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The Glass Minstrel

Hayden Thorne

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It is the Christmas season in mid-19th century Bavaria. Two fathers, Abelard Bauer and Andreas Schifffer, are brought together through the tragic deaths of their sons. Bauer, a brilliant toymaker, fashions glass Christmas ornaments, and his latest creation is a minstrel with a secret molded into its features.

When Schiffer sees Bauer's minstrel ornament in the toy shop, he realizes that Bauer is struggling to keep his son's memory alive through his craft. At first he tries to fault him for this, but then recognizes that he, too, is seeking solace and healing by reading his son's diary, a journal that reveals, in both painful as well as beautiful detail, the true nature of Heinrich's relationship with Stefan.

Fifteen-year-old Jakob Diederich is the son of a poor widow. The boy is burdened with his own secret, and he develops an obsession with a traveling Englishman who stays at the inn where Jakob works. The lives of Bauer, Schiffer, and Diederich intersect during the holiday as Schiffer tries to focus on his family in the present, Bauer struggles to reconcile his past, and Jakob copes with an uncertain future.

Echoing the sensibilities of melancholy 19th Century folktales, lyrical prose and rich period detail quietly weave a moving tale of redemption, hope, and haunting, but timeless, themes.

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