

"THE PIANIST"

A Short Love Story by

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IRIS IN:

EXT. CITY SCAPE - LATE AFTERNOON

From this vantage over the roofs, animalistic sounds of the city threaten to overwhelm.

Soon, something else, engulfs all others--

A lone piano mixed into a concerto.

We float to a series of apartment windows below, finding--

EXT. PIANIST'S WINDOW - APT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

--in, one particular window, a tall lanky man in his late 30s resting on the sill. His distant eyes stare foolishly out, waiting for something amazing to happen.

This is our PIANIST.

Through the flowing curtains, the background illuminates--

INT. LIVING ROOM - PIANIST'S APT. - CONTINUOUS

Upscale, with two rooms in the background, along with a bathroom, door ajar.

In the well-managed kitchen, a pile of dishes. On the table, delivery receipts.

Immaculately framed photos line the walls, dating back years--

A younger tuxedoed Pianist, shaking hands with world leaders, other musicians, celebrities, etc. His lucrative career as a concert pianist.

Beside a copy of "Catcher in the Rye," yellowed newspaper clippings and musical periodicals. The headlines read--

**"Where is our beloved genius?"** Another reads **"Local genius treated for Otosclerosis...outlook dire."** Below, an old photo of a smiling, young Pianist.

In the corner -- the muscular Bosendorfer Concert Grand Piano. A former warrior, neutered into early retirement--

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. LIVING ROOM - PIANIST'S APT. - NIGHT

Moon glow softens Pianist's sleeping face as he lays slumped on the hardwood below the window.

Static silence fills the room, items of his existence remain untouched.

Until -- a single melodic note travels across the void.

A violin.

He doesn't hear at first, but -- his eyes flutter, focusing. Shifts off the floor, arching his neck to peer out--

Nothing across the rainy cityscape, only anonymous buildings.

Except -- a lone square light shining brightly. And there, seated at the window, instrument to her chin--

The VIOLINIST.

Eyes closed, graceful fingers finessing the neck with ease.

His unreadable eyes never blink. Not once.

Like a dream, the moment is otherworldly. She is unknowingly expressing herself in the most simple and profound way--

Instantaneously, an idea -- counts the floors to her window (okay -- 8 floors). Grabs whatever belongings he needs, dashes for the door -- and FREEZES, staring at the handle.

Slowly, he shrinks away from the door. He can't do it--

DISSOLVE TO:

As she finishes, a certain sadness hits. Pulls the window shut, glides away, and the lights darken--

FINALLY -- He can breathe again. Reaches and pulls the window pane down, drawing the curtains.

Absentmindedly slumps backward on the piano bench, not sure what to do with himself--

Reaches into a nearby drawer, pulls out loose pages of sheet music, then three pencils. Places the sheet music on the stand, pencils placed beside.

Massages the keys, dust particles trickling in the moonlight,  
her sweet sound haunting his memory--

His head hangs low, contemplating. Peers at the sheet--

HIS POV -- the blank sheet peering back.

His fingers an extension of his mind, contemplating--

BANGING DOWN ON THE FIRST KEY, THEN THE NEXT -- with such  
ferocity, such skill--

SMASH CUT TO:

**A MUSICAL MONTAGE BEGINS.**

--Bathed in morning light, he plays, a pencil tucked behind  
his ear, adding a new note.

Discarded paper lay about, stops and starts of genius.

--At night, in his favorite position at the window, watching  
the Violinist as she plays. His face one of pure joy--

His fingers finessing the keys--

MATCH CUT TO:

His hands lovingly caressing the open air--

DISSOLVE TO:

His body is slumped at the piano. Takes a moment to rub his  
lower back--

DISSOLVE TO:

Through time-lapse, the night sky turns to day, back to night  
-- a silhouetted figure, working.

The floor has become less cluttered.

The keys are devoid of dust. His long fingers expertly move  
across them, he and the instrument are again, one--

DISSOLVE TO:

THE SHEET MUSIC -- filled with penciled notes, not one  
mistake--

Gliding toward the window, across the way, the Violinist plays. She stops abruptly, her ears may be playing tricks. She might just hear the wisp of a piano in the night air--

**THE MONTAGE ENDS.**

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

INT. BATHROOM - PIANIST'S APT. - DAY

Pianist buttons up his nicest shirt. Reaches for the hanging jacket, and slides it on.

INT. LIVING ROOM - PIANIST'S APT. - MOMENTS LATER

Closes the lid, carefully pulls the sheet music to his chest.

Glimpses out the open window -- no Violinist. Empty. Only flowing curtains, beckoning him.

A smile spreads as he gently pulls the curtain closed.

At the front door, he holds a clenched, empty grip over the handle. His brow slightly perspired--

Before fear gets the best of him, takes a deep breath --  
TWISTS THE HANDLE, EXITS.

INT. ELEVATOR - PIANIST'S APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Lit buttons ascend on the pad, back and forth--

Music held firmly to his chest, Pianist huddles in his corner, tensely eyeing--

The ELEVATOR OPERATOR, at attention in the other corner. Acknowledges his passenger with a curious nod--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - PIANIST'S APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

WHOOSHING CARS, HONKS, THOUSANDS OF CONVERSATIONS. In the middle, Pianist is planted on the sidewalk, being nudged to and fro by passerby's, before knocking him--

Toward the building across the street -- the familiar window with the flowing curtains. She's close, yet so far--

He nudges the button for access to the cross walk. Other pedestrians stand close -- too close. One PEDESTRIAN tries small talk--

PEDESTRIAN  
(indecipherable)

Pianist didn't catch that, or he's too nervous to decipher -- nervously, he takes a step away.

THE CROSSWALK SIGN -- Solid Red hand turns to White Walk Man.

En mass, pedestrians cross paths. Clutching his music, Pianist carefully motions his way through.

A CARELESS WOMAN, eyes glued to her phone, unknowingly collides with him. In the briefest of seconds, the phone drops -- he reaches to grab it, RELEASING THE MUSIC FROM HIS GRASP--

Breath held, his eyes WIDEN as the sheets flutter in the air--

EVERYTHING SLOWS TO FRAGMENTS OF MOTION -- save for him.

Extending his hands outward, tightly grips onto the music. As he pulls the music down, a bright smile crosses his face, only to be met with--

NORMAL MOTION RESUMES -- A WALL OF CROSSING PEDESTRIANS, VICIOUSLY PUSHING HIM BACK TO THE CORNER WHERE HE STARTED--

EXT. STREET - PIANIST'S APT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

--spilling backward onto the pavement. A few passersby's snicker as they walk past, the Careless Cell Phone Woman included.

He's hurt. Laying there a moment, he peers up--

The crosswalk sign is emboldened with the solid "Don't Walk" Hand.

He rolls to his feet, steps to the curb, and holds his hand out into traffic.

A WHEEZING, BEATEN CAB SCREECHES TO A STOP. He gets in, points his destination to the driver. They proceed into the intersection--

WIDE ON THIS ANGLE--

--where the cab PUTTERS to a stop, then, officially dies.

The driver bangs the wheel, turns the ignition, nothing--

The traffic light changes, yellow to red -- they're now blocking traffic. Cars pass and weave respectfully around--

Except -- the CAR THAT COMES FROM NOWHERE, PLOWING INTO THEM HEAD-FIRST, spinning the cab like a top--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. AMBULANCE - CONTINUOUS

Through the windshield, the ambulance swerves through traffic, sirens blasting.

Paramedics work on a dazed, bloodied Pianist, the music clenched to his chest--

SMASH TO BLACK:

FADE IN:

EXT. STREET - PIANIST'S APT. BUILDING - ANOTHER DAY

Angled low toward the Violinist's building. A cane enters frame -- then a cast leg. Finally, the other leg, cast-less.

Pianist is banged up, cuts and bruised, but still persistent.

Approaches the crosswalk, pressing the button with his cane, waits patiently, surrounded by more careless pedestrians--

Sighs to himself. Another day--

The Crosswalk switches to the White Walk Man--

The Pianist hobbles off the curb with great difficulty. A wrinkled, tiny hand takes his wrist. He turns, eyes meeting--

An ELDERLY WOMAN holds him in assistance.

As they cross, WE HEAR only muffled footsteps on the pavement, the distant honking of an approaching car horn--

The Elderly Woman's reassuring hand rests on his wrist--

A faint smile crosses his face. The parallel curb is slowly within sight--

HIS CANE TAPS AGAINST THE CURB OF THE SIDEWALK -- THEY'VE REACHED THE OTHER SIDE!!

He extends his free hand into the air, victorious--

She beams up at him--

ELDERLY WOMAN

I remember you from TV. You used to play so beautifully...before--

He smiles compassionately, as she turns on her way.

With unblinking determination, he faces the building--

EXT. FRONT DOOR - VIOLINIST'S APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

A MOUNTAINOUS DOORMAN stands at attention. Pianist hobbles up, reaching for the handle--

SLAP! The gloved Doorman's hand slaps his bruised hand away!

They stare each other down--

Pianist side-steps the Doorman, the Doorman blocks. Tries the other side, Doorman counters.

This routine goes on, before, getting the hint, steps away-- the Doorman's suspicious eyes don't leave his.

Off-frame, a passing vendor rings a piano jingle with his cart. Pianist side-eyes the vendor -- Doorman subconsciously yawns.

The Pianist's eyebrow arches -- an idea.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FRONT DOOR - VIOLINIST'S APT. BUILDING - ANOTHER DAY

The Doorman, still at attention, when--

LEGEND: **"Two long, agonizing days later..."**

--a lulling piano creeps into his ears. As the lullaby continues, he begins yawning, dips his head into slumber--



The lullaby only grows louder as the UPRIGHT PIANO SQUEAKS INTO VIEW, the cast-less leg pushing it toward the door.

Just to be sure, Pianist plays another moment. Doorman snores a response -- that should do it. Wheels past--

INT. LOBBY - VIOLINIST'S APT. BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Pianist scans the tenant directory -- the 8th floor.

MOMENTS LATER

At the elevator, he rolls the piano to a stop. Pushes the button, music in one hand, sweating profusely. Rather pleased with himself--

Then sees the note, partially obscured by his piano--  
**"Out of order. Plenty of stairs--"**

SMASH CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER

The piano is pushed roughly against the first step, pokes his head up the stairwell--

HIS POV -- the stairs stretch, a la *Vertigo*.

Slumps down, defeated. He's quickly running out of options--

A lingering chord envelopes the air -- a violin.

Arches his head back up the stairwell -- is this a memory?

His eyebrows furrow, his lips thin -- reaches with outstretched fingers, and **CLAWS AND BEATS AT HIS CAST LEG, ANIMALISTIC.**

He doesn't shred it entirely, enough for it to bend.

He's crazy. The violin calls--

Breathing deep at his new power, holds the cane up -- tosses it aside.

He pulls out the music, clenching it tight -- HE'S RENEWED.

A SERIES OF IMAGES -- the piano, the beckoning stairs, the music permeating down--

Grabs the piano, angles it to the first step, and PUSHES  
SIDEWAYS, THE BEAUTIFUL WOOD CRUNCHING FROM THE WEIGHT--

INT. STAIRWELL - VIOLINIST'S APT. BUILDING - SAME

Pianist pushes with all his might, strain pressed into his  
temples, about to lose his footing at any moment--

DISSOLVE TO:

THE FLOOR NUMBERS float past. "2nd Floor," then "3rd" and  
"4th Floor." Never ending--

DISSOLVE TO:

The piano bangs on the landing of floor after floor, taking  
damage as it descends. Pieces shedding away--

DISSOLVE TO:

The "8th Floor" floats into view--

INT. HALLWAY - VIOLINIST'S APT. BUILDING -CONTINUOUS

A POV observes the stairwell. The piano is slowly shoved into  
view by a strong hand, wheeling gingerly onto the final  
landing, tattered--

The panting Pianist collapses, gasping DESPERATELY for  
breath, but -- senses someone. Lifts his head--

At long last -- the Violinist, in all her insurmountable  
beauty, staring quizzically at him. His field of view reveals  
her low to the ground--

Never blinking, he side-steps the piano--

SHE'S IN A WHEELCHAIR, the violin in her lap.

Quickly putting the pieces together -- a smile spreads, then  
finally, a sense of joy--

VIOLINIST

How did you--?

His face drops as he searches for the words--

Reaches into his pocket, presenting her the music, covered in  
specs of blood and sweat--

They stare at one another, transfixed--

The piano -- the Pianist living with Otosclerosis -- the wheel-chaired bound Violinist.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VIOLINIST'S APT. - LATE AFTERNOON

Seated by the window, violin to her chin, she plays with beautiful precision.

Playing at the shattered piano, his eyes never leaving hers--

Between them, on a stand, rests their music--

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WINDOW - VIOLINIST'S APT. BUILDING - SAME

We pull away from the window, giving them some privacy. Further and further, the music leads us.

Soon her building joins others, until the entire city is in view, resting up after another long day--

IRIS OUT:

THE END