

There's No Peace In The World

by Foster Trecost

(Nulla in Mundo Pax Sincera)

Then there was the time I splurged, hoping a higher-priced phone might keep me from slamming it against the wall. She noticed it right away, the intricate scrollwork etched in the black resin, the mosaic of inlaid colors, then asked about the wall behind it. Cracked plaster, peeling paint - I considered what to say. Water damage would've been the easy answer, but I opted for the truth: "My phone rang."

As expected, these words settled somewhere beyond her reach, so she gave my comment its only sensible response: "Maybe you should turn down the ringer."

I wanted to smile but squinted instead and patted the cushion next to mine. "Come here, let me explain why I hate phones and why my father is to blame." She sat beside me on the sofa. "He was troubled," I said, because that's what was said to me. "He rarely spoke and spent most days in his study. Most nights, too." She listened with attentive eyes, but I knew she'd be confused by what I said next: "And he'd play *Nulla in Mundo Pax Sincera*. Over and over."

She lowered her head in search of a link and looked up when she found one.

"Is that solitaire?"

This time I allowed a smile. I walked to the turntable and unsheathed my album of Vivaldi arias, and let the music begin. "Sometimes he'd conduct an invisible orchestra, waving arms in erratic fashion, and sometimes he'd sit and listen. But *Nulla in Mundo Pax Sincera*, that one commanded a different reaction. From

the start he stood at full attention, motionless until the end. It went like this for a long time, then he left."

I'd thrown many phones since delving so deep, and the combination of music and memory pulled an unexpected effect. She asked why I was crying, but I didn't answer.

"I soon became his replacement. I'd sit in the study and listen to his music. One evening mother said he wanted to talk to me. I asked if I was going to see him and she no, that he'd call. I asked if I could use the phone in his study and she said I could."

At this point my companion, attentive as ever, offered her second assumption of the evening, and though more likely than the first, it was just as wrong: "And he never called and that's why you hate phones."

No, that's not why.

"When mother told me he was on the line, I rushed to the study and dropped the needle on *Nulla in Mundo Pax Sincera*, then picked up the phone. He didn't say hello or ask how I was, he only said that there's no peace in the world. He'd looked, it wasn't there, not for him."

With her final assumption, she came closer to the truth: "So phones remind you of your father, and that's why you hate them."

"That's part of it," I said, "but there's more. My dad said he could hear Vivaldi in the background and told me to keep listening, that aria was on to something. Then he said goodbye to me and mother and everyone else. Forever. He found his peace."

The music prevented a silence that would've felt more comfortable, then it finally stopped and I let the silence prevail. And there we sat, speaking without speaking, until the silence was shattered by a ring. I stood and walked to the phone, picked it up, not just the receiver but all of it, and paused to admire the artistry.

"Don't do it," she said, in a brazen display of understanding.

But I did, I hurled the phone against the wall, further cracking the plaster, then reached for the stereo to revive Vivaldi. And vowed to never buy such an expensive phone again.

