

hours in that car, always
on our way to somewhere--
soft seats, vanilla air freshener,
dusty windows and dizziness
as trees dart past like blind mice.
The sunset smears with music,
each note a flash of color:

F-sharp satin red,
B-flat cotton candy pink,
E mango orange.

We're hurtling towards the final chords,
an epic climax, *accelerando*--
the notes swell into sparks pinned
into the sky between telephone
lines for me to count.

3. K. 365 in F Minor, Allegro

By year six I have per·fect pitch

[noun, /pər'fekt piCH/]

1. the ability to recognize the pitch of a note or to produce any given note; a sense of absolute pitch.

I know it all-- piece together
notes with *legatos* and trills,
stretch rhythm, explore seas
of combinations, permutations
of sound.

It's a world I can't
escape, live without, lose;
my legs straddling
real life and music,
two tracks shuttling
into eternity where
I trust
they will never

part.

4. Girl with the Flaxen Hair

It's not fun anymore: there's
rules, expectations, pressure, perfection.
But I can't quit, can't leave behind years
of *allegro con spirito* and dedication,
of *fermatas* and frustration,
of *vivace* and passion and

my sister's just started;
I press her fingers into the keys,
wistful traces of ten years ago and

I tell myself, maybe
if I just finish Level 10,
it can be done-- I
can be done and

so I funnel in more hours,
hold my breath, plunge deeper,
but inside, I know
I'm
 drowning.

5. Prelude No. 4 in D Minor
I quit.

6. Arabesque No. 1 in E Major, L. 66
Sometimes, late enough at night,
I find myself
playing the same songs I used to:
Debussy's first Arabesque,
Haydn's piano sonata in E-flat Major--
each note resonating an unpunctuated *cadenza*.
I know it'll never be the same, but

in these moments,
suspended in my own bubble,
I remember everything: the way Dad
looked away when I told him *I want to quit*,
trimmed nails on worn fingers
cracking against smooth but harsh keys,
my sister's first piano lesson,
energico, her fingers scarcely
reaching four keys, our family spread
on the couch watching Lang Lang perform
at the China Olympics, Mom's fingers
clutching mine before each recital.

The night doesn't stop as I chase my memories
across the piano. And when I finally
emerge, 12 years
later and breathless, my thoughts
scatter and race like blind mice.

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