

The Piano in the Basement

I think we need to talk about the piano in the basement. Every night at 11:53 pm the music spirals through the halls, creaking through the Brackenridge dorm's walls like old pipes. And each time, it's been "In the Hall of the Mountain King" by Edvard Grieg. Trust me, I shazamed it.

After humming it, singing it in the shower, and stopping to listen while doing homework, I've had enough. No one pianist can play the same song each night at the same hour for two months. I stormed down, donning my mask, and peered around the corner. No one sat on the bench. I tapped my phone and 11:52 pm flashed on.

I tapped my fingers in the rhythm of the song on the wall, the minute slowing ticking by. I tapped my phone. It said 11:53 pm. Suddenly, the piano started to play the opening notes of "In the Hall of the Mountain King" all on its own. The keys went up and down as if they were one of those old west pianos. I approached the bench, slow, my feet telling me to go back to my room, yet I moved near the piano. I pressed the keys. The song stopped midway.

No one sat on the bench, but I felt someone was staring at me.

I stuttered, "He...he...hello?"

Silence wavered through the room. Whoever or whatever played the piano didn't like being interrupted. I took a step back, a chilling feeling cuffing my wrist. Suddenly, a force pulled me forward and it was like I whisked through a cloud.

A young man about my age sat on the bench, wearing clothes that looked straight out of the forties. He started to play the piano again.

I placed my hand on the wall and it passed through. I looked at my hands, shaking. "Where am I? Am I dead?" I was still in Brackenridge, but some other dimension.

He kept playing. "I didn't think that would actually work. I just wanted to frighten you away."

I tapped the lowest note again and again until he looked me into the eye. "Let me go back!"

"I don't know if I can!" he screamed. The bench started to float up and the lights flickered until they turned red. Wind shrieked and shoved me onto the floor. I crawled back. "I just wanted to be left alone! Let me have peace! Why interrupt someone's death!"

I felt nothing.

When he noticed the fear on my face, the bench sunk to the floor. "Sorry. I never got to perform my final song before graduation."

I sat the bench as he played the rest of the song. The roar of the notes swirled through my ears. The music became like silence for the next few minutes, the sound sweeping the room like a wave.

Once the song was over, he started to fade away. "I don't know how to get you back. I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry too."