

A Nefarious Night

by Grace Sudjono

Marie began to practice Mozart's famous *Moonlight Sonata* on the piano. The slanting rays of the setting sun gave a warm, orange tinge to the sky, illuminating the misty haze below. The piles of golden, ochre clouds billow calmly across the sky, whilst the little, fleecy ones, tinged with a rosey blush of pink, look like flights of pink doves scurrying across the setting sky. The lounge room of her residence was beautifully furnished with valuable antiques and exquisite paintings. On one side of the room, a bouquet of summer blooms curtsied gracefully from a clear, glass vase on a marble, demilune table; whilst an arrangement of plush sofas and luxurious armchairs were placed neatly in the middle of the room. Opposite was a blazing fire; illuminating the room with its flickering flames on glowing logs, as if mesmerised by the calming music. As the fireplace crackles softly, the kettle starts to hum; it joins in the chorus, singing to the tune.

Marie sways to the rhythm, feeling the energetic kind of glow that only music could give. As the notes hit her ears, she is transfixed by the beauty of her fingers caressing the ivory keys. Her fingers gracefully glide over the keys, creating a fusion of delightful, vibrant sounds. It brings her comfort as she daydreams that her family is in the living room, wrapped in warm, wooly blankets. Marie starts to picture her siblings cheering in the background as the music becomes livelier. She imagines how a tear would trickle down her mother's cheek, but still manage a bright smile. How her father would nod in encouragement and beam at her, full of pride. Finally, after the exhausted experience, as the last note hits the piano, someone starts to applaud. Marie swiftly turns around, searching for this anonymous figure. She starts to unconsciously twirl her fingers through her wavy chestnut hair- a nervous habit. She feels as though a cold wind went right through her, leaving her dizzy and numb. The front door is locked, the windows are bolted; how could someone possibly enter her residence? A nerve-racking cackle fills the room.

"Thought you'd get away with it, did you Marie? This will be the last time you'll ever play..."
A voice echoes around the room.

Marie grabs hold onto a heavy, brass candlestick, resting on a nearby table, hoping it will be enough to scare off the intruder. She grasps the ends of her robe and starts breathing heavily, twitching at every sudden sound- the sound of scurrying birds, the kettle going off, the rustle of the curtains, the approaching sound of heavy footsteps. Suddenly, a heavy hand grasps onto her shoulder...