

VERSE: A TOMB IN GHENT

"A Tomb in Ghent" offers a narrative that weaves together music, passion, and the evocative setting of Ghent through the life course of an English family transplanted by economic necessity. The tale begins with a portrait of a young maiden, characterized by her English heritage, quick step, and a predilection for singing ancient chants and complex melodies that betray a deep connection to a musical past—tones evoking Palestrina and Scarlatti. This singing habit becomes a narrative thread that draws us into her world and foreshadows the convergence of music, family, and legacy in the chapters that follow.

The story shifts to years prior, introducing an English workman who moves to Ghent, seeking prosperity. His life, marked by solitude and an austere devotion to his ailing son, is intertwined with tales of heroic legacy, symbolized by the mythical dragon atop the belfry of Ghent. The narrative grows around the bond between this father and son, their shared reverence for an ancient cathedral, and a particular statue—the White Maiden's Tomb that captivates the young boy's imagination. This tale unfolds against the backdrop of St. Bavon's Cathedral, depicted with a richness that evokes both the visually tangible—its architecture, the play of light—and the ethereal power of music embodied in the organ's resonance.

Transitioning to the son's adolescence, the story highlights his burgeoning musical talent, nurtured amid the cathedral's grandeur, sparking a shift from manual toil to the pursuit of artistry, under his father's proud gaze. Yet, the narrative also marks the passage of time with loss and the inevitable stirring of change, notably through the emergence of the singing maiden—a living counterpart to the stone effigy that had long inspired the boy.

In her, the young artist finds not only a muse but a partner, ushering joy, companionship, and a shared purpose into their home. Their union, culminating in the birth of a daughter, symbolizes the generational transmission of passion and talent. Nonetheless, time ensnares the musician in its inexorable decline, leading to poignant scenes of love, loss, and the continued comforting presence of the cathedral—as both sanctuary and final resting place.

The narrative closes on a cycle of life and legacy, illustrated through the musician's daughter and their intertwined destinies with the cathedral, where echoes of the Gloria serve as a haunting, yet hopeful, coda to a story deeply rooted in the personal and the universal themes of love, loss, and transcendence through art.