



Ghost Music

An Yu

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A frustrated piano teacher gains some much-needed clarity and perspective in An Yu's novel *Ghost Music*.

Song Yan lives with her husband and mother-in-law, but family secrets and thwarted ambitions prevent her from developing a close relationship with either of them. In the midst of her loneliness, inexplicable mushroom deliveries liven up her life. Then a mysterious invitation from an impossible sender reminds her of the person she once was and the dreams she sacrificed for her current reality. No one can change the past, but Song Yan's future becomes less dreary with every new chance she takes.

It starts with dreams. Song Yan once dreamed of being a concert pianist like her father. Now, years after giving up on that goal, she dreams of strange mushrooms that glow in the dark and beg to be remembered. As her home life crumbles in slow, heartbreaking fashion, she becomes more obsessed with her music and her mushrooms, and the power they both hold over her memories and imagination. The line between dream and reality grows fainter the further she travels on her poignant, imperfect journey toward contentment, if not true happiness.

Song Yan, like everyone she knows, aches: for lost loved ones, places that no longer exist as they once did, and careers that might have been. Some buckle under the strain of their sorrows, and there are times when Song Yan feels as though she may end up disappearing along with them. But that is not her destiny. She is fated to push through the disappointment just as she always has, but this time, there might be something worth keeping on the other side.

Juxtaposing unreal imagery and distinctive prose with very human characters, *Ghost Music* is a novel about learning to cope with lost dreams and missed opportunities.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (January / February 2023)

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