

My Daughter, Practicing the Cello

Sound slithers out
from under the closed door
to her teenage bedroom
as she winds her way slowly
up the serpentine spiral
of a scale, her horsehair bow
drawing long notes out
of the instrument the way
a snake charmer's flute
uncoils a length of cobra
from a woven basket,
coaxing it out bit by bit
and then easing it back
down the way it came. In
and out of keys she glides,
ascending and descending
and, ultimately, distilling
the oft-venomous world
of an adolescent down into
an orderly series of notes,
something she can exercise
some control over and,
in time, even tame.

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