

Painted Rain  
By Gemma Pol

I hesitantly opened my eyes, adjusting them to my bland surroundings. I could hear light droplets of rain staining the faded concrete outside my apartment window. My mind was bare, and my life was meaningless. Frankly, getting out of bed seemed pointless. I lived for nothing; in fact, I did not live at all. I simply just existed.

I finally forced myself to crawl out of bed when my phone would not stop its excessive buzzing. When I answered, the lifeless voice of the DVD shop owner mumbled about the tragic romance movie I had borrowed two months earlier and had failed to return. I agreed to take the DVD back that day, realising this would be the first time leaving the apartment in almost two weeks. I made a double shot espresso to go and headed out of my lonely door.

I walked down my favourite lane, even though it meant taking a longer route to the shop. The lane was always soundless and empty, like me. I think that's why I liked it so much. My isolated footsteps echoed down the lane and sent shudders up my legs. I tried to remember the last time I didn't feel so sorrowful and alone. Not since my mother passed away. I imagined her playing piano. When I was a cheerful child, she would play for hours. I imagined her beautiful melody, so sweet and enriched with warmth.

The music was getting louder, and then I realised I wasn't imagining at all. I followed the angelic tune to the abandoned creative arts hall. It shocked me that a structure so gloomy and colourless could be the home of something so vibrant and magical. I peered through the slight crack in the door to see an elderly man at the piano. He had hair as grey as rolling storm clouds and ancient-looking skin. I delicately widened the door and it made the slightest creak. The man looked up to face me, but his eyes were still wondering, searching even. He was blind.

"Hello? Who's there?"

I considered not answering, just closing the door behind me and walking away. But something about the whole situation made me feel as if this was no accident, maybe even fate or something.

"Sorry, Um... My name is Ava, and I just heard you playing and well..."

He faintly laughed to himself. "I'm Noah, why don't you take a seat dear?"

I smiled, for the first time in what seems an eternity. A chord captivated the emptiness in the room, in me. Noah's fingers glided along the piano, like butterflies slicing through thick air. I couldn't believe that someone with such an unfortunate disability could create music so encouraging and joyous. The song faded and the room was silent again.

"Do you play Ava?" Noah croaked.

"No, I don't. My mother used to. I used to sing to her music, but it just doesn't seem right without her," I explained, completely satisfied with my reason.

Painted Rain  
By Gemma Pol

"I know how you feel Ava. It was something that only you and your mother shared, something too precious and too private for anyone else to hear. But you see Ava, you have this beautiful gift, a gift given to you to share. And your mother is watching you, just wishing for the day you sing again. Today can be that day."

Noah raised his hands to the piano once again. He let his fingers roll along the keys and his emotions pour into the music. He made it look effortless. My mother was a truly amazing pianist, but Noah, he was different. He played to vanquish his impairment, to show it doesn't control him. He was so grateful of every day, every moment and every song. He saw the beauty in the world, even though he could not see.

Something changed in me that day. Right then and there, an influx of relief empowered me. I began to sing, before I even realised I was. The lyrics, my voice; everything came rushing back like storm water racing down a dry river bed. When the song stopped, so did I, but I knew the river would never be dry again.

Noah had an unbelievable impact on my life. He made me remember all the beautiful things in life I had forgotten. The grass was greener, the sky was bluer and music was richer. Rain no longer stained the concrete... It painted it.