

Bedtime stories about music.

3 stories to read aloud at bedtime, each with its own picture and a calm, sleepy ending. Written for ages 3 to 8.



The Cello After Rehearsal

about 3 min

Three Quiet Sounds for the Toy Theater

about 3 min

The Piano Tuner's Last Note

about 3 min

Reading times assume a slow bedtime pace of about 110 words a minute. Every story is also free to read online at pimlo.app/bedtime-stories/music.



The Cello After Rehearsal

Every Tuesday evening, the community orchestra rehearsed in the old hall on Station Road. There were violins and flutes, a trombone, a teacher who played the triangle and a grandmother on the drums. And there was a cello, a big warm brown one, that belonged to a woman called Rosalind.

Tonight they had played the same piece three times, slowly at first and then a little faster, until it sounded right. The cello had played the low part, the part that sits underneath all the others like a floor. When the last note faded, everyone was quiet for a moment, and then they clapped for themselves.

Then it was time to pack up. Rosalind loosened the bow, so it could rest too, and wiped the dust from the cello's strings with a soft cloth. She laid the cello in its case, on the velvet, and tucked the bow into the lid. Click went the first catch. Click went the second. Click went the third.

She carried the case outside on her back. The evening air was cool. Rosalind walked home along Station Road, past the bakery and over the little bridge, and the cello rode along behind her, swaying gently with every step. Inside its case it was dark and soft, and it could hear the faint hum of the streets, like music played very far away.

At home, Rosalind stood the case in the corner of the living room, where it always stood. She opened the catches, just to check, and the cello lay there, warm from the walk. "Same time next Tuesday," she said, and closed the lid. The lights went off. And the cello rested in its case, still holding the last low note somewhere deep in its wood.

The end. Goodnight.



Three Quiet Sounds for the Toy Theater

Edie and Hal had made a toy theater out of a big cardboard box. It had red curtains cut from an old scarf, a stage painted to look like a forest, and paper puppets on sticks: a fox, an owl and a small girl in a yellow coat. Tonight they were putting on their very first show, and the audience was Dad, two teddies and the cat.

The play was about the girl in the yellow coat finding her way home through the forest. It had plenty of noise in the middle: the fox barked, the owl hooted, and Hal banged a saucepan lid for thunder. But when they got to the end, Edie stopped. "The ending needs sounds too," she said. "Quiet ones. Sounds for going home."

So they went looking. Hal tried crumpling paper, but it was too crackly. Edie tapped a spoon on a glass: ting. "That's a star coming out," she said. That was the first sound. Then Hal rubbed his hands together, slowly: shhh, shhh. "That's the wind in the leaves," he said. That was the second.

For the third sound, they couldn't decide. A whistle was too loud. A bell was too bright. Then Edie had it. She took a big, slow breath and let it out very softly, hhhhh, like someone falling asleep. "That's the girl getting home," she said. Hal nodded. It was perfect.

They played the ending for Dad, the teddies and the cat. The girl in the yellow coat walked out of the forest. Ting, went the star. Shhh, shhh, went the leaves. And hhhhh went the girl, home at last, as the scarf curtains slowly closed. Dad clapped very quietly, so as not to spoil it. Then it was bedtime for the actors too, and Edie and Hal went to sleep with the theater on the floor between their beds, curtains closed until tomorrow.

The end. Goodnight.



The Piano Tuner's Last Note

Once a year, Mr. Pell came to tune the piano in Winnie's living room. He had a black bag full of strange tools, a tuning fork that hummed when he tapped it, and very good ears. Winnie sat on the arm of the sofa and watched. It was nearly bedtime, but this was a special night.

Mr. Pell lifted the lid of the piano, and Winnie saw inside for the first time: rows and rows of strings, and little felt hammers waiting to tap them. He played one note, listened, and gently turned a pin with his tool. "Can you hear the wobble?" he asked. Winnie listened. There was a little wah-wah-wah in the note. He turned the pin once more, and the wobble went away.

He worked slowly along the whole piano, from the deep low notes that rumbled like thunder far away to the high ones that sounded like raindrops. One note, listen, turn. One note, listen, turn. Outside, the sky went dark and the streetlights came on. Winnie's mom brought Mr. Pell a cup of tea, and it went cold because he was too busy listening.

At last he closed the piano and played a few soft chords, warm and round, to check his work. The piano sounded the way the living room felt on a winter night, with the lamp on. "One more," said Mr. Pell. "Let's listen to the last note all the way to the end."

He pressed one key in the middle, just once, and kept his finger down. The note rang out across the room, past the bookshelf, past the window, past the sleepy cat on the rug. Then it grew softer, and softer, and softer still, until Winnie couldn't tell whether she was hearing it or only remembering it. "Gone," whispered Winnie. "Gone to bed," said Mr. Pell, and smiled. And Winnie went up to bed too, humming that one note very quietly to herself until she fell asleep.

The end. Goodnight.