

Out of Tune-isia

"Legend has it," began Ms. Forforty, "that long, long ago in the Country of Tune-isia, there lived a magical group of forest elves who had a perfect pitch. This means they could instantly hear if a note is in tune or not, and they ALWAYS played their tiny elf instruments with perfect tuning." Alice Forforty was one of the most fun Suzuki teachers in town, and she often told her students fantastical stories like this one. "Normally," she continued, "this kind of perfect pitch is a real blessing, but for the forest elves of Tune-isia, it wasn't so. You see, the country of Tune-isia is the northernmost country in Africa. The Tune-isian people were SO excited about their country being so far north that they always played their instruments INCREDIBLY sharp. They thought this would show their pride at being farther north than anyone else in Africa. All of this out of tune playing was torture to the forest elves' ear however, because they could hear each and every out of tune note. One day the elves decided that each night they would sneak into the Tune-isian people's homes and untune their instruments. This way when the Tune-isians tried to play sharp it would sound in tune and spare the poor elves' sensitive hearing."

"One time," Ms. Forforty added, "the very proud Tune-isian musicians even came to America to perform their very proud (and very out of tune) music. They were laughed off the stage at almost every performance because the American's didn't appreciate their very sharp and out of tune playing. Some even believe a few of the forest elves stowed away to America to try to re-tune the Tune-isian's instruments before their concerts," Ms. Forforty said with a grin. "It is said that those forest elves still live in America to this very day." Ms. Forforty's class of students all laughed at this. They knew her fantastical stories were make believe, and the thought of Tune-isian forest elves sneaking to America was pretty funny.

On the car ride home from their group class, Dylan and his sister Sally talked about Ms. Forforty's story. "That's a made up story, right?" asked Dylan. Sally, who was older and liked to have a little fun with Dylan, said "I think it's real. Haven't you ever opened your viola case and found the strings out of tune?" "Yes," Dylan said with wide-eyes. "Well, how do you think that happens?" Sally asked. "It's the elves. That's the only logical explanation! Sometimes at night, I've actually seen the elves sneak into your room after you've fallen asleep and untune your strings! They open your big heavy bedroom door (creaky door), jump up into your viola case (jump up), un-tune your strings and jump right back down (jump down). They're so quick, they don't even wake you up. I've only seen it because I'm older and more mature than you and have a MUCH later bedtime," Sally finished, happy to remind Dylan that she was in fact older than him. She laughed to herself and had to admit that at times like this the "more mature" part was debatable.

Dylan was terrified to go to sleep that night. He knew the Tune-isian forest elves were just waiting to sneak into his room and untune his viola strings. He heard quick footsteps outside his door (quick footsteps) and he knew it was the elves, although it turned out to just be his cat Fluffy (cat meow) chasing a mouse (mouse squeak). Next, he heard his big heavy door open (creaky door), and he knew for sure it was the elves this time! Of course, when it ended up just being his mom popping her head into his bedroom to check on him, he felt a little silly. Later, he heard wind whistling through the air (wind whistle), and he knew the elves had opened his window and snuck in that way! If he had paid closer attention, he would have realized that his window was shut and that Sally was right outside his

door making wind noises on her violin to scare him. It sure is fun to mess with him Sally thought with a giggle (further compromising her status as the “more mature” sibling).

The next morning, Dylan had to get up bright and early for his viola lesson with Ms. Forforty. He hadn’t slept a wink, and he was feeling very tired and cranky. When he got to his lesson, barely awake, he opened his case and got out his viola. He handed it to Ms. Forforty to tune, and the strings were WAY out of tune. “My goodness, I wonder what happened here?” Ms. Forforty said, noticing how out of tune the viola was. The very cranky and sleep deprived Dylan burst into tears immediately. “It’s not my fault. It was the elves!! I stayed up all night to keep them from untuning my strings, but they must have done it somehow. I’ll never play in tune again!!!” Dylan cried with tears streaming down his face.

“Good gravy!” exclaimed Ms. Forforty. “Dylan, that was just a funny made up story I told you. The Tune-isian forest elves aren’t real.” “That’s not true!” Dylan protested. “Sally told me she saw them sneaking into my room at night! She told me they open my big heavy door (creaky door), jump into my case (jump up), untune my strings, and then jump down again (jump down)!!”

“Really, is that what she told you?” Ms. Forforty asked. She glared at Sally, who was sitting across the room waiting for her lesson. Sally looked at the floor. “Well, Dylan, I can assure you the Tune-isian forest elves are made up. It’s just a silly story I tell.”

“Then why are my strings out of tune?” Dylan asked, still crying a little bit. “Oh, there’s lots of reasons,” Ms. Forforty explained. “Do you ever accidentally bump your case when you’re carrying it? Have you ever left your instrument in the car, even though you know you shouldn’t? Have you ever forgotten to Velcro your instrument down before closing the case?”

“uhmm... maybe” Dylan said, a little guilty. Ms. Forforty continued, “well all of those things can make your instrument go out of tune, or even damage it if you aren’t careful. That’s why I teach you not to do those things”. “So it’s not the elves?” Dylan asked, calming down a bit. “Nope,” Ms. Forforty said, smiling. She pulled Dylan in for a quick hug to make him feel better. “Now, let’s get you tuned, and just remember to always treat your viola carefully, even when it’s in the case. If you do that, everything will be okay.”

After Dylan calmed down, he had one of his best lessons ever. When it was Sally’s turn, Ms. Forforty decided that since Sally had played such a mean trick on Dylan, she should work on Twinkle REALLY slowly for her entire lesson (even though she was on the first song in book 3). Dylan got a good laugh out of that.

The end