

Rain beat heavily on the foggy windows of the manor. The sound was soothing when it began, but as the rain picked up force into a thunderstorm, Luca Balsa was left awake for another night. His eyes, his eye, really, only the one still saw anything more than changes in light, strained in the heavy darkness that cloaked his room. There had been an oil lamp on the bedside table when he'd gotten here, but in short time he'd exhausted the kerosene staying up until twilight, and in his preoccupation with the events of the game, he hadn't thought to request for more. As a bolt of lightning became his only fleeting source of light, he'd realized he'd come to regret his forgetfulness.

He stood, only briefly, before his body remembered the damage it had suffered in the past, and his knees gave out beneath him. Falling forward, his left arm clipped his bed first, and he bit his tongue in restrained agony. He remained knelt on the floor for what felt like hours, but was in truth only minutes, before forcing himself up again. Luca blindly palmed the smooth wall beside his bed, holding as much of his weight as possible up through his right arm alone, until his fingers brushed the cold metal of his crutches. He maneuvered his forearms into them awkwardly, wincing again from the shift in weight on his left arm, and pushed himself off of the wall. Free from the support of it, he stayed in place until he caught his balance and remembered how to adjust his gait in order to actually walk.

When the crutches first showed up in his room, he'd been offended, believing it was a slight against his abilities. As the days passed and Luca had spent more and more time limping through the stately halls of the Oletus manor, his pride lost out to pain, as it almost always did. He'd decided then he'd use them when he was alone, and only when he was alone, but by that point it was a useless distinction — he was being watched, always, by his "teammates" and that mysterious Baron alike. It soon became unbearable walking without them.

Luca knew there was a music room somewhere in the manor, because he saw it when he arrived. Of course, that was days ago, and it was much brighter then, so it wasn't quite so difficult to shuffle through the winding halls that seemed to shift as soon as you'd stopped looking behind yourself. He was sure that even if he hadn't had the memory loss, finding the room would

have been torture for nearly anyone. Of course, every shadow cast by white candles burning low into their holders and the horrible blue light of lightning striking near his temporary home left the manor's lavish interior cold and foreign to him. Corners stretched further back than before, every door looked the same and felt like it was about to be opened, and the glossy hardwood seemed unstable under his feet. Or maybe it was simply his own shaking legs rendering the path more difficult to trek.

After the journey to find the room, it had felt more like an oasis, a great entertaining hall, the sort he remembered once attending as a teenager with a tall man who did not like the company. He shook his head violently, closing his eyes and willing the haze of the memory to leave him. It was too much to expect anything useful to come of thinking tonight. His eye wandered to the crown jewel of the room, the reason he dragged himself out of bed: a beautifully maintained grand piano. It was surely old by the looks of it, but it would have been hard to tell by the lack of wear to both the paint and the keys themselves. He nudged the stool aside and sat down, carefully balancing his crutches on the side of the instrument.

He ran his fingers over the keys, light enough to avoid depressing any and sending discordant sounds throughout the room. It was unlikely anyone would hear it from here, but there was no sense in annoying himself, either. It had been years since he'd played anything. Luca remembered being happy when he did, that he smiled sincerely then, and that he was surely good because it made his mother kiss the crown of his head when he'd finish playing for her. He shifted in his seat, uncomfortable now to be alone in a room built to house a happy family, and looked idly at the music rack left empty before him. He felt a bit stupid now to look for any, he was sure he wouldn't remember how to read one now if he had tried, and besides that, he'd drive himself past half-blind trying to read it in the barely lit room. He would have to play without it, he still had his muscle memory, and if nothing else at least the horrible crash of thunder and nauseating howl of wind would be drowned out, even by poor playing.

The habits of his past gradually overcame him as he set about to play, his back extending to his natural height, proud and straight, as he hovered his hands above the center of the keys. His left hand shook slightly in the air before both came

down into the beginning of the first sonata that came to mind. He realized quickly that even with the heavy numbness in his left hand, it hardly lagged behind, or at least it didn't seem like it did. In the time between playing the piano and not, he'd grown taller than he had realized, and in turn he had no need to rush his hands across the keys. It had come back to him oddly naturally, it felt just as natural to him as breaking the circuits of the strange machinery found on the manor grounds. The happiness he remembered, it didn't come back with the movements. But in his focus in playing for the empty room, the static lingering in the air and the horrible noise outside the walls, the rooms which shifted in front of your eyes, left him for the moment. The joy of the past is gone, but the motions of it remain.