The Sound of Burning Wood

_Have you had enough of me already_

The grand piano was all too clearly taunting him. Though more at home inside a concert hall or drawing room, the piano still stood proudly on the patio, its top board imperiously raised in cold amusement. It seemed to capture the attention of every wandering ray of sunlight, seemed to glow with an aura of invulnerability. Its bench extended a sly invitation to the man, but he ignored its beckoning. Instead, he grabbed the lighter fluid beside him and doused the hollow of the piano with a detached air of efficiency.

_Have you had enough of me_

Yes! Yes, he’d had enough of the piano!

It had been a constant source of conflict between him and his wife. She’d spent almost all of her free time playing those black and white keys, and it’d seemed he could never escape the interminable stream of notes. He’d always heard the maddening lilt of a caprice as he tried to focus on work, or the drawl of a lazy waltz as he washed the dishes. No matter where he’d paused in the house, he’d been followed by the piano’s floating lines of melody. But now that his wife was gone, it was the silence that trailed after him, the silence that drew him into the empty piano room.

_Have you had enough_

The piano had belonged to his wife alone. She had been the only one to tame it, to pour her soul into the faded wood and glossy keys, and it was impossible to even imagine someone else sitting at that same piano bench. Flinging the empty bottle of lighter fluid aside, the man stepped forward and lit the piano on fire.

_Have you_

How many times had he shouted across the house to tell his wife to play more quietly?

_Have you_

How many times had he buried his face in frustration, wishing the music would stop?

_But sweet memory_

And yet, how many times had he hovered by his wife’s shoulder as she played, not listening to the music, but watching her fingers waltz along the keys? How many times had he installed himself in the piano room with his newspaper, if only to remind his wife he’d always be there?

_But sweet time_

And disappearing into the smoke was the music his wife had so tenderly created, the ballads she’d learned just for him and the lullabies she’d played for their children. Gone were the years she’d spent unraveling her unbridled passion on the keys, the days she’d sung her heartbreak and dreams through the unfaltering notes.

_But sweet darkness_
The piano’s composure was withering, its radiance crumbling to ash as the flames consumed the dead wood. The man couldn’t help but feel a beautiful thrill of pain, a twisted stab of ecstasy, as he watched his memories and sorrow be devoured with the dying piano.

_Sweet darkness_

Sweet darkness.

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