

## The Little Grand

In the year 1950, a small grand piano named Grandette was created in Leipzig, Germany. The combination of exotic woods and careful craftsmanship of her creator resulted in a stunning piece. Her soundboard was constructed from Sitka spruce and her keys from basswood, lined with a thin layer of ivory for the white keys and ebony for the black. Grandette was played by a talented and well-respected musician. The musician married a famous pianist and the couple shared the piano for many years. Grandette was well taken care of and loved dearly by the family. The little grand was happy, satisfied with the joy and prosperity she had created.

After the pair had aged, Grandette was given to the couple's eldest child, in the hopes that he would learn to play the instrument as well. Their eldest had indeed become a talented pianist, but he soon grew too tired and too busy to play once his family grew. His children, new to the wonders of music, were often curious about Grandette and would bang and bash on her keys. Their father would often lock the cover so they wouldn't get into too much trouble, although that didn't seem to prevent their occasional thumping and roughhousing that caused the piano to chip in some places. Grandette missed her life of luxury, but she was still happy. She had grown to love the children, even with their ceaseless squabbles.

Once the family had grown, the little grand was set on a new adventure. She was given to a local school and used to play for the choir. Over time her keys began to stick and her pedal would squeak. The school had not tuned her for quite some time as budgets for the music program were cut. Even so, Grandette adored how the music room came to life when the children sang and she was happy. But as her keys lost their former strength and her tone soured, fewer students came to play pieces on her keys. She was pushed into a corner of the room, further separated from the children. A thin layer of dust covered the top of the piano, as she was rarely used anymore. Still, the little grand was content, as she could hear the wondrous sounds of the choir and orchestra from the music room.

A couple years passed and Grandette was moved once again. The journey excited her. She was eager to be played once more. The little grand was wheeled into a small building and placed in a far corner against the wall. The thick layer of dust had been wiped down and the exterior was polished until it shined a marvelous black color she had not seen in years. Despite the many dents and chips in her wood, Grandette felt beautiful. If only she sounded beautiful, she thought. Her new owners had not taken the liberty to have her tuned. The little grand was simply used as a piece of decoration in a small coffee shop.

For many years she would watch as families entered and exited the building, patiently waiting for anyone to play on her keys. But no one ever did. Grandette fell into despair. She missed her previous homes where music was always present. At least in the choir room, she was able to hear the harmonies of the students and the other instruments as they played, but here she felt alone.

One day, a young girl around the age of sixteen walked into the coffee shop. The young girl ordered from the counter and turned to sit at one of the tables. Her eyes landed on the little grand and her expression brightened. She immediately walked over to the piano and sat her things onto a nearby table. She pulled out the bench and sat down. Her hands hovered over the keys before she played a beautiful melody.

The sound was out-of-tune and the little grand was worried she'd stop playing, but she never did. Despite hitting a few sour notes, caused by the strings' old age, the young girl continued to play with a smile. More sour notes were played, yet the girl never flinched. The Grandette felt overwhelming happiness. It had been so long since she was able to create a melody. It filled the empty hole that had formed over the years of solitude and silence.

The young girl came back once every week to play and Grandette would patiently await her return each time. The girl had placed an empty glass jar on the top of the piano with a small label. Every time she would perform a piece, the jar would fill ever so slightly with coins given as a tip from the audience. The months went on like so until one day, the jar became completely full. Grandette had not seen the young girl for over a week since that happened. The little grand began to worry, thinking that the young girl had forgotten about her. Her once cheerful and optimistic mood turned grey as her loneliness returned.

The next day, a man came into the coffee shop with a briefcase in hand. He talked to the workers at the counter and they pointed towards the small grand tucked into the corner. The man nodded and made his way towards the piano. He sat on the bench and briefly played on the keys. To Grandette's surprise, he was there to tune her. He opened the base and worked tirelessly to smoothen out each note. After hours of the painstaking process of tightening and loosening strings, the tuning was finally complete.

The small jingle of bells was heard as the doors to the coffee shop opened. There entering the building, was the young girl. She carried the familiar glass jar in her hands and the change rattled inside as she made her way over to the piano. She talked with the tuner before handing him the jar filled to the

brim with dollar bills and coins. He laughed, but accepted it and he gestured for her to play. She obliged. As she played a familiar tune, the whole room rang with the rich sound of each note. Grandette had long forgotten the beautiful melodies she was capable of creating. Her strings resonated a clear, crystalline sound and her keys no longer stuck to the base. Not one sour note was to be heard. The loud chatter of the families in the building had gone silent as they each listened to the young girl play.

Once finished, the audience gave a small applause and the girl smiled nervously. She turned to the tuner and shook his hand, politely thanking him for his time. The girl stayed for hours, enjoying the new graceful tone of the piano. The little grand had never felt so happy.

After that day, Grandette never saw the young girl again, but new children would come and play on her keys. She noticed that the number of people who came to the shop was slowly increasing. Someone would play on the little grand every day. Since Grandette brought in so many new customers, the shop decided to spend the money to keep her well taken care of and tuned. They moved her out of the hidden corner and into the center where everyone could have a chance to play. Grandette missed the young girl dearly, but she enjoyed every day nonetheless. Thanks to the young girl, music had been brought back into the little grand's life. The girl had proved that even through the damage, permanent chips, and occasional squeaky pedal, Grandette could still create beautiful pieces of music. For that, she would be ever grateful.