled for "Wind Will Roam"—this fiddle record "Wind Will Rove"—it changed me. There's something about the way the first part lifts that moves me every time. I've heard there's a version with lyrics out there somewhere, but I liked the instrumental, so I could make up my own words over it. I wrote the first version when I was ten years old. I thought "rove" sounded like a dog, so I called it "Wind Will Roam," about a dog named Wind. I was a literal kid.

Second version when I was fifteen, I don't really remember that one too well. I was rapping and recording online by then, so there's probably a version out there somewhere. Don't show it to me if you find it. I was trying to be badass then. I'd just as soon pretend it never existed.

I came back to "Wind Will Rove" again and again. I think I was twenty-five when I recorded this one, and my son had just been born, and I wanted to give him something really special. I still liked "Wind Will Roam" better than "Wind Will Rove," 'cause I could rhyme it with "home" and "poem" and all that.

(sings)

The wind will roam

And so will I

I've got miles to go before I die

But I'll come back

I always do

Just like the wind

I'll come to you.

We might go weeks without no rain

And every night the sun will go away again

Some winds blow warm some winds blow low

You and me've got miles and miles to go

* * *

I wanted to take something I loved and turn it into something else entirely. Transform it.

* * *

The next OldTime started out in G. My grandmother had never much cared for the key of G; since her death we'd played way more G sessions than we ever had when she chose the songs. "Dixie Blossoms," then "Down the River." "Squirrel Hunters." "Jaybird Died of the Whooping Cough." "The Long Way Home." "Ladies on the Steamboat."

Harriet called a break in the third hour and said when we came back we were going to do some D tunes, starting with "Midnight on the Water." I knew the sequence she was setting up: "Midnight on the Water," then "Bonaparte's Retreat," then "Wind Will Rove." I was pretty sure she did it for me; I think she was glad to have me back in the second row and punctual.

Most stood up and stretched, or put their instruments down to go get a snack. A

few fiddlers, myself included, took the opportunity to cross-tune to DDAD. These songs could all be played in standard tuning, but the low D drone added something ineffable.

When everybody had settled back into their seats, Harriet counted us into the delicate waltz time of "Midnight on the Water." Then "Bonaparte's Retreat," dark and lively. And then, as I'd hoped, "Wind Will Rove."

No matter how many times you play a song, it isn't the same song twice. I was still thinking about Nelson's graffiti, and how the past had never felt like a lie to me at all. It was a progression. "Wind Will Rove" said we are born anew every time a bow touches fiddle strings in an OldTime session on a starship in this particular way. It is not the ship nor the session nor the bow nor the fiddle that births us. Nor the hands. It's the combination of all of those things, in a particular way they haven't been combined before. We are an alteration on an old, old tune. We are body and body, wood and flesh. We are bow and fiddle and hands and memory and starship and OldTime.

"Wind Will Rove" spoke to me, and my eyes closed to feel the wind the way my grandmother did, out on a cliff above the ocean. We cycled through the A part, the B part three times, four times, five. And because I'd closed my eyes, because I was in the song and not in the room, I didn't catch Harriet's signal for the last go-round. Everyone ended together except me. Even worse, I'd deviated. Between the bars of my unexpected solo, when my own playing stood exposed against the silence, I realized I'd diverged from the tune. It was still "Wind Will Rove," or close to it, but I'd elided the third bar into the fourth, a swooping, soaring accident.

Harriet gave me a look I interpreted as a cross between exasperation and reprobation. I'd used a similar one on my students before, but it'd been a long time since I'd been on the receiving end.

"Sorry," I said, mostly sorry the sensation had gone, that I'd lost the wind.

I slipped out the door early, while everyone was still playing. I didn't want to talk to Harriet. Back home, I tried to recreate my mistake. I heard it in my head, but I never quite made it happen again, and after half an hour I put away my fiddle.

* * *

I'd rather have avoided Harriet the next morning, but canceling our standing date would have made things worse. I woke up early again. Debated showering to give her a different reason to be annoyed with me, then decided against it when I realized she'd stack the two grievances rather than replace one with the other.

We met in her quarters this time, up three decks from my own, slightly smaller, every surface covered with archival boxes and stacks of handwritten sheet music.

"So what happened last night?" she asked without preamble.

I held up my hands in supplication. "I didn't see you call the stop. I'm sorry. And after you told me I belonged in the closer circles and everything. It won't happen again."

"But you didn't even play it right. That's one of your tunes. You've been playing that song for fifty years! People were talking afterward. Expect some teasing next week. Nothing else happened worth gossiping about, so they're likely to remember unless somebody else does something silly."

I didn't have a good response. Missing the stop had been silly, sure, but what I had done to the tune didn't feel wrong, exactly. A different wind, as my grandmother would have said.

"Any word on what went wrong in the database the other day?" I asked to change the subject.

She furrowed her brow. "None. Tech said it's an access issue, not the DB itself. It's happening to isolated pieces. You can still access them if you enter names directly instead of going through the directories or your saved preferences, but it's a pain. They

can't locate the source. I have to tell you, I'm more than a little concerned. I mean, the material is obviously still there, since I can get to some of it roundabout, but it really hampers research. And it gets me thinking we may want to consider adding another redundancy layer in the Memory Project."

She went on at length on the issue, and I let her go. I preferred her talking on any subject other than me.

When she started to flag, I interrupted. "Harriet, what does 'Oklahoma Rooster' mean to you?"

"I don't have much history for that one. Came from an Oklahoma fiddler named Dick Hutchinson, but I don't know if he wrote—"

"—I don't mean the history. What does it make you feel?"

"I'm not sure what you mean. It's a nice, simple fiddle tune."

"But you've actually seen a farm in real life. Does it sound like a rooster?"

She shrugged. "I've never really given it much thought. It's a nice tune. Not worthy of a spot in the Memory Project, but a nice tune. Why do you ask?"

It would sound stupid to say I thought myself on a farm when I played that song; I wouldn't tell her where "Wind Will Rove" took me either. "Just curious."

* * *

"Harriet's grandson is going to drive me crazy," I told Natalie. I had spent the afternoon with Teyla and Jonah, as I did every Friday, but this time Jonah had dragged us to the low gravity room. They had bounced, and I had watched and laughed along with their unrestrained joy, but I had a shooting pain in my neck from the way my head had followed the arcs of their flight.

Afterward, I'd logged into my class chat to find Nelson had again stirred the others into rebellion. The whole class, except for two I'd describe as timid and one as diligent, had elected not to do the new assignment due Tuesday. They had all followed his lead with a statement "We reject history. The future is in our hands."

"At least they all turned it in early," Nat joked. "But seriously, why are you letting him bother you?"

She stooped to pick up some of the toys scattered across the floor. The kids drew on the table screen with their fingers. Jonah was making a Tyrannosaurus, all body and tail and teeth and feathers. Teyla was still too young for her art to look representational, but she always used space in interesting ways. I leaned in to watch both of them.

"You laugh," I said. "Maybe by the time they're his age now, Nelson will have taken over the entire system. Only the most future-relevant courses. Reject the past. Don't reflect on the human condition. No history, no literature, no dinosaurs."

Jonah frowned. "No dinosaurs?"

"Grandma Rosie's joking, Jonah."

Jonah accepted that. His curly head bent down over the table again.

I continued. "It was one thing when he was a one-boy revolution. What am I supposed to do now that his virus is spreading to his whole class?"

Nat considered for a moment. "I'd work on developing an antidote, then hide it in a faster, stronger virus and inject it into the class. But, um, that's my professional opinion."

"What's the antidote in your analogy? Or the faster, stronger virus?"

Nat smiled, spread her hands. "It wasn't an analogy, sorry. I only know from viruses and toddlers. Sometimes both at once. Now are you going to play for these kids before I try to get them to sleep? They really like the one about the sleepy bumblebee."

She picked Teyla up from her chair, turned it around, and sat down with Teyla in her lap. Jonah kept drawing.

I picked up my fiddle. "What's a bumblebee, Jonah?"

He answered without looking up. "A dinosaur."

I sighed and started to play.

* * *

Natalie's answer got me thinking. I checked in with Nelson's literature teacher, who confirmed he was doing the same thing in her class as well.

How wrong was he? They learned countries and borders, abstract names, lines drawn and redrawn. The books taught in lit classes captured the human condition, but rendered it through situations utterly foreign to us. To us. To me as much as him.

I had always liked the challenge. Reading about the way things had been in the past made our middle-years condition more acceptable to me. Made beginnings more concrete. Everyone in history lived in middle-years too; no matter when they lived, there was a before and an after, even if a given group or individual might not be around for the latter. I enjoyed tracing back through the changes, seeing what crumbled and what remained.

I enjoyed. Did I pass on my enjoyment? Maybe I'd been thinking too much about why I liked to study history, and not considering why my students found it tedious. It was my job to find a way to make it relevant to them. If they weren't excited, I had failed them.

When I got home from dinner that night, when I picked up my fiddle to play "Wind Will Rove," it was the new, elided version, the one that had escaped me previously. Now I couldn't find the original phrasing again, even with fifty years' muscle memory behind it.

I went to the database to listen to how it actually went, and was relieved when the song came up without trouble. The last variation in the new DB was filed under "Wind Will Rove" but would more accurately have been listed as "Wind Will Roam," and even that one recreated somebody's memory of an interview predating our ship. If this particular song's history hadn't contained all those interviews in which the song's interpreters sang snippets, if Harriet or my grandmother or someone hadn't watched it enough times to memorize it, or hadn't thought it important, we wouldn't have any clue how it went. Those little historic recreations weren't even the songs themselves, but they got their own piece of history, their own stories. Why did they matter? They mattered because somebody had cared about them enough to create them.

* * *

I walked into my classroom on Monday, fiddle case over my shoulder, to the nervous giggles of students who knew they had done something brazen and now waited to find out what came of it. Nelson, not giggling, met my gaze with his own, steady and defiant.

"Last week, somebody asked me a question, using the very odd delivery mechanism of my classroom walls." I touched my desk and swiped the graffitied walls blank.

"Today I'm going to tell you that you don't have a choice. You're in this class to learn our broken, damaged history, everything that's left of it. And then to pass it on, probably breaking it even further. And maybe it'll keep twisting until every bit of fact is wrung out of it, but what's left will still be some truth about who we are or who we were. The part most worth remembering."

I put my fiddle case on the desk. Took my time tuning down to DDAD, listening to the whispered undercurrent.

When I liked the tuning, I lifted my bow. "This is a song called 'Wind Will Rove.' I want you to hear what living history means to me."

I played them all. All the known variations, all the ones that weren't lost to time. I rested the fiddle and sang Howie McCabe's faulty snippet of "Windy Grove" from the recreation of his historical interview and Will E. Womack's "Wind Will Roam." I recited the history in between: "Windy Grove" and "Wendigo" and "When I Go." Lifted the fiddle to my chin again and closed my eyes. "Wind Will Rove": three times

through in its traditional form, three times through with my own alterations.

“Practice too much and you sound like you’re remembering it instead of feeling it,” my grandmother used to say. This was a new room to my fiddle; even the old variations felt new within it. My fingers danced light and quick.

I tried to make the song sound like something more than wind. What did any of us know of wind? Nothing but words on a screen. I willed our entire ship into the new song I created. We were the wind. We were the wind and borne by the wind, transmitted. I played a ship traveling through the vacuum. I played life on the ship, footsteps on familiar streets, people, goats, frustration, movement while standing still.

The students sat silent at the end. Only one was an OldTimer, Emily Redhorse, who had been one of the three who actually turned in their assignments; Nelson grew up hearing this music, I know. I was pretty sure the rest had no clue what they heard. One look at Nelson said he’d already formulated a response, so I didn’t let him open his mouth.

I settled my fiddle back into its case and left.

* * *

There are so many stories about my grandmother. I don’t imagine there’ll ever be many about me. Maybe one of the kids in this class will tell a story about the day their teacher cracked up. Maybe Emily Redhorse will take a seat in the OldTime one day and light into my tune. Maybe history and story will combine to birth something larger than both, and you, Teyla, you and your brother will take the time to investigate where anecdote deviates from truth. If you wonder which of these stories are true, well, they all are in their way, even if some happened and some didn’t.

I’ve recorded my song variation into the new database, in the “other” section to keep from offending Harriet, for now. I call it “We Will Rove.” I think my grandmother would approve. I’ve included a history, too, starting with “Windy Grove” and “Wind Will Rove,” tracing through my grandmother’s apocryphal spacewalk and my mother’s attempt to find meaning for herself and my daughter’s unrecorded song, on the way to my own adaptation. It’s all one story, at its core.

I’m working more changes into the song, making it more and more my own. I close my eyes when I play it, picturing a through-line, picturing how one day, long after I’m gone, a door will open. Children will spill from the ship and into the bright sun of a new place, and somebody will lift my old fiddle, my grandmother’s fiddle, and will put a new tune to the wind.