

The Great Ivories

by Alexandra Lane

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They say there's a new show in the city, one that no well-bred lady or gentleman should miss. They say Arctic explorers stumbled across a tusk larger than any ever found, protruding out of the melting permafrost, and only discovered that the fully preserved bull mammoth it was attached to was alive when it began to defrost. What did they do with it? They carved keys right into those great tusks and coupled it to some massive musical contraption in the old opera house. They sat two young ladies in virginal white before that colossus, one at each tusk, and had them play.

They say the music is so pure it causes the mammoth to weep. Broadsides and hawkers alike claim one crystal vial of 'Titan's Tears' will cure what ails you, never mind the price.

And when he dies at last, when his bones are all that remains, the mark of us will still be cut deep into those great ivories; they will sit gathering dust in a palace-sized cabinet of curiosities, amidst the yellowed bones of his brethren.

They say the moths have changed from white to something darker because the trees are darker now too and this is how they must survive us and our black pall of smoke; and I have a feeling, a feeling the great titan is not crying for itself, and that maybe we should count ourselves lucky we've lost only this much.