

STEL AND THE VIOLIN

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ACT ONE: NIGHT

FADE IN:

1.1.a. INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

A school bell rings. The opening credits play as children mill around in the halls of Highview Public School. The camera focusses on a little girl (STEL) wearing her backpack (a rugged old army pack with badges on it). She runs down the stairs and pushes out the school doors. The opening credits end.

1.1.b. EXT. SCHOOL YARD - DAY

STEL leans against the fence of the schoolyard. She is in focus and the yard is out of focus through the fence behind her. You can hear the sound of children screaming playfully. STEL's clothes are dirty and she is wearing an oversized ball cap on her messy hair.

Three girls (JANICE, MARGARET and RYAN) in pretty dresses are talking in the schoolyard. The camera focusses on these girls and Stel goes out of focus.

JANICE

You moved here from the city? That's so cool.

RYAN

Really?

MARGARET

Yea, it's the city!

The girls walk to a bench behind Stel.

RYAN

Who's that? (gestures to STEL)

MARGARET

(With disdain) Her? (Looks at JANICE, the ringleader)

JANICE

She's a loser. Look at that ugly hat.

(Mean giggles.)

MARGARET

I heard that she doesn't even have a mom.

JANICE

Ya she died like four years ago.

RYAN

Really? That's... sad.

The camera focusses back on Stel. She frowns, turns her head and sighs. A Raven cries and flies off. The girls walk away. Ryan looks over her shoulder at Stel with embarrassment.

1.2. EXT. PEMBROKE STREET BRIDGE - DAY

STEL is walking fast with an angry expression. She walks past the Post Office, past City Hall. She gets to the bridge. She looks over the edge at the rushing water and closes her eyes, taking a few deep breaths. She keeps walking, slower this time. Someone smiles at her as she goes by (FAIRY actor in street clothes). She smiles back shyly. She turns up Victoria Street and to the front doors of the library. There is a lot of street noise in the background. She pauses and opens the door.

1.3.a. INT. LIBRARY - DAY

The camera faces STEL from inside the library. The doors thud closed behind her and it is completely silent. STEL smiles. She walks by the front desk. The librarians smile at her. She goes to the stacks and pulls out a book. She goes up to the top floor where she cozies up in her favourite armchair and settles in to read.

1.3.b. INT. LIBRARY - EVENING

STEL is almost done her book. It's dark outside now. There is a stack of books beside her. The camera looks down from STEL's POV from the balcony. The door of the library opens. It's RYAN and her mum.

RYAN'S MUM

We just moved to town and Ryan would like to get her library card please.

LIBRARIAN

Welcome to Pembroke.

RYAN'S MUM

Thank you! Ryan loves to read.

V/O LIBRARIAN

Oh does she? That's lovely... Just sign right here.

RYAN is smiling at the librarian. The camera is looking from the perspective of the front door and you can see STEL watching from the balcony. RYAN turns and looks at STEL. STEL smiles and then turns back to her book. RYAN smiles back and then turns to sign her library card.

V/O RYAN'S MUM

Thanks so much. (Door thuds closed).

STEL continues reading her book. After a beat she looks up at the clock. It's getting late, so she packs up her books and heads out.

1.4. EXT. STEL'S HOUSE - EVENING/NIGHT

STEL'S BROTHERS are hooting and hollering playing outside. The house is small and modest. DAD pokes his head out the front door. (DAD wears a red flannel shirt and jeans, he's in his late 30s, and his personality is something like Paul Rudd. He wears sadness at the edges of his smile.)

DAD

Supper!

The boys continue to play loudly, ignoring him.

DAD

Jacob! Sam! Stella! Skyler! Supper!

JACOB

No!

DAD comes outside and picks up JACOB by the back of his pants. SAM and SKYLER jump on him. He is tired, but he laughs.

DAD

(Growls like a bear)

Get inside and eat!

The boys run up to the front porch.

SAM
What's for supper?

DAD
Your favourite.

SKYLER
What's his favourite?

DAD
Whatever I make. (He tousles SAM's hair.)

1.5. INT. STEL'S HOUSE - EVENING/NIGHT

Dad brings a steaming pot over to the table. There is a pile of paper plates in the middle of the table and a pile of cutlery. SKYLER turns on the TV.

The other boys jump into their chairs at the table and grab their dishes and dig into the pot as DAD sets it on the table.

DAD
(Yells) Turn it off Skyler. It's dinner time.

SKYLER comes over and sits down. DAD sits down. They all dig in. It's Kraft Dinner with frozen pea/carrot medley mixed in.

DAD notices that Stel's seat is empty.

DAD
Where's Stel?

1.6. EXT. STEL'S HOUSE - EVENING/NIGHT

STEL walks up to her house. The lights are on and she hears loud boys inside. She opens the creaky screen door and goes in.

1.7. INT. STEL'S HOUSE - EVENING/NIGHT

SAM and JACOB are making a box fort in the living room. SKYLER is playing a video game. STEL tilts the pot on the kitchen table. It's empty. She picks out a few noodles and eats them.

DAD walks in.

DAD
You snooze you lose, kiddo.

STEL wipes her finger around the inside of the pot and licks it. She shrugs.

DAD
Where were you?

STEL
At the library.

STEL goes into the fridge and pours herself milk. She drinks it.

DAD
Cool. Read anything good?

STEL
Yea.

She has a milk mustache.

DAD laughs.

STEL goes into cupboard and gets out peanut butter and crackers.

DAD
Are you good? (He gestures to the PB and crackers.)

STEL nods.

DAD
Thatta girl.

He tousles her hair and goes into the living room.

1.8.a. INT. STEL'S HOUSE -FOYER - AFTERNOON

SAM, JACOB, STEL and SKYLER are getting dressed to go outside. It's a mess of boots, jackets, butterfly net, unread mail, etc. STEL is carrying a book in her hand and her backpack on her back and goes outside first. Stel had her books. Sam has a skateboard. Skyler has a fidget spinner. Jacob has a stuffy dog on a leash.

1.8.b.

They burst out of the house and down the street. Pickups.

A shot of the skatepark, Sam is skateboarding. Stel watches for a while. There are some other girls skateboarding, including Ryan. Stel sits on the side and reads her book.

1.9. EXT. STEL'S HOUSE -PORCH - AFTERNOON/EVENING

The kids return home. Skyler is leaning against a tree in the yard with his hands over his eyes, counting down from twelve. Jacob runs away laughing, pulling the stuffed dog on a leash behind him. Sam hides somewhere else. Stel climbs under the porch of the house.

STEL crawls under the porch. It's dark and weedy under there. She crawls deeper. It gets really dark. STEL pulls a headlamp out of her backpack. The only light shines from the headlamp, and the audience sees a wooden door in the dirt. STEL pulls it open and reveals a dark tunnel. (Staged at Festival Hall-the backstage ladder. Here's how we do it: show STEL's face as she opens the door, then show the top of the ladder in the darkness; turn out all the lights and all we see is a narrow perspective of the ladder lit by STEL's flashlight.)

1.10. EXT. TUNNEL - DARK

STEL climbs down the ladder. She stops for a moment as she hears the haunting melody of a violin playing somewhere below. She keeps climbing. Night sounds join the violin. She gets to the bottom in the darkness and feels around. The camera stays on her face and hands. She finds a door handle and opens it. It's dark on the other side. She steps through and closes it behind her.

1.11. EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

STEL is in a forested area. She hears the loud sound of snoring. There is a large rock with someone body-painted to match it, their face painted a slightly more red hue to stand out from the rock.

THE SNORING ROCK

Snooooorrrreeeeee... Snooooooooooooooooorrrreeeeee

STEL

Excuse me..

THE SNORING ROCK does not wake up.

STEL

Excuse me!

THE SNORING ROCK skips a beat in the snoring, but continues.

STEL

Wake up please! I need help!

THE SNORING ROCK

Snorrreee... Snort. Wha??

STEL

Excuse me, but I'm lost. Where am I?

THE SNORING ROCK

You're in the Glade of Memories of course.

STEL

Oh.

I hear music. (The violin is still playing.)

THE SNORING ROCK

That's the violin.

STEL

It's beautiful.

THE SNORING ROCK

I'm exhausted, little girl. I need my beauty sleep.

STEL

Oh. Sorry for waking you up.

THE SNORING ROCK

Just go ahead and sing me back to sleep.

STEL

What?

THE SNORING ROCK

You woke me up, you sing me back to sleep!

STEL sings a lullaby. The rock goes back to snoring.
STEL follows the sound of the violin.

1.12. EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

STEL enters a forest glade where children are dressed as animals— Bear, Fox, Wolf, Raccoon, Lynx, Swan, Raven, Deer. They run, dancing in the forest between the trees in eerie twilight around her.

1.13. EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

STEL continues walking and comes across a tiny stone house in the forest. The house is a tiny handmade roundhouse with many chinks between the stones. Warm light pours out the cracks as though there is a little fireplace inside. The forest is dark blue-green tones, with twinkling yellow lights in the trees imitating fireflies (or those can be added later digitally). There are three children chasing one another - one is LYNX, one is RACCOON, and one is FOX.

LYNX
Rawr! Hold still!

RACCOON
Leave me alone!

FOX
Maybe we should just leave him alone...

RACCOON
OWWWWWWWW! (He yelps in pain and looks at his tail which is full of burrs.)
He cries.

LYNX rolls her eyes.

LYNX
Stop your yowling and come here!

FOX lunges in and grabs RACCOON and brings him to LYNX.

LYNX bites the burrs to get them out.

LYNX
OUCH! (she hisses)

FOX laughs. Ke-ke-ke-ke!

STEL smiles from the bushes where she is watching.

FOX

Let me try.

FOX paws at the burrs.

FOX

Yow! (He jumps backwards)

STEL reaches in her old ragged bag and pulls out little silver scissors. She pushes out of the bushes.

STEL

Let me help you with that.

LYNX, FOX, and RACOON jump away from her. LYNX is eying her warily with her back arched, FOX eyes her curiously, and RACOON cries louder with pain.

LYNX

We don't need your help.

RACOON

My taiiiil! (wails loudly)

LYNX

Shut up! (to RACOON)

FOX

You're such a baby.

STEL

I know what to do! I'm an Earth Ranger.

Stel points to the badge on her bag. She comes closer carefully, her knees bent, gentle. The animals look suspicious but they let her approach.

RACOON is wailing. STEL takes his tail gently and cuts out the burrs with the silver scissors.

RACOON grabs his tail in his hand and inspects it, strokes it. He hugs his tail to his chest with his eyes closed and snuggles it.

RACOON

Thank you.

STEL

You're welcome.

She puts away her scissors.

LYNX

We could have gotten them out ourselves.

FOX laughs his silly laugh.

STEL yawns.

STEL

I'm so tired.

LYNX

You can stay in our house. (Her tone is grudging.)

FOX runs around STEL in a wiggly circle. The animals lead her to the house.

1.14. INT. STONE HOUSE - NIGHT

The animals tuck STEL into bed. The house is simple, with cozy blankets and pillows. Rustic pots and pans hang on the walls, and wee tools.

STEL

Goodnight.

The animals wish her goodnight and curl up to sleep cuddled up to her. RACCOON cuddles a little trash pile happily.

ACT TWO: DAY

2.1. INT. STONE HOUSE - MORNING

STEL yawns and stretches out her arms. She looks around. The animals are gone. She climbs out of the bed-nest. It's morning. She listens and hears the faint sound of the violin. She puts on her backpack and continues on her journey.

2.2. Pickups of STEL walking through the forest.

2.3. Pickups of Stel walking through a golden cornfield. Six beautiful fairies with flower wreaths in their hair perform a lyrical dance. Pickups and music.

2.4. EXT. SHORE - DAY

STEL walks down a small path and sees water (the Ottawa River). There is a woven driftwood wall and a bear sitting slumped over by the river's edge. The BEAR has a broken fishing rod in his hands.

STEL
What's wrong?

The bear turns to her, his huge eyes sad. He holds up the fishing rod and sighs heavily.

STEL
Is your fishing rod broken?

The BEAR wipes his nose dramatically along his arm and nods.

STEL pulls off her backpack and finds duct tape.

STEL
Tah dah!

BEAR
What is it?

STEL
Magical tape.

BEAR
Magical tape?

STEL
Dad always says duct tape can fix anything.

BEAR
Really?

STEL
Well except the screen door. And the handle on the fridge. And the pipes under the kitchen sink. (laughs) You should have seen when he tried to fix those with duct tape. Mom was... (suddenly sad) ...so angry.

STEL swallows hard. She never talks about her mother. A raven cries in the forest.

The BEAR snuffles.

STEL shakes out of it.

STEL
Let's get you fixed up.

She rips off a piece of duct tape.
The BEAR holds the rod tight and shakes his head.

STEL
I only want to help.

He shakes his head.

STEL
Well you can hold it while I fix it then.

She fixes the rod.

STEL
There.

The BEAR lifts the rod in the air. He softly practices casting.
He looks at STEL with a huge open mouth smile. He hugs her.

BEAR
Thank you!

STEL
You're welcome.

The BEAR gets out his lure to start fishing again.

STEL
I'd better be on my way. I really want to find that violin.

BEAR
Take this boat. You'll get there faster.

STEL
Thanks!

STEL gets into the old boat. She puts on a ragged old life jacket and pushes off from shore.

2.5. EXT. MUSKRAT RIVER - AFTERNOON

STEL floats along the Muskrat River. No paddling required as the river has its own slow momentum.
No sound capture. Music plays, the camera operator will be in a motor boat behind to film.

STEL floats by an abandoned fishing shack in the middle of the river. A child dressed as RAVEN looks out at her from the waterlogged shack, turning her head, bird-like.

STEL floats down the river, it's beautiful.
Pickups of forest along the river.

2.6.

The boat turns into a lagoon with steep mud sides. There are tin shacks and apocalypse-looking shelters in the mud cliffs. Wild looking children walk along the shore, crouched over a campfire, climbing a tree, etc.

(It's Lord of the Flies meets Pan.)

The camera catches them from Stel's perspective as the boat floats by.

They shout and cheer and shake their spears and growl at her.

2.7. EXT. MUSKRAT RIVER - AFTERNOON

STEL docks the boat at a delta in the Muskrat River (by Pansy Patch Park, the place where the voyageurs used to take a break on the log run to smoke tobacco and eat a snack). She gets out of the boat and leaves it behind.

2.8. EXT. TREE GLADE - AFTERNOON

There is a FAIRY draped beautifully on a tree. BABY FAIRIES are sitting around in the scene.

STEL
Hello. Are you a fairy?

BABY FAIRY 1
Yes!

BABY FAIRY 2
Yes!

BABY FAIRY 3
Yes!

FAIRY
Yes.

STEL
I'm Stel.

BABY FAIRY 1
She's got no wings!

BABY FAIRY 2
And she doesn't glitter!

FAIRY
She is a human!

STEL
Do you hear that music?

All the fairies tilt their heads.

FAIRY
The violin.

STEL
I'd like to see it.

FAIRY
Keep going. You're almost there.

BABY FAIRY 1
Is she coming to the party?

BABY FAIRY 2
Is she?

BABY FAIRY 3
Are you?

STEL
What party?

FAIRY
Shhh children. (to the baby fairies.)

FAIRY

Keep going, and the world you know, the world you knew, and the world you will know will become one.

STEL

Thank you. (politely, as she leaves)

2.9. EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

The violin music is getting louder. STEL continues walking through the forest.

Eventually she reaches a beautiful set of ornate golden doors surrounded by flowers in the forest. She approaches slowly, or perhaps the video is slightly slowed for effect. She reaches up to open the door but it won't open. She listens to the door. By this time not only the violin sings to her; there is a whole orchestra. She can hear laughter and conversation too, as if there are many people on the other side. She pushes harder.

RAVEN appears.

STEL

Oh hello. Could you please tell me how to open these doors?

RAVEN

I could.

STEL

Thanks...

RAVEN

But I won't.

STEL

Why not?

RAVEN

You don't deserve to know!

STEL

What do you mean?

RAVEN

Well do you have an invitation?

STEL

Oh. No.

But I've been hearing this violin all day..

RACCOON with a washboard, FOX with a banjo, and LYNX with a beautiful necklace come up to the doors.

RAVEN

Good evening.

ANIMALS IN UNISON

Good evening Raven.

LYNX sees STEL.

LYNX

Oh it's you. Hello.

RAVEN

This young lady is trying to get into the party.

FOX

She's with us.

RACCOON

Yes she's with us. She helped me earlier today.

RAVEN

Oh, well then... Welcome.

She gestures to the door with her wing.

The animals step aside. STEL pushes open the door.

2.10.a. INT. BALLROOM - AFTERNOON

Inside the golden doors there are five pairs of animals dancing. BEAR, FOX, RABBIT, BEAVER, SWAN, RAVEN, DEER, RACCOON, WOLF, LYNX. They are wearing ball gowns and suits, with gorgeous headpieces indicating what animals they represent. They are dancing a waltz as an orchestra plays.

(We have access to a real orchestra of adults... not sure what to do with them/how to dress them...)

Beautiful chandeliers hang from the ceiling/trees. The camera captures different wide angle shots. The FAIRY is there.

Pickups of the BABY FAIRIES giggling and whispering. Pickups of the beautiful costumes as dancers sweep by waltzing. STEL walks slowly through the crowd. One pickup of STEL looking at a stain on her shirt and smoothing it down, noticing how beautiful everyone looks.

After 2 minutes or so of this, the violin track enters the waltz. It is the haunting violin refrain... "I Know That You're Mine." Possibly we can add a Lana del Rey style slow jazzy vocal track along with the violin depending on the composer.

The Waltz finishes and the dancers part as STEL looks up to see a lady dressed all in white, glimmering and sparkling. She is playing the violin. The orchestral music finishes and the dancers face the LADY IN WHITE. The LADY IN WHITE finishes her violin solo.

2.10.b.

STEL reaches out, almost touching the LADY IN WHITE's skirt. She is close to tears.

STEL

Are you an angel? Sometimes I dream about angels.

The LADY IN WHITE touches STEL's cheek with a laugh. The Raven is standing behind her, blurred in the corner of the frame, not in focus by there.

LADY IN WHITE

Come here. Would you like to play?

STEL

I don't know how.

LADY IN WHITE

I can teach you. (hands STEL the bow.)
We can learn the one I just played.

STEL

(Looks at her hands)
Oh no. My hands are so dirty.

2.10.c.

The LADY IN WHITE takes Stel by the hand over to a bubbling fountain/waterfall. She lifts her skirts and wades in.

LADY IN WHITE

Come on!

STEL wades in too and they splash around. STEL washes her hands. Pickups of STEL's hands in the water. LADY IN WHITE takes off STEL's hat and washes her hair. The LADY IN WHITE lifts her out of the fountain and dries her hands and hair with a towel. She braids STEL's hair and 'boops' her nose. All slow motion with super soft light.

2.10.d.

LADY IN WHITE
Now let's give the violin a try.

STEL smiles and nods.

Slow motion pickups of LADY IN WHITE placing STEL's fingers in correct position, showing her how to draw the bow, etc.

STEL plays "I Know That You're Mine" all the way through.

LADY IN WHITE claps her hands.

LADY IN WHITE
Great job. I'm so proud of you.

STEL smiles.

LADY IN WHITE
Stel it's getting late. Your father will be wondering where you are.

STEL
Do you know him?

2.10.e.

LADY IN WHITE closes her eyes. Brief flashback. Hazy, dreamy. Their wedding in a cornfield.

LADY IN WHITE
I do.

2.10.f.

LADY IN WHITE walks over to a hole in the hedge, door in the wall, etc.

LADY IN WHITE

This will take you right where you need to go.

STEL hugs her tight.

LADY IN WHITE

Oh! (remembering.) One more thing.

LADY IN WHITE walks over to the RAVEN, who hands her a small key in her beak.

Take this. (Hands the key to STEL.)

STEL

Thank you.

LADY IN WHITE

Go on.

And please... don't forget me.

STEL leaves.

2.11. EXT. STEL'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

STEL pops out the other side of her porch into plants and flowers. Her hair is braided and her clothes clean. She finds the book beside her. She picks it up and goes into the house.

2.12. INT. STEL'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

DAD

Hey kiddo. Back at the library?

STEL doesn't answer, just hums absentmindedly.

DAD

Why don't you go put that upstairs and come help me with dinner?

He dumps a bag of frozen peas and carrots into a pot.
STEL walks down the hall.

DAD (calls)

Nobody butters toast like you...

STEL continues walking down the hall.

DAD o/s

Sam! Come set the table!

2.13.a.

STEL walks to a door in the hallway that is tightly closed. She opens it carefully. You see dusty boxes inside. It's a storage room. STEL walks in, unsure of why she is here. In the far corner, there is a hospital bed.

2.13.b.

Brief flashes of LADY IN WHITE in the bed in a bathrobe looking very ill. Bottles of pills. STEL turns away so she doesn't have to look at it.

RAVEN sits in the corner out of focus, or perhaps just the costume sitting on a chair in a corner.

2.13.c.

STEL sees a dusty black case. She picks it up and tries to open it. It's locked. She pulls out the key from the LADY IN WHITE. She tries it. It fits. She unlocks the case and there is a violin inside. STEL strokes it softly. She carefully lifts it out and begins to play.

2.13.d.

Near the end of the song, DAD comes into the room behind her, followed by SAM, SKYLER and JACOB.

DAD (choked up)

Stella... That was your mother's favourite song.

STEL

Dad, could I take music lessons?

DAD smiles through his tears. He draws her into his arms, and the boys join for a hug.

DAD

There's going to be a lot more music in this house from now on.

SKYLER opens up a box.

SKYLER

What's in here?

DAD

Those are pictures of you when you were a little jellybean.

(Happier) music plays. The kids open boxes and DAD points things out to them as the credits roll.

Possibly, if it works cinematically, we see the RAVEN and LADY IN WHITE through the window walking away in the distance.

FADE OUT.