

## **The Last Time She Sees Him**

By Lucie Moeller, North Vancouver

The first time she sees the boy, she is rushing down the sidewalk, arms full of bags, head full of thoughts about work, and how she is going to get home in time, and what to make for dinner.

The boy and his cello are moored to the sidewalk, watching the crowd flow past them like water around a stone. He searches every face. She calls him a boy, but really he is beyond that, evidence of adulthood in the sparse growth on his chin, the boldness of his cheekbones, the depth of his gaze.

When she sees him again, he is sitting on a pail turned upside down. He hugs the curves of the cello to his narrow body, studies the music book in front of him on the sidewalk, splayed open by his foot. She rushes past the cellist, mind lodged on her boyfriend who looks at her less each day, absorbed by the newspaper, or the television, or the food on his plate. She wonders if, at 35, she is already over the hill.

Today he is there again. His eyes are closed. He pulls his bow across a string of the cello and releases an infinite, solitary note. The note moves through the crowd like a tide, slows them down until everything is still. And when this happens, she walks over to the open cello case, drops in a bill, looks at the boy until his eyes open, and then says,

Thank you.