

### Adieu, Thirteen

I rip the letter up, throwing the paper on the floor. This is literally so unfair. I am thirteen years old, just a girl, and Canberra expects me to write a piece to be performed at the Opera House. Why won't they give me the life I deserve as a teenager? I should be out hanging out at shopping centres, and going to parties, not dealing with official letters from Canberra.

I slump down at my study in defeat, looking through the pages of manuscript paper. I know it was *her* who did all this, *her* who caused me this...*torment*. I loathe her and her talent.

I head outside, wearing a fluffy pink coat, and dancing in the cold rain. I hum to myself, smiling at a wild kangaroo that bounds by. My house in the outback is perfect for *her* isolation.

Just as I reach the gate, I feel her coming. I writhe against myself; I can feel her hand swipe mine away, and I gasp, trying to overcome her. But it's no use...

I look up. Thirteen reached the gate, a somewhat grand achievement for her. I admire her persistence, although her disrespect infuriates me. I shake my head, removing the hideous jacket that Thirteen bought last year. The cold wind bites my bare arms, and I shiver. Winter has reached its peak today.

When I step inside, I notice the shredded, discarded letter. I feel the frustration rising within me. This is an opportunity for me to showcase my talent as a composer, let my passions guide me, and show my patriotism. But Thirteen, foolish as she is, attempted to sabotage this- not to mention the other pieces I have written. When she awakes, she destroys all my work, all the beauties I created.

In desperation, I piece the letter back together, and laminate it to keep it safe. This precious ten minutes could have been directed towards writing my new masterpiece, but because of Thirteen, I have to waste it restoring the letter to its original condition.

I sit down at the desk, and pick up my pen. This is the moment I have been waiting for. I let the notes flow from my hand, from my heart, from my mind. I can hear the flutes whistling and the violins soaring. This symphony reflects myself and my beloved Australia. The notes are part of me- the crotchets beating with my heart, the quavers soothing all my anxieties. While I am writing, the music and I are one.

I am about to reach the climax of my piece when I feel her clawing her way through me. This is new. Thirteen usually does not interrupt after I have showed her my authority in the morning. I will not let her disrupt my writing. She does not have any control over me.

I push Thirteen away, and try to write my piece again, but the notes have left me. Instead, the musical space in my head has been replaced with questions- questions regarding Thirteen that I do not want to be thinking, that I have no time to be thinking about.

I remember when Thirteen first came. It was my thirteenth birthday and I decided to leave behind my childish ways to become a composer, to let my music take priority. At first, she was kind, luring me away from music, back into my previous carefree attitude. But she has gradually grown more dominant, more manipulative, and more of a pest.

I am determined to succeed this time, to reach the end of this piece and hide it safely before Thirteen pushes me away. I need to be strong to achieve this. "Strong..." I whisper.

Then, picking up my pen, I fly away once more...

But I can feel her on my toes, on my fingers, as if she is wriggling around in my brain. It is itching, but I cannot reach the aggravation. I am trapped in my own mind, trying to fight her off.

*'GO AWAY!' I scream, dropping my pen to the floor. 'This is an opportunity that will make me nationally renowned, finally respected for my talent. It will be my gift to our country. Please, allow me to write.'*

*'Give me back my last few years of freedom.'* Thirteen hisses. *'You stole them from me, to go and become some fantastical composer and when did your chance arrive? When you're FORTY-FIVE. You're a middle-aged woman now. I could have enjoyed my teenage years, but you wasted it, and you're still not famous.'* *'What do you mean by freedom?'* I argue. *'Did you ever fit in? Who would invite you to those hypothetical parties anyway? Nobody ever accepted you because you stood out, like a tree amongst a thicket of bushes. They thought you were overly eccentric, awfully absorbed in your music day after day. They did not respect you for your talent, they merely whispered and spread rumours about you being an android, overly unnatural. You never enjoyed school, you spent every day waiting for someone to befriend you. And now, for the past few decades, you have stayed, haunting me, pestering me. If it wasn't for you, I would have been awarded more prizes, I would have received more opportunities. But because you have remained, you hindered my achievements.'*

I open my eyes and realise I am crying. The manuscript paper on the table is wet with tears, the ink bleeding down the page. Suddenly, I can see her. I can feel her drifting from me. Her face too, is stained with tears. But the flawed innocence that I previously detested has evaporated, she no longer glares at me with accusing eyes. Instead, they are soft, her eyes are warm, and I catch a glimpse of a small smile.

I reach out towards her, but she is gone. I pick up my pen, and dry my manuscript paper. I feel serenity wash over me soothingly. I have finally let it all go.