

## PINO PETRUZZELLI READS “THE HEART IN THE TIN BOX” by Morena Perdiali - EPILOGUE

So she had become his wife. Riehle, she was his wife. She played, and he had blood in his throat and the hairs of his bow between his eyelashes. “And where is your wife now?” He did not answer, he only said: “Riehle is music, Riehle is in the wind”. No one spoke. “Riehle was expecting a baby, they took her while she was washing at the river and I, you see, I have no songs that can be sung, they took that too. I cannot sing, I cannot play, music is the air and the air is Riehle”. He came out of the kampina, my family swore he was not crying. “I cannot play, I cannot play, do you understand? You hold my violin, in the violin is my heart”. He barely waved with his fingertips and my great-great-grandfather stood like that, with that violin in his arms and a flame of tears inside his throat. Riehle, she could barely imagine her, maybe she was Yosef’s age or maybe a few years younger, but she could almost see those big eyes when the gates of the lager had closed in on her. “Save him, save him and show my heart to your child, tell him it was the war and that Riehle bent it to save me but I cannot use it if she is now waiting for me. If Riehle is now in the wind’. My great-grandfather could not find the words and took the violin with him, he put it in a corner and every day he passed a hand over it, he smiled with sad lips. Every day he searched for words for the mint-eyed boy and his lavender-haired wife, for that kiss that had not been enough to scare away the lagers, to throw away that great devouring. I don’t know if he ever found them. I do know that he gave it to my father and told him: ‘Tell. Tell your children about that heart, about the heart in the tin box’. There is still an old violin in the house, the case is made of wood and the strings are all broken. The hairs of the bow are broken in half and scorched, they hang like untied, dusty nerves. There is a small sheet of music folded into a heart inside a tin box, a yellow sheet of music that smells of mould and that I have never dared to open. A score like the moon, a story that lives in the wind, that has its eyes hanging on the edge of a shell. Which, one night, in history, lost its words.

