

Estate

by Alyson Jane

In the kitchen they discovered the instruments. A flute under the sink tucked behind a rusted silver pipe. An oboe on the floor in the pantry. And a violin across the ice tray in the freezer, now dark.

"Not ice," sister said, holding it up by the neck.

"We never had ice," brother said.

"In the summer?" sister asked.

"No. Never."

He wrapped his fingers around the flute and pulled it out with a pop as if he had plucked one rib from a whole skeleton.

"The first flute was made from mammoth tusk," brother said, brushing the metal over his lips. "Then, the tibias of people."

"Do they really use cat gut to make the string?" sister asked, fingering the broken threads.

"No. Sheep," brother said. And it was true.

They braced the instruments underneath their arms and approached the oboe together, stopping on adjacent large tiles. The pantry was empty except for the instrument, three cans of oatmeal and a crusted jar of vegetable oil.

"She couldn't have played all these," sister said.

"Just that one," brother said, head tilted towards the oboe.

"Did I play any?"

"Too young. But she bought you the violin anyway."

"And you. The flute?"

"Me. The flute."

"That must have been nice."

"Who remembers," brother said.

"No one, I guess."

"Take it," brother said, gesturing to the oboe. And she did.

