

The Distraction

He is very tired tonight as he ascends the steps to his room upstairs, but he convinces himself that he must persevere at all costs, even at the expense of his own comfort. Once inside, he ignores the cold of the winter night, forgetting that there is wood for the fireplace underneath the stairway. He touches a match to the wick of a candle on the table. The fog from his breath collects around the flame. Bundling himself in a wool blanket, he selects a book from the shelf. He seats himself on a wooden chair beside the table and begins to read.

In a concert hall across the street, the lead violin tunes an orchestra and a symphony begins. Its sound filters softly into his little room, distracting him. He tries to focus on his reading, to cut himself off from the world outside, but he cannot prevent the music from seeping through the glass of the room's only window. His attention is divided now between the music and his book. At last, his concentration destroyed, he closes the book and stares out the window into the black night. The music continues but he can no longer hear it.