

The Piano at the Station



By Helen Rutter



Have you ever seen the pianos at train stations? I think they might be magic. My name is Sonny and I live next door to a train station. Most people would hate it. The noise and the people always coming and going, never staying. But I like it. I like the sound of the trains; it sends me to sleep. Once I went and stayed at my grandma's and it was too quiet. To me, the silence sounded louder than the trains.

It was a Sunday afternoon when I first heard the music. It was really hot and all our windows were wide open. Mum was on her phone like always. I told her I was going to put the bin down the shoot. We have a shoot for our rubbish, like a huge slide. It's pretty cool. I didn't go to the shoot that day, though, I went to the station.

I followed the sound and found the piano. There was an old man sitting on the stool, smiling as he played. It looked like he only had one tooth. There was no one listening to him play. I sat on a little ledge outside the sandwich shop and watched him.

He kept changing the music. It would go from fast to slow, from happy to sad, from angry to brooding. I did not know why the man kept changing songs. At first it made me cross. I wanted him to play one song all the way through. But then I looked more closely and followed his eyes. He was watching people as they passed, busy in their own worlds, unaware of him. He was changing the music to suit each person!

A little girl skipped by, just ahead of her mum, and he played twinkly ballerina music. She smiled and pirouetted, but her mum took her arm and pulled her along. A businessman speaking loudly into his phone swooshed past. The old man played a fast, important-sounding Boom Boom Boom. I smiled. This was a fun game. I looked at the next person, a man who had too many bags and kept dropping them on the floor. I wondered what song he would get, and then the sound of the circus came from the piano. I laughed out loud.

A woman approached from outside the station, not knowing which way to go. She stopped and rubbed her head. She took a big breath in and the pianist changed the song. A sad, lonely sound came from the keys and, as I watched her, the woman seemed to get smaller with every note. When she slowly, sadly, walked towards the piano, the old man stopped playing, turned to the lady and smiled. "Are you OK?" he asked kindly.

The lady's face changed instantly and she smiled back at him. He changed his song - lighter now, more hopeful. Maybe she just needed someone to see her, to ask if she was OK.

#ReadForEmpathy

