



# *Music to His Heart*

By Janine Mendenhall

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“Blast it!” Mr. Charles Adsley threw the stump of his cigar in the bushes and strode into the entryway. How could he prevent his friend and business partner, Mr. William Chetwynd, from hearing the music? Chetwynd was not due ‘til tomorrow, yet he had just arrived early.

A perfect trill from the harpsichord opened the evening’s entertainment, and Adsley’s jaw muscles tightened. Heaven touched earth when she played, but could Chetwynd hear it from such a distance? Perhaps not. The guest chamber to which he was being escorted was at the back of the house.

Adsley took his place near the foot of the grand staircase. He would know soon enough.

Minutes later, footsteps on the stairs distracted him from the music. He glanced up to see Chetwynd, now dressed in formal silk evening coat, embroidered vest, breeches, and polished shoes, descending as if he was the king himself.

Though sorely disappointed, Adsley was hardly surprised.

“Chetwynd, I thought you intended to retire. Yet here you are, despite your grueling journey.”

“I did too.”

“What changed your mind? Not the crowd, certainly. Not since Caroline--” Adsley clamped his mouth shut and cleared his throat. “My apologies, William, you know I meant nothing by it.”

William nodded, always forgiving. “The harpsichord. I heard Bach’s Suite in D minor and could not resist. Have you any vacant seats in the salon?”

“Come, there is a splendid view at the side. We shall stand.” Adsley hated himself for thinking it, but the damage was already done.

Perfectly-metered tinkling notes persisted, and Adsley could not help but notice their effect on his friend. Chetwynd, a man of nearly forty years—though no less striking for having struggled through them—was drawn to the music. Unfortunately, the exquisite young lady playing it posed a serious threat.

Adsley permitted his gaze to drift her way. Passion glowed on her face as she swayed in the candlelight. He glanced back at his friend.

Chetwynd's eyes twinkled as Bach's cherished piece flowed from her fingertips like a babbling creek flutters over parched earth. Each note eroded his carefully-managed façade.

It had been too long since Chetwynd had enjoyed entertainment of any kind, and Adsley could hardly begrudge his friend what happiness he might find. If only Chetwynd had not arrived so early; he would not have been exposed to this enchanting young lady and her playing.

"Say, Chetwynd, are you well?"

No response.

Adsley sharpened his tone. "So why did you come down?"

"I said—" Chetwynd turned to Adsley, but he was still distracted.

"I know what you said. However, she is rather a charming creature, isn't she?" Now, he had his friend's full attention.

"Without a doubt." Chetwynd's smile deepened.

"And it has been over six months, has it not?"

"It has."

"You have questions, I suppose." Adsley sighed.

"Where did you find her?"

"She is my neighbor's sister-in-law and resides with him and his family, but I must discourage any further association."

"Why?"

Adsley took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. Summer concerts. What good were they? "Word has it that her music is all she has to recommend her."

"Have a care. She is your neighbor's sister, after all." William eyed him, and Charles met his gaze with equal intensity.

"Believe me, I do. But I can see that will not suffice."

"Indeed."

"Then we shall speak after the concert."

“Agreed.”

Chetwynd turned back to the young lady, and soon enough the frolicking trills of Bach’s Suite came to an end. The salon brightened with polite applause, she curtsied, and seated herself.

“There’s a second performer, Adsley. Let’s discuss the matter now.”

“Come to my study then.”

Secure in the private upstairs room, William began. “So what do you know of her?”

“The thing is . . . Well, there are some rumors floating about.”

“And you credit them?”

“I have not heard any of them, personally.”

“Charles.”

“No, wait. I realize you miss her playing. Your dear wife—God rest her soul.—was an accomplished musician. But you cannot risk your standing, not after all we’ve gained. What if her reputation is taint—?”

“I shall not condemn her on account of gossip.”

Adsley knitted his brows. “Are you judging me?”

“No. I simply wish to maintain courtesy.”

Adsley walked over to the drink service and poured himself some brandy. “See now, there it begins.” He took a drink.

“What do you mean?”

“Recall that old story, one of your Bible stories, about that man who tried to save that harlot by marrying her? Next thing you know—”

“The prophet Hosea was not trying to save Gomer.”

“Yet, you were already considering it. I knew it!”

“Until a few minutes ago, I knew nothing of this young lady. Is there something you wish to tell me?”

“I told you; I know nothing of her.”

“Then why suspect the worst?” William seated himself in a wing-backed chair.

“Come, Adsley, sit down. What has happened? You’ve changed.”

“So I have.” He sat across from Chetwynd, and then raised his glass as if to cheer.

“While you remain unchanged, as always.”

“My infant son needs a mother, Charles. Regardless of what she has or has not done, he will notice no difference.”

“And what of society, and you?”

William shook his head. “I care nothing about their opinions. And as far as I’m concerned? Well, God has forgiven me much, Charles, as well you know. Therefore, who am I to cast a stone?”

Adsley drained his glass. “Another Bible story, huh?”

“That will never change, as you also know.”

“Indeed.” Adsley shook his head. “Will you at least attempt to learn the truth?”

“After the lady and I are better acquainted, if she will even receive me, I will ask her.”

“If the worst is true, do you suppose she will tell you?”

“Perhaps there is nothing to tell.”

### *The Beginning*

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear. . .” I John 4:8

“It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails.” I Corinthians 13:7-8