**Fur Elise**

The thwack of a newspaper hitting the coffee table as her mother entered was a familiar sound in the Garivano household. Curled up on the couch was a teenage girl with messy copper hair ruffled up by her reluctant awakenings. She was preoccupied with her phone, as most teenage adolescents are, her blue eyes darting around the small screen and precise fingers punching letters into a text.

“Look, honey, you’re in the paper again! I picked it up on the way home from the bakery. Oh, you look so nice here; I’d better frame it soon. Also, could you text your teacher? I wanted to schedule another lesson before this weekend.”

She made a feeble murmur of agreement and opened up a new text message. Before typing anything, her eyes peered over to the mahogany coffee table where the paper was opened up to the music and arts section. The miniscule text was illegible to her, but the headline was bold and clear: *Musical Prodigy Elisa Garivano Captures Audience’s Hearts Once Again.*

There was also a photo of her, hair tightly woven into a bun, and hands a blur across a baby grand’s black and white glossy keys. All she remembered from that night is her over fastened hairdo was tearing at her scalp the entire performance.

“Did you text him yet Elisa?” Her mother’s voice called from the kitchen.

“Uh, yeah, I’m just about to,” She responded.

“You better practice too; I heard you still need to clean up some of your pieces.”

“Yeah, I will in a bit.”

Elisa went upstairs, passing all the framed photos and newspapers from all her previous recitals. Strolling by her father’s study, she got a glimpse of her own baby grand shimmering the morning light. Memories flooded her of when she a small child, being pulled onto her father’s lap and pressing her tiny dimpled hands against the keys but only making noise, not music. She recalled seeing a piece titled “Fur Elise” sitting the music rack and begged her dad to let enroll her in piano lessons. Her toes could barely reach the pedals, but she didn’t mind one bit. The piece—somewhat—had her name in it. Elisa started lessons right away. Her parents were overjoyed to see her so passionate.

She also remembered her enthusiasm, that small spark of joy when praise was given; especially about her age and how advanced she was playing. Now, being 16 years old it was so much a routine and chore. Being labelled a prodigy isn’t as luxurious most imagine; yes, she had some great benefits, but her entire life was consumed by a musical instrument. Being stuck to a small wooden seat playing repetitively for hours became a bore.

Elisa entered the study and sat down on the bench, warmed by the morning sunlight. She felt her fingertips graze the polished black and white keys. Without thinking, her fingers began to dance across the piano, Fur Elise perfectly flowing out. After the last note was played, a heavy feeling of loathing rose from her chest. Elisa sighed and went into the bathroom.

Brushing the knots out of her hair, Elisa cleaned herself up, and headed back downstairs for breakfast. While slicing her French toast, her mother joined her at the table.

“So, are you excited for your recital this weekend? I heard it’ll be full house, with the audience up to the thousands again.

“Yeah, that concert hall’s pretty big,” Elisa answered uninterestingly, some thoughts swimming through her mind.

“Of course, that’s how amazing you are, sweetie.” She said with a smile. “Something on your mind, Elisa?” Her daughter’s eyes looked shifty and aversive.

“Well, I know it’s a first but… after this recital this weekend… I’m just wondering if I could take break from all this preforming, like maybe just a month or so. Just to, I don’t know; work on my academics or something.” Elisa’s mother stared at her, eyes unreadable.

“Where did this come from?” With eyes still blank. “And since when do you need to focus on your academics? You have your career already sorted out for you.”

“I just want a break, this whole performance thing…it’s just kind of tiring.”

“Well, that’s what happens. If you take a break, you’ll lose whatever you’ve learned recently and all your new publicity will disappear. We can’t stop now, everything’s just beginning to start,” She could hear her mother’s voice raising.

“Mom, I know. I could get back on my feet just as easily, and of course I’ll practice even when I’m not having lessons or anything.” Her mother’s lips were pressed into a tight line. Her expression seemed rigid.

“Elisa, I’m sorry. You can’t take a break. I’ve been setting out your shows, the press loves you, and you’re about to go global! I can’t let you stop; it’s not the right time.”

“When will be the right time? All this performing is so draining, while you’re just there enjoying your bragging rights!” The venom in Elisa’s voice just angered her mother more.

“Elisa! I am doing this for you, not for me! You have such an amazing talent, and if you just want to throw to away, that’s fine! I’ve worked hard to get you so renowned, and you’ve never seemed thankful or interested at all. If you didn’t want your great talent to be recognized, you should have just told me so I wouldn’t have wasted my time.”

“I never said that!” Elisa’s eyes were glowering while her mother’s eyes were unforgiving. Her chest expanded as she inhaled. “I need to get fresh air…” Elisa stood up and burst out the door.

She stepped out into the cool, brisk morning air. Her bottled up anger and frustration was bursting like fireworks in her chest. Her legs were moving fast underneath her in quick long strides. As she kept walking, tears stared fill her eyes. She pulled up her hood and looked down so no one else could see her eyes threatening to spill. Elisa began to cross the road where her favourite childhood park was.

The last thing she heard was a car horn blaring and tires screeching before her body slammed into hard metal.

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“The time for her to recover after surgery would take several months. There are various options for her condition, but I feel it would be appropriate for her to choose herself.”

“Yes, I understand…” Elisa heard her mother quietly sob.

“It’ll be okay Connie, we’ll get through this together,” Her father’s voice said comforting the weeps from across the room.

Elisa felt the stiff hospital sheets against her skin and a heart monitor beeping beside her, the sharp beeps stinging her ears. *What happened…? Everything is so sore…* She thought. Elisa’s entire body ached, but she had to see what damage has been done. She tried wriggling out of the sheet, draining her of the small energy she had. The rustling caught the attention of her parents and the doctor, who rushed over to the bedside.

“Elisa, honey..? Listen, when you were hit, it was serious; they had to pull you out from underneath the van, and…” Her mom stopped talking when Elise managed to uncover herself. At the end of her left arm were not her fingertips, but a bandaged stump. Elisa’s breath vanished in her lungs. Taking all the strength she had in her, she began rise from the bed despite the painful soreness. It was agony to move any muscle. Even with her parents’ pleas to remain in bed, she tore the wires and tubes off her body and staggered into the bathroom, locking the door behind her.

As Elisa stared at her reflection, her heart ached with the rest of her body as tears began to flow.

She lost a dream that she didn’t even know she had.

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Numerous months passed from the accident, and so did several heartbroken articles. Elisa was at the park with her left phantom hand stuck in her pocket. She sat on the swings, gently rocking back and forth. Elisa refused the prosthetics despite all the offers and tried to continue on with her life. The piano in her father’s study was collecting dust, and it stung to even glance at all the mounted articles and pictures from the previous years.

Coming from behind her, she heard the voice of a young boy encouraging a small golden puppy to follow him. However, instead of a dog’s usual trot, this one more or less hopped with his back legs trailing behind. It was missing half of its front left leg. As Elisa watched, she saw the boy teach the puppy how to catch a small disc, which at first, wasn’t so successful. Overtime, the dog caught more and more discs and the boy couldn’t seem prouder. Elisa rose from the swing set and she made her way home.

She climbed up the stairs, and opened her father’s study. Wiping the accumulated dust on the piano, she sat down on the bench. Downstairs, Elisa’s mother abruptly stopped as she was preparing dinner. Tears began to cloud her mother’s eyes as the twinkling notes of a broken Fur Elise drifted from upstairs.

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