

I Used to Hear Colour First

I used to believe every song had a colour trapped inside it, waiting for someone lonely enough to notice.

When I was six, my hands could barely stretch across an octave, but I remember sitting at our piano while evening folded itself softly against the windows, pressing down keys that felt heavier than they looked. Some notes arrived blue. Others arrived gold. A minor chord from Beethoven carried the dark silver of rainwater; Joe Hisaishi sounded green to me, like sunlight moving through leaves too quickly to hold. Even silence had colour sometimes. Pale and floating and endless.

Adults loved children who were easy to introduce. *The piano kid. The smart one. The girl with neat posture at recitals and certificates tucked carefully into folders at home.* There was always a pattern to childhood, I think: *an instrument, a sport, good grades lined up side by side like obedient little soldiers.* Everyone was trying to build futures out of us before we were old enough to understand what futures were.

But piano never felt like a *future* to me.

It felt like a *place*.

A place where time loosened. Where loneliness became something beautiful instead of embarrassing. I would come home from school still carrying the noise of hallways and fluorescent lights inside me, then sit at the piano bench and feel the entire day dissolve note by note. Music didn't ask me to explain myself. It simply opened the door and let me enter.

That was the first time I ever understood what it meant to belong somewhere invisible.

As I grew older, life became crowded in the ordinary way. Homework spread across evenings. Deadlines settled into the house like dust. My piano remained by the window, but slowly it turned into furniture instead of refuge. Weeks passed untouched except for the occasional apologetic scale. I began measuring time in assignments completed, hours slept, grades returned. Somewhere in all that practicality, the colours disappeared quietly, one by one.

I didn't notice at first.

That is the frightening thing about losing something slowly. There is no clean breaking point. No dramatic farewell. Just absence becoming routine.

Sometimes, late at night, I would walk downstairs for water and see the moonlight resting against the piano keys like cold milk spilled across black stone. The instrument looked patient. Almost human. As though it had been waiting all evening for me to return and could not understand why I no longer spoke its language.

And still, certain songs could undo me instantly.

A fragment of Clair de Lune drifting from someone else's apartment window. Merry-Go-Round of Life playing softly in a café while strangers continued their conversations unaware that something sacred had just entered the room. Suddenly I would remember the girl I used to be—the one who believed music carried entire landscapes inside it, the one who heard oceans in left-hand arpeggios and saw summer hidden inside major keys.

I miss her sometimes.

Not because she was happier. Childhood isn't the beautiful thing people pretend it is. But she knew how to linger inside moments without trying to turn them into achievements. She knew how to love things *uselessly*. Completely.

Recently, I played again after months away. Nothing impressive. Just scales at first, hesitant and uneven beneath my fingers. Then a Hisaishi piece I used to know by heart. Outside, rain moved against the windows in long silver ribbons, and for one brief moment the room returned to colour. Green. Gold. Blue. As though the music had been holding them for me all this time.

I think growing up is realizing that the parts of ourselves we abandon do not always leave. Sometimes they wait quietly beside us, hands folded in their laps, hoping we will someday remember the song that first taught us how to feel alive.

And maybe the colours never disappeared at all. Maybe they were only waiting inside the music for me to become gentle enough to notice them again.