

THE CLOCKWORK SHADOWS

Elara Vance & Julian Thorne



The Melody of Shadows

Ryk x_z



Elara discovers a tarnished silver music box hidden beneath a heavy velvet shroud in her grandmother's silent attic. Dust motes dance in a single beam of moonlight as she reaches out to touch the inexplicably cold metal.



As she winds the rusted key, a haunting and dissonant melody fills the air, sounding like a distorted lullaby. The temperature in the room plummets, and the shadows in the corners begin to stretch and twist like reaching fingers.



Back in her bedroom, Elara finds the music box sitting on her nightstand despite having left it upstairs. The lid slowly creaks open on its own, and the melody begins to play at a frantic, uneven pace.



Looking into her vanity mirror, Elara sees a tall, pale figure with hollow eyes standing directly behind her. When she spins around, the room is empty, yet the reflection still shows the dark entity looming over her shoulder.



Every clock in the house stops at exactly midnight, their rhythmic ticking replaced by the sound of wet footsteps echoing in the hallway. Elara huddles under her blankets, watching the brass door handle slowly and silently turn.



The bedroom door swings open to reveal a void of absolute darkness where the hallway should be. Pale, spindly hands grip the doorframe, their long, jagged fingers scratching deep, permanent grooves into the wood.



Elara tries to flee, but the floorboards beneath her feet turn into a viscous black liquid that pulls at her ankles. The music box melody grows deafening, shifting from a song into a series of panicked, rhythmic heartbeats.



Suddenly, she is back in the attic, but the windows are gone and the walls are covered in thousands of unblinking eyes. The figure from the mirror stands in the center of the room, offering the silver box back to her with a silent grin.



The entity whispers Elara's name in a voice that sounds like dry leaves skittering across a grave. She realizes the music is no longer coming from the box, but vibrating from deep within her own chest as the shadows swallow her whole.



The attic falls silent once more, the silver music box tucked away safely under its velvet shroud. A new, dusty portrait now hangs on the wall, depicting a girl with a frozen expression of terror and eyes as silver as moonlight.