# WELCOME TO WHISPERTON. SHHH!

Written by

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EXT. LAWN - DAY

A silent, glistening wash of green.

With an almost imperceptible hum, black spouts emerge.

Suddenly, they spring into action, spurting water.

The classic vipvipvip chorus of sprinklers in action. Water cascades over the already dewy greenery.

Pan to reveal EMMA RUBENSTEIN (77) watching the sprinklers, hands plastered against the window glass. She breathes silently.

EXT. ROAD TO WHISPERTON

A hand-printed sign reads, "Welcome to Whisperton, ODB since 1897."

A bicycle whirs by, ratchet chain humming quietly.

EXT. WHISPERTON NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The PAPERBOY, perched atop his bicycle, speeds over the empty street. He flings his papers with expert aim ... they land silently on padded cushions.

EXT. LAWN - DAY

A MUZZLED DOG watches the paperboy. As the bicycle passes, it sees its chance, emitting a stifled GROWL and lunging forward.

A plastic chain clicks softly, holding the dog back.

Startled, the paperboy misses his mark with his throw. The paper SLAPS against the pavement.

EXT. WHISPERTON NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

The slap echoes over the silent street.

From a great distance, we see a harried OLDER WOMAN rush outside, grabbing the paper off the pavement. Obviously embarrassed, she retreats back to the safety of her house.

# EXT. VARIOUS

Faces in windows watch her flee --

EMMA. Young JOSEPH (13) and his mother ANN (33). And strange young MAURICE (27), his hair a wild frazzled mass, his spectacles thick and glassy. Obviously out of place.

The others retreat from their windows, but Maurice remains.

We follow his gaze to the end of the street ... as though he is waiting for something to appear.

### EXT. WHISPERTON NEIGHBORHOOD

At first (as usual) we hear nothing. Then, a whirring, like the bicycle from before. It grows louder, then louder still.

### EXT. VARIOUS

The others return to their windows, trying to figure out what's been going on.

Maurice looks on in delight. Clearly what he has been anticipating. He rushes to a nearby writing desk and begins scribbling on a piece of paper.

#### EXT. WHISPERTON NEIGHBORHOOD

THREE BICYCLES crest a hill, towing a trailer. The young cyclists strain to move their heavy load.

# EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Finally the cyclists reach Maurice's driveway. They turn in and brake to a stop.

Working in unison, they pull out an an enormous package, about the size of one of the boys. They set it down.

Maurice greets them in his bathrobe (resembling a dinner jacket), and tips each of them with a silver dollar. They smile at him and depart.

Maurice wheels out a squeaky hand-cart and wedges it under the box. The box tips onto the hand cart with a thud. Maurice glances around to make sure he's not in trouble, then wheels it inside.

### EXT. VARIOUS

The onlookers retreat from their windows. Show's over.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE

A quick survey of Maurice's shelves as he frantically struggles with his box reveals that he is a collector of music boxes.

Each beautiful artifact sits on his shelf, presumably untouched.

We track past the shelves to Maurice, who has opened the box to reveal --

A dwarf piano. It looks very old. Positively ancient, its keys browned and crusted. It has wheeled feet, which Maurice uses to roll it into place. It fills the space naturally, as though it was always intended to be there.

Maurice kicks a bunch of junk on the floor out of the way, and sets down the bench. He goes to his writing desk and takes out the paper, which we now see is SHEET MUSIC.

He sets it on the music stand and begins to PLAY.

The sound is of a CEMBALO, an old design of a harpsichord. The music is inspired by Bach, the melody leaping from one hand to the other. Maurice plays joyously.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE

The music leaks out into the street.

### EXT. WHISPERTON NEIGHBORHOOD

The dog perks up its ears and pays attention.

EMMA, JOSEPH and ANN return to their windows and silently press their hands to the glass. What's going on?

For a long moment, they listen, their faces full of fear, uncertain what to do. Then Joseph releases his mother's hand and steps out into the street. Emma covers her ears, horrified by the cacophonous noise.

Ann tries to stop Joseph, but he pushes her aside and runs to Maurice's house.

# EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE

Joseph stands outside Maurice's house, lost in the music.

Ann sends a frantic text message to someone on her cell phone -- we see the switch is hard-wired to 'vibrate'.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE

The piece comes to an end. Maurice smiles, contented, and rests his hands on the sounding board.

EXT. WHISPERTON - NEIGHBORHOOD - DUSK

Night falls on Whisperton. All the houses are dark -- until Maurice's house lights up with a crazed dancing glow.

EXT. ROAD TO WHISPERTON - NIGHT

A PRIUS zips silently past the Whisperton sign, careful not to go over 15 mph so as not to engage the engine.

### EXT. WHISPERTON NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

A dozen or so residents of the neighborhood assemble to watch the Prius appearing. They wave and give silent cheers.

The Prius rolls to a stop in the middle of the street. WILHELM WHISPER (65), mayor of Whisperton, emerges, wearing his ceremonial sash and bearing his ceremonial cane.

EMMA, JOSEPH and ANN, in matching bathrobes, step forward to shake Wilhelm's hand. Wilhelm indicates for them to follow.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maurice sleeps in his bedroom, surrounded by lava lamps (the source of the strange light). A soft KNOCK at the door, barely audible.

Maurice jumps up, instantly awake. Only one person ever dares to knock in Whisperton.

Maurice quickly throws on a slightly ratty Whisperton bathrobe, checking his appearance. The KNOCK returns, more insistent. Maurice rushes downstairs.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maurice opens his front door to find Ann, Joseph, Wilhelm and Emma waiting. Maurice smiles weakly and invites them in.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE

Maurice's living room is extremely cramped with all these people in it, but they manage, sitting on various furniture.

Emma gives a fierce glare at Maurice's music boxes on the shelf. She pats her muzzled dog, which groans contentedly.

Wilhelm raps his cane lightly. Everyone pays attention.

He opens his mouth as if to speak, but no sound comes out. Still, everyone understands ... Whisperton citizens are expert lip-readers. For us, subtitles must suffice.

> WILHELM Well, Maurice. You have been a bad citizen today.

Wilhelm turns his gaze to the cembalo.

WILHELM (CONT'D) Is this the source of the disturbance?

Maurice nods. Wilhelm inspects the cembalo, looking it up and down, scratching his well-groomed beard.

Wilhelm presses his hand against the keys, tentatively. They strike, creating a nasty chord. Everyone winces and shudders.

Wilhelm looks at Maurice and shakes his head.

WILHELM (CONT'D) Unthinkable. This is against all regulations. Get rid of it.

Maurice shakes his head, holding up his hands pleadingly. Wilhelm shouts, actually raising his voice to an audible whisper.

WILHELM (CONT'D) I have spoken!

Maurice looks cowed ... everyone else looks terrified. Even the dog shrinks down. But Maurice overcomes his fear. He motions to his ears ... listen. Just listen.

Maurice sits at the bench and produces his sheet music. Knowing everything rides on this. He must play perfectly. Hands poised, he begins.

The song is the same as before. It is exquisite, his timing is perfect. Maurice revels in the joy of the music.

But the others shrink away, horrified at the sudden, overwhelming noise.

After a few moments, Wilhelm can take no more. Wilhelm bats Maurice's hands with his cane, stopping the sound. It makes a light whipping sound.

Maurice is hurt, physically and emotionally.

Ann breathes a sigh of relief. Emma nods, pleased with the ferocity of his response. Joseph is saddened and confused.

Wilhelm gestures to the cembalo. His attendants descend upon the instrument. Maurice tries to intervene but his neighbors restrain him. Joseph cries silently.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The offending instrument has been placed on the lawn. Wilhelm dons earmuffs and nods regally.

Unable to move, Maurice watches in horror as POLICEMEN smash the cembalo with muffled fuzzy hammers.

It emits small groans and shrieks, crying out for help. Maurice can do nothing.

At last, the cembalo lies in pieces.

The policemen quietly load the destroyed instrument into the trunk of the Prius. Wilhelm mouths to the neighborhood --

# WILHELM

Justice has been served!

And he drives away.

Maurice can't take it anymore. He breaks down and cries on the lawn -- a soundless, silent cry that would nevertheless rend the heart of anyone who heard it. Joseph, holding Emma's hand, tries to comfort Maurice. Emma holds him back. With a slight smacking of flesh, Joseph yanks his hand away. Emma is shocked at this display.

Joseph puts his arm around Maurice, helps him up. After a moment, Ann joins Joseph, also helping Maurice.

Joseph stands in front of Maurice so Maurice can see his lips move.

JOSEPH Come with me ...

INT. JOSEPH'S SHED

Joseph opens the door to his shed to reveal a well stocked woodshop with soundproofing everywhere. Maurice's jaw drops in amazement. So does Emma's.

> EMMA What *is* this?

Joseph mouths to Maurice --

JOSEPH You are not alone.

Joseph motions for Maurice to sit at his workbench. Together they begin sawing a piece of wood. Ann quickly goes and gathers more pieces. Emma, however, leaps at the sound.

> EMMA Joseph, you mustn't!

JOSEPH Are you staying or going?

Emma pouts, but she shuts the door to the shed, closing them all inside.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The quiet sounds of nature -- the woods at night. Compared to Whisperton, it's downright loud.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

We watch the sun come up in time lapse -- as the first rays of light pierce the sky, a strange music begins.

The same piece we heard before, but louder, somehow amplified.

INT. MAYOR'S HOUSE

Across town, the mayor is having breakfast. He, too, hears the music. He is so surprised he drops his teacup and it shatters on the floor. The mayor squeals in horror!

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

The music is louder here, echoing across the neighborhood. Ann is standing at her window, listening -- and smiling.

Emma is at her window too -- pouting.

INT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

In the old space where the cembalo once stood, Maurice now has a beautiful, pristine grand piano, fashioned last night in Joseph's woodshop.

Joseph's maker's mark is engraved on the side of the piano.

Maurice plays and plays, happy as can be.

EXT. MAURICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Joseph and the dog sit on the lawn together, enjoying the music. The dog tries to howl, but it is muzzled.

Joseph removes the dog's muzzle, and it emits a HOWL! We crane up into the sky, looking down on the boy and the dog on the strange, patchy lawn, smiling together.

THE END