

Chord of Evil by Sarah Rayne

5 stars

Phineas Fox investigates the mystery of a portrait featuring hand written music from WWII

Toby Tallis asks his friend Phineas to look into the disappearance of his cousin, who has suddenly vanished without a trace. At her flat they find a portrait of a woman holding a sheet of music titled 'Giselle's Music'. The portrait belongs to her godfather, Stefan Cain, who came to England as a young boy; a refugee after World War Two. Looking closer at the portrait, Phineas notices a strange chord – a tritone – once called the devil in music. It is a discordant tone, once banned in Church music. Phin's current commission is to trace the erratic journeys and various fates of several eminent composers and conductors sent into exile by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s and to provide factual evidence for a textbook for a northern university. Seeing the tritone sets Phineas on a journey to discover who Giselle was and why she would have used the tritone chord.

The storyline in this book is intricately plotted and gripping from the first page. It explores the love between mother and child and the sacrifice that a mother is willing to make for her children. It delves into the world of music and orchestras, the horror of the concentration camps of World War Two and how the human spirit is tenacious and can survive even the worst atrocities. Yet the book is written in a light-hearted tone which does not suck the reader down into the dark depths that are covered in the book. A most enjoyable read.

Saphira

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review.