

## **Raging Against the Machines**

**By**

**Emma Hughes**

Most of my day is located in my town's city centre, past rows of perfectly straight, worn cobblestones, past armies of pigeons, and past street musicians.

They're constantly on a rotating cast, the musicians. Fighting for the good places next to the town hall, or near Tesco. They're impressive. Many are middle-aged, obviously used to performing, and they carry themselves with the buoyancy and grace that only comes with time.

Last week, there was a new face. A young girl. She couldn't have been older than twelve. She was playing a violin. White tape marked the fingerboard, and her bow was too tight and her strings were out of tune - a rookie mistake to bring a wooden instrument into freezing weather.

I had shopping to do, so I circled behind her and went into Boots.

I came out an hour later, she was still there. Her playing had become feeble. The wrist holding the violin had become crooked, and her entire body was curled nervously into itself. There were two 50p coins in her case, but nothing else.

This little girl was staring at the ground, and she barely moved her bow. She was playing *Ode to Joy*, and her F# was too high, the strings trembling on her tiny violin.

On the chilly street in downtown Chester, this girl was trying to speak the language of musicians. She wasn't very good yet, and she probably felt sick to her stomach.

When AI generates a violin solo, it is perfect the first time.

I don't care. She reminded me of my friends and myself learning to play together at the ages of ten. I had to give her money. I had to. I saw myself in her. I cannot see myself in a computer. It's just a fluorescent screen staring back.

I've played the violin for nine years, played everything from pop to classical to grunge (yeah, weird right?). Playing has slowly, painfully, become easier. There was affirmation that I was doing the right thing, and I wanted to be that little girl. I needed her to stay with the violin. I needed her to see that playing the violin made her a part of the revolution against AI. That we were on the same team.