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The Grand, Old Piano

I remember the day when my grandmother brought it home. I was not yet ten years of age. “What is it?” I asked. It was an electric piano that was made of dark mahogany wood, almost black, but not quite. The foot pedals were golden, and it smelled like freshly cut wood. I was so excited to have a piano of my own! I had no idea how to play one, but my mind raced as I imagined playing any song I wished.

When my father set it up, I curiously opened the dark lid to peek inside. Its creamy white keys had a satisfying contrast against the ebony black keys that accented almost every other white key. “Can I turn it on?” I asked my mother. “Sure,” she replied, “Just be careful.” I turned the piano on in anticipation. Though I had no idea how to play it, I listened to the brilliant high notes and full bass notes that came out when I pressed the keys. This was all a wonderful new adventure to me; it was something that made me want to go beyond myself and my current limitations and be able to do more.

When I first started practicing, I was nervous. My piano teacher was nice, but I have always been a perfectionist, always trying to get things exactly right. I remember practicing the scales up and down the piano. I learned which notes went where and what chords to play when in a certain key. I would also have to do finger exercises which helped me to develop finger independence—being able to play different notes using different fingers at the same

time. I remember the first songs that I played. They were simple, fun songs that were less than a page in length and without many notes, but I was happy knowing that I was able to play at least one song on the piano.

One occasion that was momentous for me was when I started learning how to play by ear. My piano teacher did not teach us how to play the piano by ear since she did not do it much herself, but I became inspired to learn on my own when I would hear songs playing on the radio. I would go to the piano and try to figure out which key each song was in; however, I would always struggle with finding the correct one. Then one day, I did it. My mother was on her guitar trying to figure out the same song, so I figured that I would try as well. When I went to the piano and sat down, I figured that I would just start hitting random keys like I usually did in search of the correct note. I pressed the first key. To my amazement, it sounded exactly right! I tried it again just to make sure, and again, it sounded like the right key. After that day, I continued trying to figure out songs on the radio and became better at it as time went on.

Then, later on, there came times that I needed the piano. Where at first it had just been a hobby, it then became a passion. It helped me through some rough times in my life. It was a way to express my emotions: when I would get angry, upset, or frustrated, I would start playing whatever my heart told my fingers to play. Playing the piano became a way to vent my frustrations when things were heading downhill, like when a dear friend I thought I could trust betrayed me. I remember times when I was so mad and when I had no one to talk to, I would sit down late at night and just play quietly for half an hour or more. At times like that the notes would be soft, quiet, and sad. At other times, when I was so angry that I just wanted to scream, the music would come out choppy and vicious. This old piano that now sits in my room

collecting dust has served as a faithful friend. When I needed someone to express my anger to, I knew that it would not tell.

As I grew a little older, the keys on the piano that I would play to express my emotions turned into something more than chord progressions and notes. They started finding words. The once random flow of music started taking on a consistency that was part intentional, part mysterious. Songs found themselves trying to find their way out of their jail cells and into the open. At certain times, the words would flow easily. At other times, they struggled to find their proper place in a song. I would write them down quickly because a newborn song is a fleeting thing, then return later and perfect them. One day I hope to be able to put those songs into recordings. In fact, I have already started.

These days, I do not turn to the piano much to vent my emotions. Instead I am proud to have someone close to me whom I can actually trust, someone who does not get mad and lets me vent my emotions. I don't take out my bad mood on her and get mad at her for other things in my life, rather when we talk I am at ease knowing that I am able to confide in her and know that I can trust her with anything. She has replaced the piano in every way as my special friend, but that is perfectly all right with me since I have learned that people are much more important than inanimate objects and that some friends are more special than others. However, true friends stand the test of time.

Though the old piano in my room is not everything it has been to me in the past, it still has a special place in my heart. The corners of the veneer are peeling off the top and the bench has a splintered section on the inside, but it is still a dear friend of mine. Ever since I was first learning to play up to now, it has always been an exciting experience to me. At one time,

playing it felt like a stormy sea with choppy waters and had no rhyme or rhythm. Today, its shiny white and black keys feel like smooth waves gently flowing under my fingers. Like true friends, it too has stood the test of time. It was, and still is, a grand, old piano.