

## SILENT MUSICIAN

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MORGAN'S STOMACH SEEMED TO BE A SEPARATE entity by itself, floating within him as he took slow shuffles towards the main theater of the music hall. He shifted his head down, letting his mud-colored hair obscure his face, focusing on the velvet carpet. The heat from the crowd around him felt like sunlight, uncomfortable and too heated for him. He sometimes ran into people, but he just muttered a few words and passed on, trying to focus towards the end goal – having finally fulfilled his dream of going to the Music Hall.

The Music Hall was always the house on the hill for Morgan, like the idea of a family adoption back at the orphanage. With the gilded sculptures, lights constantly brimming in the evening air; it stood opposite of the graveyard in location and design. It was so foreign, like some of those exotic lands that Jamie would talk about them visiting when they were a child. Those dreams never came to fruition; however, this was his chance to finally fulfill a dream that was unrelated to Jamie. All he had to do was keep walking forward, to get into the main theater.

The main theater made the breath escape Morgan's lungs, making him feel like he stepped into a world above his own. The walls of the theater were filled with gilded statues, perfectly imperfect figures frozen in various performance. Men, women, and children, all were featured beneath the painted starry sky on the ceiling. The very air seemed foreign in the room as he was shoved forward in the mass of people, he felt like he was a meteor part of a shower he saw just once as a child.

He took a seat in the middle of the theater, granting him the perfect view of the stage. The stage was nearly empty, only a single piano under the light, the background a crimson curtain with silver as bright as starlight sewn into them. Morgan took a deep breath, feeling the excited air enter his lungs, feeling part of a crowd – a sensation foreign to him, being the last time he felt it so far in the past. He could feel his shoulders bump with that of a burly gentleman to his left, trying to get his child to sit still as they bounced around. The Music Hall, despite its fantastical appearance, was built for everyone, and yet it was Morgan's dream to come here... and here he is.

The audience began to hush and quite down, and when Morgan looked back to the stage, he saw

a man begin to approach the piano on the stage. He didn't recognize the man, he didn't even know what kind of performance the ticket was for – he got it off of a chance at the loss of another. Because someone's future was stopped, his future took a turn that he didn't expect. He watched with anxiety, his eyes fixated on the performer as he took the stage, his bald head shining the light like a lake during a clear night.

The man stretched his fingers, then brought them down, crashing into the keys like the shovel hitting the earth. His fingers tumbled over each other, each note playing a different sound, combining to form a song that felt like it was telling a story with no words. Morgan was entranced, he couldn't move, couldn't blink, he could only watch as the man's fingers danced across the keys... and then he faintly saw another set of hands pulling the man's fingers along.

He saw the faint outline of hands pulling the man's hands across the keys, the performance growing stronger, more enticing. Morgan felt the audience around him catch their breath at the strength of the performance, but Morgan caught his breath for a different reason – he could see the silhouette of a different man on the piano bench.

The first thought to enter Morgan's mind was how handsome the silhouette appeared, with the brown hair mirroring that of the ashes and wood in a fire, a regal face that seemed like a single firefly within the night. The man wore a suit, with gilded edges that aligned with that of the music hall – Morgan was reminded of Jamie, with the captivation the man seemed to provide. However, another thought entered his mind... that the man sitting there was a ghost, like the horror

stories read to him as a child.

Nobody seemed to have any idea about the ghost appearing on the stage, not even the performer himself. The performer's face was as crimson as the curtains behind them, he was breathing heavily from the pure energy of the performance. Visible, gleaming sweat was dripping down his head, as he pushed forward into the song, the climax of the rising notes making it hard to breath as Morgan hung on to the notes themselves – despite the knowledge that the ghost was the one leading the performer this entire time.

With a final triumphant flare, the performer's fingers were slammed by the ghost into the keys, bringing the entire Music Hall to silence. Morgan felt himself panting and sweating as much as the performer, and before he knew it, he was clapping along with the crowd. Just beneath the surface of sound, just single chord seemed to be played, a musical laughter filling his ears. ✱