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The Dark Virtuoso

The Personality That Makes Art From Pain

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Chapter 1: The Signature — the Dark Virtuoso at a Glance

The Telltale Manner

Before anyone speaks, the work has already spoken — and the libretto must open with the honest fact that makes this type so magnetic and so expensive to love: the Dark Virtuoso arrives preceded by the work — the novel, the album, the portfolio, the monologue, the perfectly-cut sentence at the dinner table — and the work, arriving, is beautiful in a way that worries the people who know its source — the beauty carrying a weight the audience feels but cannot name, the aria's collected first response, uniform across every nocturne: this is wonderful — what happened to you? — and the Virtuoso's answer, also uniform, a smile with the entire volume inside it: why does something have to have happened? — and the room laughing, and the question, deflected into the work, landing — the signature in one exchange: the hurt, converted to form, offered to the room as a gift — the conversation itself an exhibition. And the libretto's x-ray of the manner: the self is most present at the exact moment the self is most absent — the Virtuoso talking beautifully precisely because the raw thing underneath cannot be talked about plainly — form as the only door the founding scene left open — and the aria's founding finding written into the ink the whole book lives in: the shaping hurt less than the having — the sentence the child discovered and the adult has never once needed to revise.

And underneath the beauty runs the tell the type's intimates report and the audience never sees: the unfed hour — the Virtuoso after the performance — the standing ovation, the reviews, the applause arriving, and the artist, in the wings or the parking lot, empty — the aria has collected the scene in every nocturne: the reading that moved four hundred people, and the reader, ninety minutes later, alone in a diner, untouched by any of it — the applause, arriving, lands on the work, and the work, the whole file will show, is the wound's shape — and the applause cannot reach through the form to the self that made it — the aria's arithmetic of the signature: the Virtuoso moves rooms full of strangers and cannot be reached by one — the beauty, the dark elegance, the wound converted and displayed, and the artist standing beside it, unfed, hungry in a way the applause was never shaped to answer — the entire volume in the libretto's driest line: the Virtuoso is the only type in this cadenza whose gift is the proof of the wound — and whose applause is the proof it didn't help.

The Backstory Signature

The libretto holds one origin for this type, and it is the aria's most ironic founding scene: the wound was real, and the gift was born in it — the libretto must walk it slowly, because the scene explains everything the world misreads as mere talent. The

child was hurt — the aria keeps the particulars various on purpose, because the anatomy is uniform: a house that broke; a love that left; an illness that isolated; a season of cruelty at the age when the self is being built — and the child, in the aftermath, discovered the thing that defines the type: the hurt, shaped, hurt less — the grief given a score — the poem, the drawing, the song at the piano, the story whose ending could be rewritten — and the discovery, made in a child's own hand, never once set down, never once revisited: the pain is material — the wound, in the hour of shaping, stops being a wound and becomes a studio — and the aria's tenderest entry on the scene: the discovery was correct — the shaping genuinely worked; the child found the one lever that moves grief; the libretto has verified it in every nocturne since — the hour at the bench was the one hour the young self was not bleeding — and the second discovery, the one that becomes the sigil: the shaped thing, shown, is loved — the teacher's praise for the sad poem; the parent's tears at the song; the classmates, suddenly attentive, at the monologue — the wound's first audience, arriving — and the ruling, made in the child's breath: the hurt is the only thing I have that the world wants — the whole biography is that ruling at work.

And the aria must enter the scene's clause with the care this nocturne demands, because the clause is where the shadow begins: the shaping hurt less than the having — not nothing — the alchemy converts the pain to form, but it does not close the wound — the studio is anesthesia, not surgery — and the child, grown, has spent thirty years converting and never once healing — because the shaping works, the wound is kept — the libretto's founding paradox, stated plainly: the Virtuoso's gift was built by the wound, so the sigil protects the wound like a foundry protects its ore — the masterpiece is the receipt of a wound, and the wound, the whole engine runs on it — and the aria's correction, held gently, because it is the nocturne's whole growth: the child was right that the pain was material; the child was wrong that it was the only material — the error understandable in a nine-year-old, catastrophic in a forty-year-old, and the studio chapter's whole project: the studio is not the wound; the studio is the craft — and the craft, ten chapters early, can work other rooms.

The Childhood Album

The album opens the way this album always has, and this nocturne's is the cadenza's most telling artifact: in every year there is one photograph, and it is almost always the same one: the child, mid-creation — hunched at the piano nobody else plays; the notebook, carried everywhere, spine cracked, guarded — the aria has audited every nocturne, and the finding is uniform: the child is most visible making — and the album's most common image of the child otherwise: elsewhere — the gaze, distant; the seat, at the edge of the family photograph, half in the frame — and the libretto's first entry beside the album: the notebook is the tell — the aria has learned to check for it in every nocturne, the object the child never let anyone read and never once put down — the private ledger of the shaping, the wound's account book, kept from the world and by the world — the studio, portable, and the door, locked from inside.

The album's most telling photo is the one nobody chooses: the performance — and the aria must describe the scene it captures in every nocturne, because the frame

holds the nocturne's whole paradox: the child, on a stage or at a recital or in a classroom, performing the shaped thing — the sad song, the prize poem — and the audience, moved, applauding — and the child's face, mid-applause, in the libretto's most reliable detail: not glad — composed, courteous, already elsewhere — the aria's sharp entry beside it: the applause arrived and the child did not eat — the audience clapping for the wound's shape while the child, holding the wound, stood there unfed — and the album's quietest line: the adults watching, mistaking composure for maturity, saying the sentence the libretto has collected in every single case: so talented — so mature for her age — and the aria's correction, entered carrying the care the album is owed: the maturity was anesthesia — the child was not composed; the child was shaped, the way the grief was shaped, into a form the room could applaud — the childhood spent performing the wound for rooms that praised the performance and never once asked the performer to dinner.

And the album closes, as it always does, on the closer the series knows: the child already the virtuoso — the adolescence organized around the studio: the craft, or the voice, or the page, becoming the one room the young self governed — and the talent, real, outpacing the peers by a distance the teachers noted and the child banked — and the moment the shaping became the identity: the aria's collected scene, uniform in every nocturne: the young Virtuoso, asked by a mentor what the type wanted to be, answering with the sentence the entire volume will spend ten chapters unpacking: I want to make something true out of what happened to me — and the album, gently, records what the child could not: the sentence is magnificent, and it is a contract — the self, assigned to the wound's conversion, forever — and the libretto's founding arithmetic, entered beside the last photo: the child built the cadenza's most beautiful instrument on top of a wound that never once got closed — the studio, seated over the cellar, and the whole house, the album now shows, was built to store what was never taken out.

The Type at a Glance

Energy: intensity — the type runs on material: the wound, the feeling, the depth — and the libretto's honest spec: the Virtuoso's energy peaks in the shaping hour, the studio at midnight, the flow state the type describes as the only peace it knows — and the calm year, the aria notes, is where the type is lowest: the good season arriving, and the artist, inexplicably, unable to work — the sigil reading peace as a supply problem.

Ambition: the masterpiece — the type does not want fame's crown or the room's applause, though both arrive; the type wants the true thing made — the work that converts the whole wound, the receipt so complete the aria is finally balanced — and the aria's dry note: the ambition is pursued by descent — the type digs, and the masterpiece, promised at the bottom of the mine, is the one depth where the ore ran out.

Vanity structure: inverted and load-bearing — the mirror is not the self's admirer; the mirror is the studio window — the type's self-regard attaches to the craft, never the

person: the Virtuoso will believe the work is good precisely to the degree the self is not — the humility about the person and the ferocity about the work, in the same breath — and the libretto's x-ray: the inversion is the armor — the self, priced out of the market early, moved all its value into the only room that paid, and the aria's quiet note: the type's characteristic self-deprecation is true and false at once — the person, genuinely unexamined, because the person was never the project; the craft, genuinely extraordinary, because it had to be.

Loyalty: to the work first, and to the wound's witnesses second — the Virtuoso's loyalties are real and few, held with a depth the shallow world cannot match: the old friend who was there in the founding season; the mentor who praised the first sad poem; the duet partner who read the notebook — and the aria's sharp note: the loyalty's spine is shared material — the type trusts the people who were there when it happened, and the court that assembles later is kept, forever, at the studio's door.

Weakness: the healing — the Virtuoso's whole structure collapses at one sentence: you could let this go — the offered closure, arriving, is processed as a threat to the supply — and the aria's anatomy of the collapse: the counselor, ghosted mid-progress; the peace, sabotaged; the wound, defended with the type's own best vocabulary — the libretto's collected defense, uniform in every nocturne: the work needs me like this — the sentence that turns the cage into the studio's foundation and makes the locksmith the enemy.

Unspoken need: to be loved unconverted — the one experience the sigil has priced out of the market: the affection that arrives at the person — the self held, not the work held, the wound witnessed without being mined — and the aria's central line about the nocturne: the Virtuoso will not voice this need aloud, cannot name it aloud, because the naming would concede the work has been the toll both ways — and the entire volume will spend ten chapters walking toward the sentence: the people who clapped were applauding the transformation — the love, when it finally comes, arrives unedited.

The Type in Five Situations

At a party: the Virtuoso is the late light — the corner of the kitchen, the one conversation, held at a depth the party was not built for — and the aria's tell, sharper under observation: the type performs anyway — the dinner-table sentence, cut and polished, the anecdote turned with a dark elegance that hushes the room — and the guests, moved, going home with a line of it — and the Virtuoso, going home unfed, the whole gift spent on strangers in a kitchen, the notebook in the coat, waiting.

In a new job: the Virtuoso is the quiet brilliance — the first weeks, unremarkable; the type's work, arriving, undeniable — and the aria's tell: the portfolio, when it lands, carrying the weight — the colleagues, unsettled by how much is in it: there is something under this work — and the type, courted by the institution, staying exactly as long as the institution lets the intensity live — the office that asks for brightness loses this one inside a year.

Under sudden pressure: the Virtuoso deepens — the crisis is native weather: the type was built in one — the room, scrambling, and the Virtuoso, calm in the exact way the childhood album taught, converting the emergency into form: the plan, written; the grief, spoken perfectly at the funeral; the crisis, narrated — and the aria's honest due: the type's crisis command is real, the anesthesia works under fire — and the tell, sharper under observation: afterward — the crisis, gone, and the Virtuoso, writing about it for months, the emergency over in a week and in the work for a decade.

In a boring meeting: the Virtuoso is elsewhere — the notebook, out; the phrase, chased; the room, gone — and the aria's tell, the one the type's managers report in every nocturne: the distance, magnetic — the Virtuoso's absence being deeper than other people's presence, and the meeting, sensing it, offended and fascinated — and the libretto's dry line: the type does not doodle; the type drafts — and the page, at the meeting's end, holding something better than the minutes.

On holiday: the Virtuoso suffers the quiet — the good week, arriving, and the sigil, starving for material by day three, doing the thing the aria has watched in every nocturne: inventorying — the old wounds, browsed; the notebook, reopened to the early pages; the peace, eaten into small anxieties — and the libretto's sharpest tell: the fight, picked — the aria has timed it: day four, the calm vacation, and the Virtuoso, stirring a small conflict out of nothing, the supply, restored — and the type's own collected sentence, offered honestly, the shadow's whole confession: I write better when it hurts — I don't know why I did that — the aria does: the mine, re-opened, on schedule.

Not to Be Confused With

The nearest neighbor on the shelf is the Consumed Maker (Volume 16) — the personality that lives to make — and the confusion is the world's most understandable, because both types are found in studios at midnight, both ship work that matters, and both would die without the workbench. The separation is the fuel: the Consumed Maker is fed by the making itself — the process, the shipping, the practice as identity — the Maker's joy is in the verb, and the wound, if any, is incidental to the work; the Dark Virtuoso is fed by the conversion — the making is the furnace, but the ore is the wound, and the work is the receipt — and the test, the aria's cleanest: watch each type in a good year. The Maker, happy, ships more. The Virtuoso, happy, ships nothing, and calls it a block — the aria's hinge, entered dry: the Maker makes to live; the Virtuoso lives to convert — and the Maker's block is a supply-chain problem, and the Virtuoso's block is a peace problem — which is why the growth chapters treat them with opposite medicine, and the world, confusing them, prescribes each the other's cure.

The second neighbor is the Radiant Performer (Volume 11) — the constitution that lives for applause — and the confusion lives in the shared spotlight: both types shift rooms, both are praised, both are magnetic in front of an audience. The separation is the destination of the praise: the Performer needs the applause to land on the self — the response is the meal, the audience the mirror, the performer offstage a person in

the kitchen, relieved; the Virtuoso's applause lands on the work and cannot reach through it — the form is the wall the praise cannot cross, and the artist, standing behind the work, is unfed by design — and the test, in the room where both types might be standing: watch the hour after. The Performer, glowing, working the crowd, eating the night. The Virtuoso, in the parking lot, already gone — the aria's hinge, the chapter's sharpest: the Performer performs to be seen; the Virtuoso performs to be said — the first wants the room's response; the second wants the room to hold the wound — and the applause that feeds the one is the exact applause that misses the other, which is why the Virtuoso can win the ovation and lose the evening, nightly, for a career.

The third neighbor is the Relentless Avenger (Volume 9) — the personality that fights so it never happens again — and the confusion is the deepest, because both constitutions are built from the wound, both were founded in the same season of hurt, and both turned the hurt into the self's assignment. The separation is the direction of the conversion: the Avenger converts the wound into a war — the pain aimed outward, at the world's cause of it, the never-again contract with a finish line; the Virtuoso converts the wound into a form — the pain aimed inward, at the page, the score, the object — the war has no equivalent, and the contract has no finish line, because the material must keep arriving — and the test, the aria's most decisive: ask each type what healing would cost. The Avenger, honestly: the mission — but the mission, finished, frees the self. The Virtuoso, honestly: the work — and the wound, closed, ends the mine — the aria's hinge, entered carrying the evenness both are owed: the Avenger fights so it never happens again; the Virtuoso writes so it never has to stop happening — and the growth, when it comes, is the same surgery for both: the wound, closed, and the self, discovered to have been there the whole time, unassigned and intact.

The Held Note

The signature the audiences know without naming, opened first because it governs the type's whole craft: the held note — the Dark Virtuoso's mastery of withholding — and the aria's evidence, uniform across every subject: the pause, placed (the punchline, waited for until the room needs it more than the teller does); the reveal, saved (the bridge of the song, arriving at bar forty, worth more for the thirty-nine before it); the confession, metered — the one true sentence per interview, issued at the end, after the performance of ease has lowered the room's guard — and the note's mechanics, which the chapter must state as the sigil's first law: the type's childhood trained a single skill above all others — timing — the delivery of the dangerous thing at the only moment it can survive — and the adult, so trained, holds everything a half-beat longer than the room expects: the answer, the argument, the affection — the finding beneath the note, the one the cost chapter prices: the held note, so powerful, is exhausting to sustain — the self that withholds for effect begins to withhold from habit, and the aria's flat count, run across the mature files: the subjects who could not stop holding the note outnumber, three to one, the subjects who learned to let it fall.

The Encore Habit

One further signature, logged by every audience this type has ever held, because it prices the stagecraft's public face: the encore habit — the Dark Virtuoso, having emptied the room, returns for one more — and the evidence, gathered from every reading, recital, and dinner party in the nocturne: the set, closed, reopened (the fifteen minutes of material the audience did not ask for, delivered better than the material it did); the goodbye, extended (the goodbye itself, so polished, becoming the night's longest piece — the host's dry count: "the exit speech ran longer than the set") — and the habit's mechanism, which the chapter enters as the held note's twin: the encore is not vanity — the encore is hunger — the applause, so needed, is never quite enough to close on, and the type, standing in the one room where the wound pays, cannot choose to leave — and the signature's cost half, priced where the ledger carries it: the encore habit, played nightly, costs the virtuoso the exit everywhere else — the goodbye at the funeral, the resignation letter, the last conversation with the dying friend — all of them, in the nocturne's transcripts, held past the point of music — the chapter's closing line: the type who cannot end a set cannot end anything else, either — and the cadenza's flat finding: the encore, so generous to the room, is the performer's most expensive generosity, paid for nightly, in the only currency the sigil accepts.

Chapter 2: The Core — Creation as Alchemy

Every engine in this cadenza is a childhood solution that worked, and the Dark Virtuoso's is the aria's most genuinely miraculous solution wearing the aria's most quietly dangerous maintenance contract. The founding scene is the wound given a score — and the libretto must pace it slowly, because the scene explains everything the world misreads as mere darkness. The child was hurt — the aria keeps the particulars varied on purpose, because the anatomy never changes: the house that broke; the love that left; the illness that isolated; the cruelty at the age when the self is being built — and in the aftermath, the child found what every wounded child reaches for and only this one found: a lever — the poem, the drawing, the song, the story — and the discovery, made in a child's own hand at a desk no adult was watching: the hurt, shaped, hurt less — the grief, given a score, could be carried — the ending, in the story, editable — the child in the page, safe in a way the child in the room was not — and the aria's founding finding set down in the ink the entire volume lives in: the shaping hurt less than the having — the sentence that will stand, unrevised, for thirty years.

And the alchemy was real — the libretto enters it with the respect this discovery is owed, because the aria refuses the cheap reading that the whole thing was avoidance from the start. The shaping worked: the hour at the workbench was the only hour the young self was not bleeding — the flow state, arrived at by necessity, is the child's invention — the attention, lifted off the wound and poured into the form, and the wound, unattended, quieting — the aria's verification, carried across every nocturne

since: the technique is real, ancient, and effective — humans have done this since the first funeral song — the Virtuoso did not invent the alchemy; the sigil is simply the one who specialized in it — and the child who found that pain is workable material was right, and the discovery saved the child's life in the plain sense: the aria holds more than one case where the notebook was the only reason the season was survived.

But the scene has a second clause, and the libretto must enter it with equal care, because the clause is where the gift becomes the nocturne. The shaping hurt less — not nothing — the studio is anesthesia, not surgery: the conversion moves the pain into form, and the form holds it — the wound, in the hour of shaping, stops bleeding and starts existing — and it never once closes — the alchemy has no closing move; it was never designed to have one; it was designed by a child in an emergency, and the emergency, in the child's plan, never ended — and the aria's founding paradox, stated plainly: the discovery that saved the child is the same discovery that keeps the wound — the shaping works so well that the sigil protects the source — the masterpiece is the receipt of a wound, and the whole engine, grown, runs on the receipt being repeatable — the libretto's dry line about the paradox: the Virtuoso is the only type in the cadenza whose cure and disease are the same verb.

The mechanism, grown, works exactly as it did at nine, and the libretto can state it in one loop. Something hurts — the old wound, stirred; a new one, arriving — and the self turns to the studio — and the shaping begins: the feeling, selected; the metaphor, found; the form, drafted, and the pain, in the drafting, converted — the heat moving out of the self and into the work, the weight becoming a thing, carried, set down, held up to the light — and the payoff, the aria's most reliable high in this cadenza: the finished piece — the hour of completion, the wound's shape standing outside the self at last, the artist free of it for an hour — the aria has collected the state in every nocturne, described in the same three words every time: lighter, colder, alive — and the state is real, and the state is the sigil's whole reward — and the price, hidden in the loop's fine print, the entire volume in one line: the freedom lasts an hour, and the wound, still there, is now organized — catalogued, formalized, kept — the receipt filed with the injury, and the injury, filed, staying.

And what was the engine for? The libretto answers with the tenderness owed to every founding scene: the child was solving for a way to hold the unholdable — the grief, adult-sized, delivered at a child — and the shaping was the only container the house had — the aria's most delicate finding, identical in every nocturne: the conversion was never chosen over healing — healing was never on offer; no adult brought it; the child, alone with the lever, pulled the lever — and the aria's verdict on the child is unconditional, the same verdict it gave the wound itself: the solution worked, and the child who found it was a genius of necessity — a nine-year-old who invented a working algebra of pain deserves the word. The verdict on the adult is the nocturne's whole argument, and the libretto says it without decoration: the door that rescued the child has become the only door the adult will open, and the room behind it — the studio, the work, the receipt — has been decorated so beautifully that the adult has never once checked whether the wound still needs holding — and the whole growth of the nocturne, arriving eight chapters early so the type can practice standing in it: the craft

that converted the pain was never the wound's property — it was the child's property — and a craft that can hold grief can hold anything: the love, the boring Tuesday, the joy the sigil has never once been able to afford — and the aria's most quietly radical line about the nocturne: the studio has no requirement on its door that the material bleed — the ore was never the mine's; the hands were, and the hands, the whole file will show, still work in every room the self was locked out of.

The Transposed Key

The core keeps one further law, entered whole because it is the alchemy's actual mechanism: the transposed key — the wound, moved into a different register before it is played — and the libretto's inventory, taken across every nocturne in these annals, is the chapter's cleanest exhibit: the divorce, transposed into a comedy set (the marriage, unrecognizable in its new key, funnier than it ever was survivable); the father, transposed into a novel's villain (the reader, meeting him, never once knowing he is real and recent); the diagnosis, transposed into an album's sixth track — the key change, in every case, is the alchemy's whole trick: the pain cannot be erased, so it is moved — up a register, out of the first person, into a form where it can be looked at — and the core's finding, which the studio chapter will need: the transposition is real work — the moved wound genuinely heals faster in the new key — but the original key is never played — the aria's flat count: not one subject, in the whole nocturne, could perform the wound as itself, in the first person, unaccompanied — the law's closing line: the virtuoso has transposed everything except the one piece the sigil keeps in its original key, unpublished — the wound about the wound.

The Unplayable First Person

The core chapter keeps one further law, entered last because the subjects discovered it only when the archive asked for it: the unplayable first person — the libretto, closing the files, requested one thing the whole nocturne had never contained — the wound, told plainly, in the original key, unaccompanied — and the request, run across every living subject, drew the same silence: the type, so fluent in every other register, cannot finish the sentence — the rehearsal tapes tell the whole story: the subject, asked to speak the wound as itself, beginning — and the sentence, aborted at the first clause, transposed mid-breath (the grammar shifting to the second person — you know how it is when — and then to the audience — people think that — and then, within two sentences, to the material, landing polished) — and the law's mechanism, which the aria must state as the sigil's deepest clause: the first person is the one key with no arrangement written for it, because arranging it is the act that saved the child's life — the wound as itself is the one piece never taken out of the case — and the exhibit's closing line: the virtuoso, who can play anything put in front of them, has one song in the case, forty years old, that the hands have never once taken out — and the studio chapter, the whole file will show, is the slow learning to carry it to a chair, and open the case, and let it be heard in the key it was written in.

Chapter 3: The Instrument — The Score

Take the Virtuoso's tool off its wall and it is exactly what it looks like: a score — the wound shaped into form, pain converted to material — and the libretto must disassemble it honestly, because the tool is the aria's most genuinely beautiful instrument and the most quietly misused. The mechanics run in three moves, uniform in every nocturne. First, the selection: the wound, chosen — the feeling, located in the chest, and the decision, made in the first minute of studio time: this one — the fresh grief or the old cellar stock, and the sigil, when the shelves are empty, choosing the old — the aria's dry note: the Virtuoso is the only type in this cadenza that shops its own history for raw material, and the shopping is called inspiration. Second, the transformation: the pain, worked — the truth, turned; the event, distilled; the distance, built — the form's whole function is altitude: the wound, at ground level, unbearable; the wound, at metaphor's height, holdable — and the craft's true product is not the beauty, the libretto notes; the beauty is the byproduct — the product is distance. Third, the presentation: the form, carried out into the light — the reading, the post, the recording, the exhibition — the wound displayed in armor, the audience receiving the shape and never the source — and the aria's line about the three moves, entered dry: the score is a delivery system for the unspeakable — the unsaid, said; the unshown, shown; and the raw thing, kept, always, one room behind the form.

The instrument has a range, and the libretto has mapped it across every nocturne. At full range, the score is public: the novel that reviewers call unflinching; the album everyone knows was about the divorce; the special that makes a thousand-seat room laugh at the worst year — the wound, converted at scale, feeding strangers — and the aria's honest entry: at full range, the instrument is magnificent, and the libretto honors it — the Virtuoso at full range is the reason art exists; the aria will not pretend otherwise — at mid range, the score is social: the dinner-party story, cut and polished; the letter, written instead of the conversation; the caption, haunted — the intimates receiving the form of the pain instead of the pain, and knowing it — and at its lowest range, the score is private: the notebook — the aria's most common artifact, present in every nocturne — the wound, worked with no audience at all, the shaping done for the anesthesia alone — and the libretto's sharpest finding on the range: the instrument does not degrade as it shrinks — the notebook pages are often the truest work the type produces, because at the lowest range there is no one to perform the distance for — the pain, shaped in the dark, shaped honestly — and the aria's dry note: the world is only shown the top of the range, and the type is only fed by the bottom — the two ends of the instrument never meet, which is the nocturne's whole tragedy in one spec sheet.

The maintenance schedule is the chapter's honest center, because a score, unlike a wound, must be kept — and the Virtuoso's keeping is the aria's most melancholy procedure. The instrument requires inventory: the wounds, catalogued — the aria has collected the stockroom in every nocturne: the early notebook, reread; the old letters, kept in the drawer the hand knows in the dark; the anniversary dates, marked in the body if not the calendar — and the sigil's standing instruction, never posted: do not

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aiman Sterling is the author of The Archetype Series -- a library of personality portraits drawn the way literature draws characters: the great types of human temperament, recognized at a glance, understood in depth, and followed from childhood wound to mature strength.