

ACCOMPANIED

BONNIE LACY

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The piano vibrated as I sat on the bench in front of it.
I hadn't put my hands on the keys.

Maybe it was the washer in the next room, going into spin cycle.

Or a semi truck lumbering past my house outside.

Later I sat reading in a chair, my back partly turned to the piano, but in my peripheral vision, the piano keys flipped up and down—ping, ping, dong.

Wha?

I faced the instrument directly.

The keys did a piano wave—treble end to the bass. Butta-butta-bong—all the way down.

I held my breath.

I wasn't even rattled. I knew it was my imagination. I have a great imagination.

Nothing had happened.

I hadn't heard a thing.

The keys hadn't moved.

I turned away and opened my book, becoming immersed in the chapter.

There.

I heard ... I heard the faint tinkle of a melody skimming across the keys, right to left, left to right.

I rotated my chair and faced the piano again, book still in my hand, finger holding the place in the story.

I waited.

I blew a big breath up, bangs flying off my forehead.

Nothing moved and I heard ... nothing.

Okay.

I could play this game.

I stood and slid the chair clear around, until my back was to the piano.

Wasn't gonna get the best of me.

I sat. Stretched. Ahhh. My feet straight out in front of me, crossed at the ankles. I sipped from my tea.

The story drew me in again, page after page.

I licked my finger and the moisture caught and flipped the page.

My fingers followed each line, as the characters bumbled through the scene.

Soft plunk.

I flipped a page.

Another plunk.

The plot intensified. I dug in. The story exploded in my senses. Each word spoke to my brain and heart, creating streets and rooms and characters. I felt each word, lived it, ate it. No skimming now.

I focused on each word.

But again, I heard a flicker of notes.

Turned the page.

Another note.

I smelled the burned coffee described in the story. The smoke permeated the air around me.

A riff floated behind me, rising in crescendo.

I turned my head part way, listening with my good ear.

Quiet.

I stretched my eyes to look behind me, but detected no movement.

I sat for a moment, still engaged in the agony of the chapter.

Powerful book, as each word suggested a background soundtrack in my heart.

I lingered there for a moment, resting in that power, the shadowed vision of the scene painted before me, but could not stay away any longer.

I opened the book and a flicker of a broken chord played behind me.

I held my breath and stiffened my back, my head at attention.

The silence dripped like honey, covering the pause.

The story pulled at me again and as I became immersed in the pages, the notes flew behind me.

I caved in.

Chords pounded.

My finger flew across the page.

Arpeggios. Ripples.

Pages turned.

Melodies accompanied the pictures developed on my mind's panoramic screen.

Crashing, thunderous rolls of song outlined the words trailing off the pages into view.

It rained.

It poured.

Chords pounded, each branch crackled and smoking beams crashed to the ground.

Notes swirled around me, encircled me, caressing each word, opening each syllable to new meaning, new power.

Pages flipped to the flow of the music, faster and faster, until I could read no longer, but I sat back and watched the panoramic scene playing out before me.

I grinned at the humor.

I marveled at the beauty exploding like fireworks over water.

I closed my eyes to absorb each note, each chord. Each word.

It stopped abruptly.

My eyes popped open and I was in my living room, my back still to the piano, the book fallen to the carpet.

I swiveled my chair to face the piano and as I placed my feet on the floor, my shoes sloshed into the carpet. I patted my chest and my hand stuck to my wet shirt. My hair dripped onto the leather-bound book below me.

A dominant chord sounded, the keys visibly down.

Another chord, the keys changed.

It waited.

I slowly picked up the book, shaking the water droplets off

...

The piano responded with a light trickle.

I shook the book.

The piano rattled off a riff.

I laughed.

The piano laughed along with me.

I closed the book.

The piano slammed its cover.

I jumped.

All was quiet, except for lingering notes vibrating from the piano strings.

I turned to replace the book on a shelf when I caught the slightest movement.

The pedal lifted.

My breath caught as visible footprints in the wet, plush carpet left the room.

Concert over.