



*A*  
**SONG** *in the*  
**DARK**

*a novel of* **WORLD WAR II**

**Kimberley Woodhouse**



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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

This is a work of historical reconstruction; the appearances of certain historical figures are therefore inevitable. All other characters, however, are products of the author's imagination, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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This book is lovingly dedicated in memory  
of my beloved grandparents:

*Ray—a WWII veteran—and his beautiful wife, Dot Frappier*

Two people who hugely shaped my life as a musician,  
writer, and most importantly—believer.

Their legacy lives on through their children, grandchildren,  
great-grandchildren, and now great-great-grandchildren.

Grandma and Grandpa—you are dearly missed.

*dear reader,*

This story has been in my heart and mind for umpteens years. In fact, it's been brewing since before I signed my first publishing contract. Forty-plus books later, it's coming to you through much love, sweat, and tears.

A ton of research has gone into it, and yes, there are historic dates and details which are real. But the premise is completely from my imagination.

For so long I wondered why the Jews stayed in Germany, or other parts of Europe, as long as they did. I also wondered how and why the world couldn't see what was truly happening. As the saying goes, hindsight always is 20/20.

The more entrenched I became in the research and history, the more I understood. I watched hours and hours of documentaries and testimonies of survivors. I went through countless boxes of Kleenex and learned as much as I could to at least imagine what it must have been like to walk in their shoes.

One incredible man who inspired me was Otto Weidt, a nearly blind man who employed and hid blind and deaf Jews in Berlin during the horrible years of the Nazis. What he did to aid others had a powerful impact on me. How he managed to convince the SS and Gestapo that his workshop (where they made brushes and brooms) was necessary to them for their cause and war effort completely blows my mind.

Even though Hitler and his regime knew what they wanted well in advance, they set out in a gradual process at the beginning. Whether this plan was to gain more followers and convince people that what they were doing was necessary and acceptable, or because they didn't want to shock the world too much at once and cause a global uprising, the end goal was the same. They wanted the expulsion and extermination of the Jewish people, as well as anyone deemed unworthy to live. A glaring example for us all even today to be aware, seek truth, stay informed, and be ready to stand firm.

One of the documentaries that interested me was that of Inge Deutschkron being interviewed by Claude Lanzmann. They were filming "Shoah," and you can find the interview on the site of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum: [collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004643](https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1004643).

There are hours of Inge's testimony sharing how this gradual process took place. Her testimony helped me understand what it was like to live during this time.

Even though Hitler held power and systematically put his plans into motion fully beginning in 1933, the world was unaware of the truth and the threat growing. Looking back, people have questioned why the world allowed the Olympics to be held in Germany. But during the 1936 Olympics, Hitler made sure that his propaganda—and all evidence of hatred and prejudice against the Jews and others—was not seen on the world stage. He ensured Germany looked good to the world—all while advancing his atrocities in the background.

If ever the tale of the frog in the pot of water being brought to a slow boil was played out in real life—it was during this time.

Years ago, Joel Rosenberg wrote a wonderful book I highly recommend, *The Auschwitz Escape*, in which a question is asked in a concentration camp: ". . . if you ask me, the question shouldn't be 'Why are you, a Christian, here in a death camp, condemned for trying to save Jews?' The real question is 'Why aren't all the Christians here?'" That question has resonated with me ever since

and I wrote a blog post back in 2016 about it. (KimberleyWoodhouse.com/uncategorized/apology/)

I encourage you to read and reread that quote above. Let it simmer for a while. Then read it again.

In early 2024, my husband and I went to see the movie *One Life* with Anthony Hopkins. I was already contracted for *A Song in the Dark* and deep into the research and writing. I thought the movie would provide wonderful insight, and I was blown away by the story. I highly recommend it. Once again, I was inspired by the people who saw what was happening and did something about it.

All these people who inspired me were beautiful reminders of my grandparents. That's why this book is dedicated to them. My grandpa was one of the most joyous and funny people I've ever known. He loved dessert and mashed potatoes with gravy (not at the same time, but then again, it wouldn't surprise me if he made those two foods a meal). He was an amazing saxophone player and musician. He pulled some crazy pranks in his life and reminded us all to live life to the fullest, grab onto joy, and love God with everything we had.

But a piece of his life held dark memories. He fought in World War II, and what he saw and experienced haunted him. He was awarded the Bronze Star for performing heroic acts of bravery and saved the lives of fellow soldiers.

As a history major, my son dove into researching my grandpa's journeys, battles, and role in the war. What he discovered was awe-inspiring and devastating.

Grandpa only spoke to me of the atrocities he faced a couple of times—he never wanted to share the ugliness. Didn't want to dwell on it. Didn't want to travel down that memory lane.

One time, I was a teenager when my parents and I visited Grandma and Grandpa in their RV as they were traveling and volunteering with a retired group that helped around the country. My dad wanted to get some of the stories down on paper because

he was working on genealogy and our family's history, and none of us knew what Grandpa had endured.

Grandpa's hesitant stories stuck with me. How could a man who was so full of joy and fun still be so after such horrible things? The memories as he shared them shook him to his core and brought tears to all of us.

I used a story of Grandpa's—that I fictionalized—in *Out of the Ashes* (Bethany House Publishers, 2018), and it's amazing how many readers have written in to tell us that it had a huge impact on them as well.

My grandma was a phenomenal pianist and inspired me in my own musical career. Her love for God, Grandpa, music, and her family were huge in shaping not only me—but our whole, great big family. Family reunions were an incredible thing to behold with all the cousins, aunts, uncles, and our beloved grandparents. But their greatest impact and legacy is the fact that they started each day on their knees praying for each and every member of our family. As the years passed and our family grew—so did their prayer time.

World War II was awful. And that is the understatement of the century. But the history is fascinating, and we must not forget what happened lest we repeat it, right? Readers who love this era have spurred on an entire genre of fiction. Some fascinating and beautiful stories have been written highlighting this horrific time in our history.

*A Song in the Dark* is my first novel set during this time period. Partly because I've been waiting for the right time. Partly because I wanted to do it justice. And partly because I had to bathe it in prayer for a long, long time.

I appreciate you taking the time to journey along with me, and I pray this story touches your heart. I encourage you to go back and reread that quote from Joel Rosenberg's book.

I long to be one of the few.

*Kimberley  
Woodhouse*

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## *The Few*

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Before Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 . . .

Before Kristallnacht on November 9, 1938 . . .

Before the Munich Agreement on September 30, 1938 . . .

A culture of hatred and superiority set the stage for war in Europe. In the hearts and minds of people, it quickly spread.

Many didn't want to acknowledge what was happening because the continent still reeled from the Great War. It hurt too much. Surviving was hard enough.

Many thought the world leaders would stop it before it got too bad.

Many didn't believe the stories they heard.

Many ignored what was happening right under their noses.

And then there were the few . . .

The few that stood up to hatred and bigotry and murderous hearts.

The few that heard and saw things and didn't wait to do something about it.

The few that sacrificed everything to save even one.

Stories have been told about the few who each saved hundreds—possibly thousands—of lives. But many stories are still untold.

This story is for all the unsung heroes. The ones we may never know about.

May we remember.

May we not be afraid to do what's right.

May we never be complacent again.

May we love one another above all else.

May we turn our hearts to God Almighty.

May we be . . . the few.

—Kimberley Woodhouse

# prologue

OUTSIDE LONDON, ENGLAND—MAY 19, 1918

The melody inside Chaisley fought with the excited butterflies in her stomach. Which would be released first?

Light shimmered on the shiny black and white keys.

Her birthday present.

The golden letters spelled out *Steinway*.

Chaisley Frappier's heart leapt. It was all hers. She slid her hand along each of the eighty-eight keys, counting them again as she went. Their surface reminded her of touching Grandmother's silver serving dishes. Polished and smooth.

"Go on, darling." Mother stood in the circle of Father's arms. "Try it out."

Chaisley nodded. Couldn't keep the grin from her face. Father had indulged her initial curiosity by giving her an old, dusty text on musical theory. The binding was falling apart—and if she didn't hold it just right, pages would fall out—but oh, how she loved that book. The music room had been commissioned not long after she'd read the entire text and shared with them at every meal each new piece of information that fascinated her.

She'd riddled her private tutor with questions about everything she didn't understand. And soaked in every bit of knowledge as

she waited the long months for her very own pianoforte. Until one day, her teacher informed her parents that she needed a specialized music tutor because he no longer had answers for all her questions.

Another thing to wait for . . . but to finally have the explanation for the music that seeped from her bones? It was glorious to think about. Grandmother told her such words made her sound much older than her ten years. But all of her time was spent with adults so what other words would she use?

As she sat on the padded bench, she let her legs dangle for a moment, relishing the beauty of the instrument before her. She reached out her right hand to stroke the silky keys again.

The notes resonated within her. Her left hand joined her right.

Touching, caressing, feeling each key as she pressed them to hear the individual sounds.

Each tone.

Her eyes couldn't leave the piano. She closed the cover with the pretty gold letters over the keys and walked around the instrument. While she understood the basics—the keys made the hammers hit the strings, and they resonated with the sound—it still amazed her. She had so many questions!

“That’s called the fallboard.” Father pointed to the cover and followed her around.

When she stopped in the big curve on the right side, he lifted the massive lid and placed a leg-looking stick into a rounded upside-down cup on the underside. The lid stayed open and her eyes widened at the glorious construction inside.

“That’s the lid prop. And look. If we want it open, but a bit lower, we simply use the shorter leg.” He smiled, and his eyes danced.

Like she imagined her own must look as she took in her new treasure.

Giggles escaped, and she couldn't stop them—nor did she wish to.

She ran another circle around the piano, twirled around twice when she reached the bench, and then sat down again with a

flounce. She lifted the fallboard and slid her index finger over the lettering and then tested out every one of the keys over and over again. Watching the hammers hit the strings, the reflection of her hands in the ebony mirror of the lid, and the precision of movement—she was in heaven. For a whole year, she'd waited.

And it had finally come.

Music radiated within her. Soon she'd be able to transfer the music from her heart to the keys. She just knew it. Everything was mathematical—and she adored math. Measured in half steps, the keyboard was laid out in a pattern. Different combinations of keys would make chords . . . major, minor, augmented, diminished. Everything she'd read came alive before her very eyes.

“Happy birthday, sweetheart.” The faint hint of his French and Dutch ancestry came out in his accent. “We’ve hired a master teacher to come see you. Your first lesson is”—he glanced at his pocket watch just as the chime for the front door rang—“right now.”

Chaisley did her best to stay proper on the bench. “Truly?”

He nodded and tapped the end of her nose. “Let’s see if you can put all that book learning to good use.” He leaned down and whispered in her ear. “Be brave, my little munchkin. He’s a very tall man and looks intimidating, but he’s the best of the best.”

She shifted her gaze back to the six-foot grand piano. Another small giggle escaped her and she placed her hands over her lips as if she held a magical secret. And she did. “Dr. G is very tall too.” Father’s best friend and their family physician—Dr. Grafton—had been bringing her additional books on music for several months. Tchaikovsky’s *Guide to the Practical Study of Harmony* and Rameau’s *Treatise on Harmony* were her current favorites. Dr. Grafton understood her longing to release the music inside her because he said he had that longing too. Even though she’d never played an instrument in her life, Chaisley *understood* music.

“Well, I see she is enchanted by her present.” Mum’s voice

drifted into her awareness. “We’ll be in the parlor, sweetheart, if you need us.”

The hour with Monsieur Beaufort fed her soul and opened up her mind to the vast universe of music. And she didn’t have to work at being brave. Several times, she’d caught her teacher with his mouth open. Then he’d mumble under his breath in French that he’d never seen a child as gifted as she.

Three hours after his departure, she remained on the padded bench. Her fingers giving life to a melody etched onto her soul.

“Chaisley, my goodness.” Her silver-haired grandmother—her favorite person other than her mother and father—entered the music room. “You’ve been in here for hours tinkering away.” Grandmother’s accent was thicker than her father’s, and Chaisley loved to listen to the cadence of her words. Like music itself.

Chaisley tore her eyes from the piano. “It’s so beautiful, Grandmother. I couldn’t help myself.”

Grandmother pulled a tapestry-covered wing-backed chair up next to the bench and sat. “Did you know that Steinway pianos were founded by a man from my mother’s home country? They’ve made the best pianos in the world since the 1850s. When your father wanted to surprise you with one, I heartily agreed that it was the only piano we should buy.” She ran her hand over the sleek gold lettering, just like Chaisley had done. “It is indeed beautiful, child. As is your music. I could hardly believe my ears.”

“It’s like it’s all trapped inside me, just waiting to burst forth and get out.”

“You’ve always been an old soul, Chaisley. Your words, your mannerisms. You’ve just turned ten years old today, and yet you talk like someone twice your age.” Grandmother winked at her. “Maybe that’s why we get along so well, my dear. My blond-haired, blue-eyed little cherub.”

Grandmother’s wrinkled hand reached out and touched Chais-

ley's cheek. *Old soul*. She'd overheard the grown-ups whispering that about her before. Was that why she didn't have any friends her own age?

Mother and Father walked into the room and that was when she noticed that the shadows of the tall windows had grown across the floor.

Mother walked over and pulled Chaisley into her arms. "Are you happy, dear?"

"Oh, yes. Thank you so very much." Happy didn't even begin to describe everything that danced within her.

Father winked, the glimmer in his eyes just like his mother's. "Maybe this will give you something to do other than burying your nose in your books."

Mother patted her hand. "There's nothing wrong with reading books, darling. Your father is teasing. Now, let's get you ready. We've planned a party for you at your favorite restaurant this evening."

Food and a party sounded like fun, but . . . Oh, how she wanted to stay at her precious piano. With a longing glance at it over her shoulder, she pasted on a smile. The piano would be there after the party.

Grandmother cleared her throat and stood. Chaisley saw tender understanding in her eyes. "Come on, little one. I'll help you get dolled up for your ten-year celebration."

**CH AISLEY PRESSED HER CHEEK** against the back window of the Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost limousine. *Silver Ghost*. From the day her father showed her the new automobile, Chaisley loved to repeat the name. She could imagine it came from a fairy tale. A melody line immediately formed in her mind. As the music swelled and grew into a symphony of story, she closed her eyes and allowed it to play. The sonata of the Silver Ghost finished with a flourish,

and she drew in her breath. She was . . . what? Content. Yes, that was it. Not only did the music inside her have a way to come to life now, but she'd begun to understand the structure of it. It made sense. Logical and yet beautifully mysterious. She could hardly wait for tomorrow's lesson with Monsieur Beaufort. A little chill raced up her arms and she replayed her new composition in her head.

"Perhaps we should ask Gerard to drop us off a few blocks away so we could take a stroll together. It's such a lovely evening."

Mum's words caused Chaisley to open her eyes and blink away the music. "Oh, could we? By the fountain? I could make a wish on my birthday!" She bounced on her seat as she faced her parents in the back of the long car.

Her dad chuckled. "Of course. Change seats with me, Chais." They did so, and he tapped on the glass behind him and spoke to Gerard.

If only Grandmother could have come with them! But she'd had a sudden bad headache, and as much as she wanted to come, she couldn't.

Grandmother's disappointed tears had made Chaisley want to cry herself. A party just wouldn't be the same without the one grandparent she'd ever known, who'd lived with them since she was a baby.

She sighed and looked at the sparkly lights outside and the people dressed in their finery. She loved watching out the window as they drove to the city in their motor car. But tonight, her mind drifted back to the shiny Steinway Grand sitting in the new music room. The lavish wing of the home built for *her*. And her music. A laugh bubbled up inside her and escaped once again. What a joyous day.

But as the world slid by the car's window, Father's words from earlier drifted back into her mind. Did she really read too many books? Didn't every child read books? Just because she enjoyed

reading and the music that played in her mind—that didn't make her odd, did it?

The car hit a bump in the road, and Chaisley's forehead banged into the window. She rubbed at the smarting spot.

"You'd better lean back, Chais." Father grinned and shook his head at her.

She rubbed one last time. Every time they drove to the city, the same thing happened. She'd hit her head on the glass while peering out the window, Father would suggest she lean back, and she would obey and gaze out the window some more. But it seemed her forehead always inched back to where she could enjoy the cool feel of the glass against her skin.

Mum moved to the seat next to her father and took his hand. The special smiles they shared together always made Chaisley feel warm and protected.

A terrible screaming punctured her happy bubble and filled the car. Air-raided sirens!

All the air in Chaisley's lungs whooshed out as she screamed. She closed her eyes tight—wait . . . what was that sound?

The roar of airplane engines.

Her eyes popped open and she saw Father's eyes were wide. "Turn the car around! Now!"

The earth rumbled beneath them and the car shook. The blast was so loud that Chaisley cupped her hands over her ears to stop the ringing.

"Turn *around!*" Father's mouth shaped the same command, though the ringing and roar all around her drowned out his voice.

Gerard cranked the steering wheel, and Dad pulled Mum under his arm. He waved Chaisley closer, but they were so far away. The small space between their seats turned into a chasm as she felt frozen in place.

A bright light from the other side of the car made her snap her gaze to the window.

What was that? It was coming fast. Getting brighter and brighter . . .

With a sharp inhale, her hands fell to her sides and she stared as time seemed to slow down.

Mum screamed. Father grabbed for Chaisley and her mum, but his hands met air as they jostled around inside the car. An awful new sound filled her ears—screeching, screaming metal. Chaisley cried out, reached for her father, and saw something in his eyes she'd never seen before.

Fear.

She turned to Mum just in time to see her head smash against the window and bounce back. Her eyes shut. Blood trickled down her face.

“Oh God, no! Please . . . save us!” Father's words jerked Chaisley's eyes off her mother.

Chaisley swung her gaze to follow his. The lights—and whatever was behind them—were pushing them toward a massive stone wall.

She screamed and tried to reach for Father again. If she could get to him, she'd be safe.

But he was too far away.

They slammed into the wall.

The impact threw Chaisley from her seat.

Glass shattered.

The car crunched.

Her father shouted her name.

### THREE MONTHS LATER

“So there's no hope?” Grandmother's whispered words from somewhere across the room traveled over the length of Chaisley's body like a tiny wisp of wind.

The last remnants of sleep disappeared and she rubbed at her face.

A man sighed. “There’s plenty of hope for her life now that all her other wounds have had time to mend.” She recognized the voice—her father’s best friend. The only doctor she’d ever known. “But the tiny glass shards did too much damage to her eyes. I’m sorry. Her skin has healed, yes. You can barely tell the places she had stitches. Her broken bones have mended. I know you want her to be exactly like she was before. Perfect in appearance and . . .” He paused. A deep breath. “You’d like her to be perfect with all her senses intact. But God has given us a different path. She’s young and strong and needs to know the truth.” Footsteps brushed the carpet. An all-too-familiar sound now. “Chaisley. Can you hear me?”

Her dry throat burned as she opened her mouth. “Yes, Dr. G.”

“Do you understand what is going on?” The scent of peppermint whirled around her with his words.

“Yes.” Her own words cracked. She swallowed. “I can’t see. I won’t ever be able to see again.” The words were mere facts. She’d had three long months with the dark to understand them. They didn’t hurt. Not anymore.

Unlike the knowledge that Mother and Father were dead.

“Well, I want to send a new tutor over for you. You need to learn braille and other life skills. There’s no reason you shouldn’t enjoy a very full life. Your parents would want this for you. *We* want this for you.” His tone wasn’t harsh, but it sounded . . . determined. Funny how everyone’s voice was different now that she could no longer see their faces. But she could feel what she used to be able to see. Like dynamics inserted into a piece of music.

Grandmother gasped. “Grafton, don’t you think that’s a little too brash? She’s just a child.”

“Celestia, your son was like a brother to me. You know very well what the will stated. And I’m taking my job very seriously. Chaisley is like my own daughter, and I won’t see her bedridden. She is brilliant, talented, and capable and if I have anything to

do with it, she will receive every benefit she deserves and live life to the fullest.” His statements were clipped and then he cleared his throat.

The rustling of Grandmother’s dress told Chaisley the older woman had risen. And when Grandmother stood, she meant business. Chaisley chewed on her bottom lip, her ears tuned to every breath, every hint of sound.

“Young man, might I remind you to whom you speak. I understand *exactly* what the will stated—I aided my son in the writing of it—but remember that we are co-guardians of our dear girl, and *I* am related by blood. This is *my* estate. *My* granddaughter. And I do not appreciate being trampled over by a mere boy who used to build mud pies in my flower gardens, *Timothy*.” A thud accompanied each word, followed by several thumps at the end to punctuate.

Grandmother didn’t need her cane to assist her in walking, but she said it made her feel more comfortable to carry it. No doubt to help her get her points across.

And the fact that she called him *Timothy* . . . she must really be in a lather.

“There’s no need for reminders of the past.” The doctor’s voice sounded less on the verge of cracking as he chuckled.

Hearing Dr. G talk with Grandmother was almost like hearing Dad’s voice again. Warm but firm. She let out a sigh and snuggled against the pillows.

The doctor continued. “I apologize, ma’am. I truly do. But you can’t keep her sequestered and bedridden. She needs fresh air. She needs to run around. She’s healthy and robust, but she won’t stay that way if you continue to coddle her for fear of losing *her* as well.”

No one ever scolded Grandmother. Ever. How would she respond?

He cleared his throat again, and Chaisley listened as the footsteps moved away. Possibly to the window? His voice was deeper

and quieter as it spanned the expanse of the room. “We have seen amazing things among the blind. Why won’t you allow her to live? Not just live . . . thrive.”

Grandmother huffed. The rustle of one of her lace hankies—no doubt—muffled her sniffs. Amazing how all the sounds were distinguishable now. Her sure, soft footfalls came toward Chaisley. The scent of lilac preceded Grandmother’s hand touching her own. “My dearest, I never wanted you to have to go through any of this. I’m sorry you’ve had to overhear our discussion. But know this—I love you—”

“We both do.” Dr. Grafton’s gentle, firm voice again.

Grandmother cleared her throat. “Would you excuse Grafton and me? I’d like to speak to him downstairs.”

“But . . . I want to hear.” Why did her own voice sound so weak and mouse-like? She wanted to tell them that she *did* want to live . . . to thrive.

“I’d like to speak to Dr. Grafton alone.” Grandmother’s tone brooked no argument.

She nodded. “Yes, Grandmother. I’ll be fine.” As soon as Dr. Grafton challenged her grandmother something had shifted inside her.

The pain from her injuries had overshadowed every part of her life but her grief for many weeks. And her body had been so very tired. Then her other senses often became overwhelmed as they took up the slack from her loss of sight.

But to hear him say that she was healing and could live her life encouraged her more than she dared imagine. Today was the first day she had any gumption to do anything other than what she was told.

She wanted to live. Oh, how she desired it!

But the world was a scary place in the dark. Her room was safe. Her bed her little cocoon of comfort.

Tears pricked her eyes. “*Be brave, my little munchkin . . . God*

*will always be with you.*” How could she be brave? She couldn’t see. . . . Her parents were gone. . . .

“*Be brave . . .*” Father’s words echoed in her head. Whenever she faced something new, he’d say the same phrase. She could hear his voice, clear and strong in her mind. Oh, she never wanted to forget his voice.

A surge of warmth rushed through her body. She *would* be brave. For Mother and Father.

But as soon as the feeling came, it left.

How could she be brave? She was scared. Helpless. A little blind orphan girl . . .

The tears returned in earnest. For weeks, she’d battled the dark and the nightmares that accompanied it. Days passed in a sludge of smothering unknowns. What would she do without her parents? What would she do without her sight?

And what would happen to the music that multiplied and grew inside her each day?

**MARY BETH BRIGMAN**, the teacher Dr. G had brought in twenty-two days ago, coached her down the steps. “You’re doing splendidly, young lady. You’ve just about mastered every area of the house without any aid.”

At the bottom of the grand staircase, the coolness of the marble floor seeped through Chaisley’s thin ballet slippers and she bounced on the balls of her feet at the praise. She knew every inch of her home now, and not just by counting her steps or touching the walls with her hands and floors with her feet. No. Each room had its own sound. Its own pitch. Its own smell and feel. And in her mind, notes played across the musical staff in a different melody for each one.

Mary Beth engulfed her in a hug. “I’m so proud of you, little miss. It’s barely been three weeks since we started and you amaze

me every day. I'll go fetch your grandmother so you can show her. You head on back up the staircase."

She nodded, unable to contain a smile. Though her guardians had indeed gone to battle over her recovery, Dr. G had won, and the very next day Mary Beth arrived with a long stick. The walking stick was great for their walks outdoors and helped her to navigate unknown surroundings, but she didn't like to be hindered by it inside. She'd much rather skip and jump and glide through her own home. Each day, she felt a little stronger. A little braver. A little more alive.

As she turned for the stairs, a strange sensation tugged at her. Melodies and harmonies and symphonies burst into her mind. Notes from the lowest of basses to the highest of trebles.

Sliding her feet back round, she hesitated. Dare she? The room called to her. The music begged her. A lone tear slid down her cheek. She hadn't wanted to venture back into that room since that terrible night. . . .

She inhaled but didn't dare move just yet. She released her breath as the music inside her swelled.

It was back. Wholly and completely.

The music exploded in her head and heart. No stopping the pull—it drew her like a magnet. She touched her right heel behind her to the stair and felt the line of it. If she turned forty-five degrees, she'd be facing her beloved music room. Without counting her steps, she headed straight toward it. The room that had been closed since her birthday and—

No. The nightmare couldn't control her any longer. The loss of her parents couldn't squelch the beauty that deep down she *knew* lay ahead.

If only she allowed the music to take over. Fill her heart. Soothe her mind.

Her right foot met the bottom of the door. Both hands reached for the brass handles she could see in her mind's eye.

She pushed and wrinkled her nose. Stale air permeated the room like a musty perfume. Still she moved forward. The warmth from the sun spilled over her. Father had built walls of windows into this room. At least the staff hadn't drawn all the drapes. The warmth on her face told her the sun was shining in.

Hands held out in front of her, Chaisley searched for what she desired most. The one thing that would bring a smile as it reminded her of her parents for the rest of her life.

She walked straight into it and jolted from the force of the bump. The slick surface felt wonderful under her hands, soothing the ache inside. As she allowed her fingers to guide her, she knew she was standing in the great curve on the right-hand side.

Working her way around to the keyboard, a sensation she hadn't felt since her birthday bubbled up inside her tummy.

Excitement.

With a swift turn to put the piano at her back, she steadied herself and then counted her steps back to the double doors. But she ran into the doorjamb instead.

Which was just as well, as she'd left the doors open.

Something she quickly rectified. With the click of the doors, she turned again and held the handles behind her back.

Using all the techniques Mary Beth had taught her, she focused and counted steps again. To the edge of the piano. Then back to the doors. This time she ran into the left door. Almost center. Better try again. Back to the piano again.

Ten times she repeated the process until it was exact and she found her way each time.

With a shaky breath, she allowed a smile and lifted her chin.

At the piano, the fallboard was down over the keys, the bench pushed in. But she fixed that within seconds and let her hands find their way. Without making a sound, she skimmed them up and down the keyboard with reverence. She remembered what it all looked like. The sets of two black keys and the sets of three black

keys divided up the white keys, making the notes easy to find. From left to right, C was before a set of two. F before a set of three.

In her mind, the picture unfolded . . .

And she could *see*. Her fingers moved over the keys, the music rippling like a ribbon in her mind. The tip of her nose burned as tears rose to the surface. Her sight wasn't coming back. And neither were her parents.

She knew that.

But right now, sitting at her piano, she felt like any moment she would soar right out a window and into the heavens. A sense of purpose poured out of her into the keys, a melody swirling and rushing through her like a river in a storm.

The smile that broke through her grief warmed her to her toes.

And for the first time since the accident that stole everything from her, Chaisley had hope.

CELESTIA FRAPPIER HOOKED the ornate cane over her arm and rushed to the house to see Chaisley. The walk uphill to the manor had kept her in shape all these years, but the ache in her hip after kneeling at the family cemetery reminded her she wasn't getting any younger. More painful than the ache in her hip was the ache in her heart. The loss of her only child and his wife had taken its toll. Like part of her heart had been wrenched from her chest while the remaining pieces struggled to be put back together. But she'd done everything in her power to not let her granddaughter see it.

Melanie—the sweet daughter of Chaisley's teacher—had run out to the garden to fetch her for a 'spectacular look-see at the bottom of the stairs,' as the young girl put it. Mary Beth always summoned Celestia for each milestone her granddaughter achieved.

Chaisley had made so much progress, it astounded her. She sighed. She'd have to apologize to Grafton—he'd been right after

all. But she didn't mind. Not one bit. It was a good thing the man would be there for afternoon tea. They had much to discuss.

As for her own battered heart, it would heal. Especially with the joy of Chaisley around.

Just then, Mary Beth trotted around the corner in a most unladylike manner. But the young woman beamed, and Celestia understood her excitement. The whole house brimmed with the news of her granddaughter's daily progress.

Losing sight wouldn't hold the child back.

Celestia felt the crinkles around her eyes deepen as she smiled. What joy the little girl had brought into her grief-stricken life.

But upon reaching the staircase, she gasped. No sign of Chaisley anywhere.

"Um, I'm sorry, ma'am. I'll run up and see if she's taking a rest. Or possibly a jaunt to the loo."

Mary Beth was halfway to the top when a glissando reached Celestia's ears.

*What?*

Her heart clenched at the memory of Chaisley's birthday and her present. With an abrupt turn, she headed toward the music room, Mary Beth close on her heels.

No. It couldn't be. Could it?

Celestia had ordered everyone to stay clear of the room since that awful night. No one had dared to enter other than the one maid that was allowed to clean in there.

Arpeggios up and down the piano sounded. Then a spectacular and flowing melody.

When Celestia reached the doors, she stopped. Her heart thundered. Her mouth dropped open. With a shaking hand, she opened one door and then stared. The song grew in volume and harmonies. The music coming from the instrument was beautiful. Unlike anything she'd ever heard before.

It jolted at a dissonant chord. The music stopped. Chaisley's

mumbled words couldn't be deciphered, but then the music started again.

Celestia peered across the room. Could her eyes and ears be deceiving her?

No. It was true! Her granddaughter sat on the bench, her eyes wide open, face toward the windows, a jubilant smile lifting her lips.

Mary Beth nudged Celestia and whispered, "My goodness, Mrs. Frappier, you didn't tell me the child could play. I would've brought her in here had I known. How long has she been studying?"

Celestia could only shake her head.

"Ma'am? Are you quite all right?"

The sweet girl's question brought Celestia out of her stupor. She closed her mouth and composed herself. She swallowed and cleared her throat. How could she explain this? There was no way . . . other than divine appointment.

"We must call Monsieur Beaufort immediately." The words spilled out on a soft whisper.

"Who?" Mary Beth stepped in front of her, brows knit deep. "Ma'am, I'm confused."

"Monsieur Beaufort is the piano teacher." With a deep breath, Celestia put into words the only explanation she could give—the truth. "Three hours, Mary Beth. That's it."

"Excuse me, ma'am?"

"My granddaughter . . . she's had one lesson and only played three hours prior to today."