

Empty Spaces

by Foster Trecost

They spoke in low tones, hushed against a heavy din: "Have you seen him?"

"No, they put him on three."

"Our days are numbered, I can feel it."

"What are you talking about? Old-timers like us built this place, they need us."

Curious faces passed, some hurried, some not.

"They don't stop like they used to. Some don't even slow down."

"No, they don't. You're right about that."

"We're not famous. What will happen to us?"

"I don't know. Maybe nothing."

The new arrival on three generated much excitement. Hopes had been placed upon his shoulders, hopes of renewal built on the memories of days gone by, glory days. He had been ushered in with great expectation.

The building became quiet except for a few. "I hate closing time. Remember a few months back? They shut the doors and cleaned house. We're next, they're making changes."

"Just calm down."

"I'm not ready for some second-rate room. Or worse, a doctor's office."

Loud clomps resonated through the great hall, perfectly timed, rhythmic. A suit-clad man circled the room and stopped in front of the two who had been talking. "This one," he said. "And this one, too." He pointed with a carefree flair, as if he had no idea what he was doing.

The paintings were removed and placed on a cart.

"Put them in storage and hang these new ones, change out the cards...quick! I want to go home."

The cart was wheeled away, leaving empty spaces on the wall where the paintings had hung. No one could hear them cry.

