

The Piano Player

by  
Hura Hill

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FADE IN -

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - BOURBON STREET - NIGHT

Three young white men exit a club, intoxicated, they stumble down the crowded street. The muffled sound of ragtime drifts with the pedestrians.

The 2AM mist blankets the street. At the corner, a disheveled old black man down on his luck, watches the men approach.

OLD BLACK MAN  
Could you spare any change?

The men laugh, one man digs in his pocket.

MAN #1  
Aye, I might have something.

Another man pats his pockets, with sarcasm.

MAN #2  
Damn, why even bother, you're just gonna get drunk-

MAN#3  
--You mean like us.

The three men cackle loudly.

The old man turns to walk away.

MAN #1  
Ah, hey aren't you that guy?

The old man stops, he turns around, stands erect with dignity.

MAN #1  
Damn man, that's Jonathan Quince.

MAN #3  
Who?

MAN #1  
He use to be *THE* first call jazz piano player in all of the southeast United States. I read this article about a year ago.

He extends his hand, Jonathan shakes his hand, then turns to walk away.

Man #1 stops him. Jonathan turns around.

MAN #1  
Man what happened to you?

EXT. EL DORADO, ARKANSAS - CLUB - NIGHT

*FLASHBACK 2024-*

Warm, humid as nightfall envelopes the town. The club settles in for a night of live music.

A waitress rushes drinks to a table, she takes their order.

A small audience awaits.

EXT. CLUB - PATIO - NIGHT

The band takes their spots, they settle in. A confident musician sits at the keyboard.

JONATHAN QUINCE, black male, 35, nods at the drummer.

The drummer nods back.

DRUMMER

One, two, three, four.

The band launches into a jazz fusion song. Jonathan plays a riff on the keyboard. The crowd reacts with applause.

After the set, the band breaks down their gear. Jonathan sees the manager approach.

MANAGER

Listen, you gotta play stuff people know, that's what keeps their attention. You guys are hot, but-

JONATHAN

--I decide what we play, you knew up front what we're about.

The manager looks at Jonathan sternly.

MANAGER

Here's the deal, I can pay what I promised, but you guys are fired.

JONATHAN

What?

The manager pulls out a wad of cash, he shoves it at Jonathan's chest.

He catches the money.

MANAGER

It's all there, now get out.

INT. AIRPORT CHECKPOINT - DAY

MARY KIM - black female, 40ish but looks 50. Pretentious, but a innocent pretentious. She mumbles to herself as she walks, a soft chuckle is her response.

Jonathan watches her, she nods her head. He follows.

They arrange the bollards to control passenger flow.

Jonathan Quince is new, Mary Kim trains him.

MARY KIM

This is nice, I can hear myself think.

JONATHAN

What do you think about?

MARY KIM

Things, I think of things.

She smiles.

MARY KIM

What about you?

JONATHAN

Music, I'm a musician. Piano.

Mary Kim nods approvingly.

MARY KIM

My daddy was a piano player, back on Bourbon street.

Jonathan raises his eyebrows.

Mary Kim nods as she looks at her watch.

MARY KIM

Daddy said he played everywhere. He said if you hit the *RIGHT KEYS*, they can take you all over the world.

Jonathan eyes her with skepticism. He smiles.

MARY KIM

My daddy's piano is taking up space, you should come get it.

JONATHAN

What? Me? But I don't need a piano nor do I have the room, my wife-

MARY KIM

--When's your day off? Just come  
by to see it.

INT. MARY KIM'S HOUSE - DAY

Mary Kim and Jonathan look over the piano.

A black spinet, faded letters that spell

*GULBRANSEN.*

Jonathan sits at the piano, he taps middle C.

MARY KIM

Go ahead piano player.

Jonathan raises his hands over the keys, he plays 'Autumn  
Leaves'.

Mary Kim closes her eyes, then opens them, moist with tears.

Smiling, Mary Kim pats Jonathan on the shoulder.

MARY KIM

How soon can you get it out of my  
house?

Jonathan runs a scale across the keys, nodding his head.

JONATHAN

Not bad, it's actually in tune.

MARY KIM

Every year, I have it tuned, just  
like daddy did.

JONATHAN

But don't you wanna keep it, you  
know, a keepsake to remember your  
father?

Mary Kim smiles.

MARY KIM

I have pictures, and the melodies  
are in my head.

Sighing, Jonathan gets up, rubbing his chin.

He spies a faded 8x10 on the wall behind her.

Jonathan sees the family resemblance.

JONATHAN

Tomorrow, I can come tomorrow.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Jonathan sits at the table, EARLENE - black female, 32, stands next to the stove, arms folded.

He wrings his hands.

JONATHAN

Babe, I'm sorry, uh maybe we can just sell it, it's in great condition.

Earlene shakes her head.

EARLENE (angry)

Why she just give you a damn piano? I'm so sick of you, mama can't come visit 'cause you got that bedroom as a studio, and now this piano.

Jonathan stands, he walks over to her. He hugs her.

JONATHAN

It won't be that bad, I promise.

INT. AIRPORT CHECKPOINT - DAY

Jonathan and Mary Kim set up the checkpoint.

Mary Kim excuses herself for a minute.

GLEENDA - black female, 27, walks over.

GLEENDA

Hey new guy.

JONATHAN

Hey what's up?

Glenda sits next to Jonathan.

GLEENDA

Are you married?

Jonathan smiles shyly.

JONATHAN

Yes I am, are you?

GLEENDA

Come on silly, a married woman's not gonna ask that question.

JONATHAN

You'd be surprised.

They laugh.

GLEENDA

How's Mary treating you? She's a little slow if you haven't noticed. But she's nice tho'.

JONATHAN

What do you mean slow?

Glenda tugs at her earring, adjusts her uniform.

GLEENDA

She was in a accident. She recovered but mentally, not all the way there-

Mary Kim walks up.

GLEENDA

--Oh hey Mary, I'll see you guys.

She walks away, Jonathan watches her leave.

Mary Kim watches Jonathan. She points at Glenda.

MARY KIM

You watch yo'self, that gal there is loose.

Jonathan looks back as Glenda walks away. Glenda looks back at them.

JONATHAN

Okay Mary Kim.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - STUDIO - NIGHT

It's late, Jonathan noodles around on the piano, Mary Kim's piano.

The studio is dimly lit.

EARLENE (O.S.)

Alright babe, I'm going to bed.

He doesn't look up.

JONATHAN

Okay, good night babe.

He plays a series of uninspired chords.

Jonathan noodles some more.

Another series of chords.

And again, he plays more chords.

He runs a scale, one note, one key is mute.

Jonathan hits the dead key again.

He lifts the lid, looks inside. Hitting the key again.

He turns on the lite on his phone.

The felt on the hammer was crooked, he straightens the felt.

Good as new, he hits the B-flat.

Jonathan goes to close the lid, he notices a faint writing on the inside of the lid. He shines the lite on them.

He sees a series of seven chords. Curious, he plays the chords.

JONATHAN

Damn.

He plays them again, and again, and again.

INT. AIRPORT CHECKPOINT - DAY

Mary Kim and Jonathan set-up the checkpoint, Jonathan finishes quickly.

JONATHAN

I have questions-

MARY KIM

About?

JONATHAN

Do you know about those chords inside the piano?

Mary Kim looks mischievously at him.

MARY KIM

No not really, I don't play.

JONATHAN

But did your dad tell you what they meant?

She takes her seat, Jonathan sits next to her as the passengers approach the checkpoint, it gets loud in a hurry.

MARY KIM

No, but he always said, there's more than one way to skin a cat.

Jonathan's expression turns, but he has to attend to his first passenger.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - STUDIO - NIGHT

The lid of the piano is up, Jonathan studies the chords.

He plays them flawlessly.

Earlene walks in.

EARLENE

Haven't you played that enough?

He looks over at his wife.

JONATHAN

My instructor once said, a good musician practices until he gets it right, a great musician practices until he can't get it wrong.

Earlene turns to leave.

EARLENE

Good night, and practice well.

Jonathan plays the first chord, then goes thru the progression.

He plays the last chord, and then the first and goes thru the progression.

He plays the last chord, then sixth chord and goes thru the progression.

He plays the last chord, then the sixth chord, then the fifth chord, and goes thru the progression.

Jonathan stands up, ready to go to bed, he stretches his back, yawning.

For no reason at all, he sits down again. Jonathan plays the progression backwards.

In a instant, Jonathan is in the studio with *WHITNEY*.

He plays a baby grand as she sings one of her biggest hits.

INT. AIRPORT CHECKPOINT - DAY

Mary Kim sets up the checkpoint, Jonathan's a little late.

He rushes up to Mary Kim.

JONATHAN

Mary Kim! I'm, I'm sorry. You won't believe what happened to me last night.

She takes her seat, nodding at Jonathan.

MARY KIM

You played the right keys?

JONATHAN

I did.

MARY KIM

Well you won't be around long.

Jonathan exhales.

MARY KIM

That's what happened to my daddy. He would disappear for a few hours, hours turned to days, days turned to weeks. Until one day, he just never came back.

They prepare for the crowd at the checkpoint.

JONATHAN

Mary Kim, we gotta talk.

INT. BREAK ROOM - DAY

Mary Kim sips on a cup of coffee, Jonathan drinks water.

They sit at the back table.

JONATHAN

I was with Whitney Houston, can you believe it?

Mary Kim nonchalantly sips.

MARY KIM

Keep your voice down. It happened. That piano is the reason I don't have my daddy no mo'.

JONATHAN

So you gave me a cursed piano? Are you crazy? Um I'm, I'm so sorry. I didn't mean that-

Mary Kim rolls her eyes.

MARY KIM

--Please stop, I know what people say about me, that's what Glenda told you huh? I know.

She sips, looking around the break room.

MARY KIM

That piano is a blessing and a curse. You have to decide which one it will be for you. Daddy couldn't make up his mind, or maybe he did.

Jonathan is flabbergasted.

JONATHAN

So why did you chose me? You could've given it to anybody.

MARY KIM

Hahaha, well Jonathan, that's what I did.

Glenda walks in, eyeing Jonathan. She smiles, he smiles back.

MARY KIM

Why are you working at the airport? If you're such a great piano player. I figured you needed a little help. What's at risk is your family losing you, like I lost my daddy. Success can be a drug you can't put down-

Jonathan listens, he thinks about what she just said.

MARY KIM

I see you played the right keys to get back.

He nods.

MARY KIM

Okay Mr. Quince, break time is over.

JONATHAN

Wait! Where did your dad get the piano?

Mary Kim stands.

MARY KIM

This old rich white woman died,  
she lived alone in this big old  
mansion. There was an estate sale.  
Daddy got that piano for \$10.

JONATHAN

You think your dad forgot the  
right keys to come back?

Mary Kim looks at him, pain in her face.

MARY KIM

No.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - STUDIO - NIGHT

Jonathan and Earlene sit at the piano.

JONATHAN

I know it sounds crazy, I sound  
crazy but-

EARLENE

--Well all you gotta do is show me  
babe.

JONATHAN

This is our chance to make some  
money, pay for this house right?

Earlene nods at her man.

He looks her in the eyes.

JONATHAN

Hold me around the waist, while I  
play the keys.

Earlene hugs Jonathan tightly, he begins to play.

Earlene listen to the chords, Jonathan fades into nothing,  
he's gone.

INT. WEST-LAKE STUDIO - LOS ANGELES - CONTINUOUS

*QUINCY JONES* stands in front of the piano, *MICHAEL JACKSON*  
is in the booth with headphones on.

At the piano is Jonathan, he has headphones on, he listens  
to the playback.

The session takes all night, it's 6AM before they're done.

Jonathan plays the right keys.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - STUDIO - DAY

Jonathan appears at the piano, he immediately walks into the bedroom.

*BEDROOM-*

Earlene stirs as Jonathan sits on the bed, she sits up to hug her husband.

EARLENE

Oh babe, I believe you, I believe you. Where did you go?

JONATHAN

L.A., I was in the studio with Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson, it was incredible!

EARLENE

So how is it possible?

He hunches his shoulders.

JONATHAN

It's the piano. But listen, not a word to anybody about this.

Earlene nods as she gets out of bed, puts on her robe.

EARLENE

I don't know what to say.

Earlene stands to go into the kitchen, Jonathan grabs her hand.

JONATHAN

Do you know how crazy this is? It's, ah, a dream come true. *QUINCY AND MICHAEL! Oh my god!*

INT. AIRPORT CHECKPOINT - DAY

Mary Kim and Jonathan setup.

They take their seats.

MARY KIM

So where you'd go?

JONATHAN

L.A., with Quincy and Michael Jackson. But what if-

Mary Kim looks.

JONATHAN

--What if your dad's still out there somewhere? What if I could find him?

He has Mary Kim's attention.

MARY KIM

But where would you look? I don't even know if he's still alive.

JONATHAN

It's worth trying right?

MARY KIM

But your music career?

JONATHAN

I can do both. I need a picture of your dad.

Mary Kim thinks.

MARY KIM

Maybe he doesn't want to come back.

JONATHAN

At least then you'll know.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Mary Kim sits on the sofa next to Earlene, Jonathan paces.

Mary Kim hands Jonathan a picture of her dad.

MARY KIM

I need that picture back, it's my favorite.

EARLENE

Would you like a cup of coffee?

Jonathan studies the picture. He flips it over, then back.

Mary Kim nods, Earlene gets up, walks into the kitchen.

JONATHAN

You never mentioned you mother?

Mary Kim sits back into the sofa, crosses her legs.

MARY KIM

Momma? Well they didn't get along. Daddy moved out for a while. He came back tho'. That's when he bought that piano.

Earlene listens, she holds a cup.

EARLENE  
You close to your momma?

MARY KIM  
Momma was always hard on me, never  
understood that.

Earlene walks over and hands Mary Kim her cup.

JONATHAN  
What's your daddy's name?

MARY KIM  
Marcus Trudeauux.

Jonathan and Earlene sit on the loveseat.

JONATHAN  
I bet the lady that owned the  
piano had a story to tell.

Mary Kim nods as she takes a sip of coffee.

MARY KIM  
So you find my daddy, what do you  
say to him?

Jonathan shrugs.

She takes another sip.

EARLENE  
When did you see him last?

MARY KIM  
I was fourteen years old.

Earlene stands, extends her hands. Jonathan stands also.

They hold hands, they look at Mary Kim.

EARLENE  
Would you like to pray with us?

Mary Kim puts her cup on the coffee table.

She doesn't speak.

*BEAT-*

Jonathan and Earlene watch Mary Kim.

She looks down at the floor.

MARY KIM

When I had my accident, it was raining-

EXT. CAR DRIVING THE BOULEVARD - NIGHT

*FLASHBACK/TEN YEARS AGO-*

A lone sedan drives thru the night. Rain pounds the windshield. The wipers move frantically, back and forth.

Mary Kim mis-judges a curve, she spins out and strikes a utility pole.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Mary Kim lays in a hospital bed in I.C.U.

MARY KIM (V.O.)

I was in a coma for two days. The doctors didn't know if I would recover. All I can remember was being in a fog. I prayed and prayed for my daddy to come save me, come get me, come help me. But my daddy never came. So...I don't pray anymore-

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

*PRESENT TIME-*

JONATHAN

--I'm sorry Mary Kim.

Earlene moves over and gives Mary Kim a hug.

MARY KIM

No fault of yours, anyway I should probably go.

She shakes Jonathan's hand, and scurries toward the front door.

JONATHAN

Good night Mary Kim-

MARY KIM

You find daddy, tell him I miss him, good night.

She opens the door and walks out.

Earlene sits on the sofa.

EARLENE

That poor woman.(sniff)

She wipes her eyes.

JONATHAN

I know(*exhaling slowly*).

Jonathan sits next to his wife, puts his arm around her shoulders.

EARLENE

You've got to find her daddy-

Exasperated, Jonathan stands. He throws his hands up.

JONATHAN

This is impossible babe, why did I even agree to this?

Earlene stands, she hugs her man.

EARLENE

Because you're Jonathan Quince, that's why.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Earlene prepares Jonathan's breakfast.

He walks in.

EARLENE

I enjoyed our time last night.

Jonathan winks, gives her a hug.

JONATHAN

Me too.

He sits at the table. Earlene brings his plate.

EARLENE

Will you be coming home every day?

Jonathan listens as he chews.

JONATHAN

Haven't thought that far yet, but-

EARLENE

--Don't you disappear like Mary Kim's daddy.

Earlene places her plate on the table. She sits next to Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Oh no. Don't worry, I know the right keys to play.

She takes a bite of food, chews. Earlene looks at Jonathan.

EARLENE

So did her father.

After breakfast, they clean up. Outside, airbrakes engage loudly.

*FRONT ROOM-*

Jonathan walks to the front room window. He peers thru the blinds.

JONATHAN

Looks like we got new neighbors moving in.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Jonathan and Earlene sit at the piano, they hold hands as they pray.

Earlene's demeanor changes.

EARLENE

Babe. I don't want you to go.

Jonathan drops his head, he sighs.

JONATHAN

I know babe, but I have to. You know I do. These studio sessions pay well, I'll bring the money back as soon as I can.

Earlene pouts playfully. She hugs Jonathan as he plays *THE RIGHT KEYS*. They kiss-

INT. VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA - SOUND CITY STUDIOS - NIGHT

Jonathan is handed a chart, he looks it over.

D minor, not his favorite key. He sits at the piano. JEFF POCARO makes adjustments to his kit. He slaps the snare several times.

Jonathan waits, Jeff looks up and nods. He counts off.

They run thru the song perfectly. The rest of the band enters the studio.

*STUDIO RESTROOM -*

Jonathan exits a stall, Jeff is washing his hands.

JEFF  
Damn good set man-

JONATHAN  
Thanks, appreciate it.

Jonathan washes his hands.

JEFF  
Your pay is on the piano, we did good tonight.

JONATHAN  
Thank you. So I was wondering-

JEFF  
--What's up?

JONATHAN  
You know of a Marcus Trudeauux?  
Piano player. Older black man from  
New Orleans?

Jeff checks his hair in the mirror, then looks at Jonathan.

JEFF  
I may have heard the name, but don't know him man.

Jeff walks out.

JONATHAN  
Thanks.

Jonathan walks down the hallway.

*STUDIO-*

He sees an envelope on the piano, he picks it up, places it in his pocket.

Jeff walks up with a lady friend.

JEFF  
Hey man, this is STEVIE NICKS.

Jonathan smiles broadly, he extends his hand.

JONATHAN  
Nice to meet you-

STEVIE NICKS  
Hey, Jeff said you were asking about Marcus Trudeauux?

Surprised, Jonathan steps in closer.

JONATHAN

Yes, ya know him?

STEVIE NICKS

Just in passing, heard him play in a session once. I was really impressed.

JONATHAN

Where?

Jeff grabs Stevie Nicks by the arm.

JEFF

Hey, let's run down that idea. My man, you sitting in?

Jonathan sits at the piano.

STEVIE NICKS

Oh, I wanna say it was in Oakland, I'm not sure tho'.

Nodding, Jonathan plays a riff as he waits for Stevie to start singing.

JONATHAN

Thank you Stevie.

INT/EXT. JONATHAN'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

A man stands at the front door, he knocks. Earlene creeps up to the door.

She peeks thru the peek-hole, then slowly cracks the door open.

EARLENE

Hello?

The man extends several letters towards her. CALVIN BROOKS is tall, with a deep baritone voice. Black man, 38.

CALVIN BROOKS

Sorry to bother you, I, I think I got your mail. I'm Calvin.

Earlene opens the door all the way, she steps out, taking the mail.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

EARLENE

I'm Earlene, how'd you get our mail?

CALVIN BROOKS (smiles)  
I'm sorry, I just moved in across  
the street, mailman screwed up I  
guess.

EARLENE  
Oh okay, well thank you and  
welcome to the neighborhood.  
Hopefully we can meet you and your  
wife soon.

Calvin looks back at his house, he smiles again.

CALVIN BROOKS  
Oh well it's just me. Not married,  
anyway I'm gonna get back across  
the street, nice meeting you  
Earlene.

Calvin turns and walks away.

EARLENE  
Nice meeting you too.

INT. JONATHAN 'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Closing the door, Earlene leans against the door, she looks  
thru the mail.

She hears noise coming from the studio.

Earlene walks cautiously toward the noise.

EARLENE  
Babe? Is that you?

HALLWAY-

Jonathan walks out with the money from the session.

Earlene runs to him, they embrace.

JONATHAN  
Earlene, I had a great time, and  
this is for you-

He hands her the money.

Earlene's eyes get big, she kisses him.

KITCHEN-

They walk into the kitchen and sit at the table. She peeks  
inside the envelope.

EARLENE  
Babe, you made this much money?

JONATHAN

Oh yeah, they pay well.

EARLENE

Did you look for Mary Kim's dad?

JONATHAN

I asked around, he might've been in Oakland. Thing is tho', I don't know where I'll end up. That piano has a mind of its own so-

He hunches his shoulders.

EARLENE

--It'll work out. Oh, I met the new neighbor 'cross the street. Calvin, seems nice.

Jonathan nods, thinking.

JONATHAN

Let's go out babe, gonna take a shower.

He stands and heads for the bedroom.

EXT. CALVIN BROOKS HOUSE - CURB - DAY

Calvin stands at his mailbox, he waits for the mailman.

He sees him approach, he steps back.

CALVIN BROOKS

My man, twenty bucks again, for Earlenes mail-

The mailman sighs.

MAILMAN

--This is the last time brotha, I can' lose this job.

He hands Calvin the mail, Calvin hands him twenty dollars.

The mailman drives away. Calvin walks across the street.

INT. CASINO DE MONTREAX, MONTREAX, SWITZERLAND - HOTEL MONTREAX - DAY

1980-

Lake Geneva appears to sit on the lap of Casino de MONTREAX, picturesque.

It's early, Jonathan still in bed. Someone knocks on his door.

He rolls over, the knock persists. Finally Jonathan gets up.

He opens the door.

There's *DIZZY GILLESPIE*.

DIZZY GILLESPIE

Sorry to bother you.

He walks past Jonathan, Jonathan closes the door and follows him.

JONATHAN

What's happening man?

DIZZY GILLESPIE

We gotta go over the set before tonight man.

JONATHAN

You do know I just got in bed forty-five minutes ago, we rehearsed all night.

Dizzy paces, he walks over to the window.

DIZZY GILLESPIE

We rehearse in an hour, if you need a pick-me-up, go see the man. But we got the rehearsal hall in one hour.

Dizzy walks out, Jonathan sits on the bed, head down.

INT. CASINO DE MONTREAX, MONTREAX - NIGHT

Backstage, the night is over, 3AM, Jonathan is exhausted.

DIZZY GILLESPIE

Let's celebrate, drinks on me.

He sighs.

JONATHAN

Gonna take a raincheck.

Dizzy takes him by the arm.

DIZZY GILLESPIE

Come'on good brother, let's celebrate. You can sleep in the morning. They got a bar setup for us man, let's go.

INT. CASINO DE MONTREAX - BAR - NIGHT

The bar is crowded, people mingle. Jonathan sits next to Dizzy. He's barely awake.

Dizzy waves over the bartender.

DIZZY GILLESPIE  
My man here needs a pick-me-up.  
I'll have the usual.

The bartender nods. Dizzy spins around, he notices a table with several women. He spins back around.

DIZZY GILLESPIE  
Take a few minutes, then meet me  
at that table behind us.

The bartender brings the drinks, Dizzy takes his drink and walks over to the table.

Jonathan sits up, pushes the drink away. Then gets up, walks away, heading for his room.

Dizzy stops him.

DIZZY GILLESPIE  
You play well, now you got to  
party well too. That's how you  
build the chemistry my man. You'll  
learn one day.

JONATHAN  
Thanks for the advice, see ya  
'round.

Jonathan turns then stops.

JONATHAN  
You know a Marcus Trudeaux?

DIZZY GILLESPIE  
I've heard the name, is he suppose  
to be here?

JONATHAN  
I don't know, anyway-

DIZZY GILLESPIE  
Sorry-

INT. JONATHAN HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan kicks off his shoes and flops on the bed.

There's a knock on the door.

JONATHAN

Damn! Who is it?

He walks over and opens the door.

A woman smiles.

WOMAN

Hi, Dizzy said you forgot your  
drink, so I brought it up for you.  
Can I come in?

Jonathan takes the drink from her, then slams the door in  
her face.

He pounds down the drink, coughs, then opens the door.

Jonathan steps out to look for the woman, she hears the door  
open and turns around, she walks back.

INT. AIRPORT CHECKPOINT - DAY

Mary Kim sets up the checkpoint, Glenda joins her.

They take their seats moment before the passengers come in.

GLEENDA

So where's the new guy, Jonathan?  
Haven't seen him in like three  
weeks.

Mary Kim smiles slightly.

MARY KIM

Oh he probably quit, I didn't  
think he was cut out for this type  
of work anyway.

Glenda nods.

GLEENDA

Yeah but if you think about it,  
nobody is.

EXT. JONATHAN'S PORCH - DAY

Calvin knocks on the door.

Earlene opens the door.

CALVIN BROOKS

I'm sorry, looks like it happened  
again.

He hands Earlene her mail.

EARLENE

What's up with the mailman?

Calvin smiles.

CALVIN BROOKS

Haven't got a chance to meet your husband. Does he travel a lot?

EARLENE

You could say that, he should be home tonight.

Calvin looks Earlene over, his eyes say enough to make Earlene uneasy.

EARLENE

So uh, thanks again Calvin, I appreciate you coming over.

CALVIN BROOKS

Welcome, it's the least I'd could do.

Earlene waves and steps inside quickly.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

The woman lays asleep in bed, sheets cover her naked body.

Jonathan is in the shower.

He exits the shower, gets dressed. Jonathan tips out quietly, slowly he closes the door.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Out the room, he runs into Dizzy.

DIZZY GILLESPIE

Morning brotha, you okay?

Jonathan nods. Dizzy hands him his pay.

DIZZY GILLESPIE

The promoter was looking for you, check at the desk man.

JONATHAN

Thanks man-

DIZZY GILLESPIE

Oh you welcome for the lady too hahaha!

Embarrassed, Jonathan doesn't respond, he walks away.

INT. HOTEL DESK - DAY

Jonathan walks up to the desk.

CONCIERGE  
May I help you sir?

JONATHAN  
Looking for the promoter.

The concierge points to a door behind him. Jonathan nods and walks over, he knocks.

*CONCIERGE'S OFFICE-*

The promoter opens the door, Jonathan walks in.

PROMOTER  
Can I help you?

JONATHAN  
Dizzy said you were looking for me?

PROMOTER  
And you are?

JONATHAN  
Jonathan Quince-

The promoter nods.

PROMOTER  
I hear you're looking for Marcus Trudeauux? He was suppose to play the festival but got caught up. He's in Chicago.

Jonathan inhales deeply.

JONATHAN  
Really? Is he still there?

The promoter hunches and walks out.

PROMOTER  
Don't know, that's all I got man.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - STUDIO - DAY

Jonathan appears back home. He takes out the cash and places it on the piano.

He starts to play the right keys, then stops. There's faint laughter from outside.

Jonathan leaves the studio.

*FRONT ROOM -*

He looks thru the blinds to see Earlene and Calvin chatting it up at the mailbox.

Jonathan watches for a minute, before he steps out on the porch.

Calvin notices him, he waves.

CALVIN BROOKS

Hey neighbor-

A surprised Earlene spins around to see Jonathan on the porch.

*EXT. FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS*

Earlene runs up to Jonathan, she gives him a big hug. Jonathan watches Calvin walk across the street to his house.

EARLENE

Babe, I'm so glad to see you-

JONATHAN

-- Looks like Calvin had your undivided attention.

Earlene frowns.

EARLENE

That's not fair, we were just talking, he's funny.

Jonathan nods, as he walks inside.

JONATHAN

I bet he's the next Bernie Mac.

Earlene follows him.

*INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - DAY*

Jonathan sits on the sofa.

EARLENE

You need anything? You hungry? You look tired.

He doesn't respond, he stretches out on the sofa, yawning.

JONATHAN

I left the money on the piano, I'm gonna crash for a bit.

Earlene nods, she takes off his shoes for him.

EARLENE

Okay babe, I need to pay some bills. See ya later.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Earlene walks in hours later with a couple of bags. Jonathan is not on the sofa.

KITCHEN-

Earlene puts the bags on the table.

EARLENE

Babe?

She walks into the studio. *EMPTY*.

She checks the bedroom, bathroom, no Jonathan.

EXT. EVANSTON, ILLINOIS - DOWNTOWN - DAY

1960-

Jonathan walks, it's bitter cold, he rolls up his collar on his coat. A few snowflakes flutter in his face.

He pulls a note from his pocket, stops and looks for an address.

Jonathan pulls on the double doors in front of him. He walks upstairs. He hears music play.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Jonathan walks in to see *SAM COOKE* at the piano. The two men embrace.

JONATHAN

Nice, what are you working on?

Sam Cooke gets up, he offers the piano to Jonathan.

SAM COOKE

Oh just messing around, I got some fellas coming up later, you down?

Jonathan nods, as he sits at the piano. He runs a scale, confidence oozes as he plays.

JONATHAN

I been looking for Marcus Trudeaux, you know 'em?

Sam Cooke walks around the piano, he runs his hand over the black lacquer finish.

He looks toward the door and back at Jonathan.

*SIGHS.*

SAM COOKE

About two weeks back, he got  
busted up at this bar 'cross town.  
What you want with that loser?

Surprised, Jonathan hesitates to answer.

SAM COOKE

After a session, he goes and gets  
drunk. Got into a fight, busted  
his hand, he's useless now.

JONATHAN

I see, is he okay?

SAM COOKE

Hell if I know, don't care either,  
why you ask?

JONATHAN

I know someone looking for him, a  
woman.

Sam Cooke laughs.

SAM COOKE

Well good luck, she's better off  
with someone else.

Jonathan nods, thinking.

JONATHAN

Yeah maybe you're right.

The door opens, and *GLENN, 45 y/o white male* walks in.  
Chipper, energetic and the engineer.

SAM COOKE

My man, this is Jonathan, and this  
is Glenn.

Glenn and Jonathan shake.

SAM COOKE

Tell 'em 'bout the night we  
finished recording.

Glenn smiles.

GLENN

We had a good session, I was just waiting to lock up. Marcus was at the piano, just sitting there. So I go take a leak.

Sam Cooke watches Jonathan as Glenn tells his story.

GLENN

I come walking down the hall, I hear Marcus playing something, just as he plays the last chord. I walk in to see him disappear.

Jonathan feigns surprise, looks at both men. Glenn taps Jonathan on the shoulder.

GLENN

You believe that? I don't drink, a little tired but I saw what I saw. *THAT MAN DISAPPEARED!*

Sam Cooke nods, Jonathan thinks for a response.

JONATHAN

Maybe you thought he disappeared. Maybe it was dark and your imagination got the best of you, ya know. People just don't disappear man.

Glenn points at Jonathan with fiery indignation.

GLENN

Damn son! I saw what I saw, nobody can say different.

JONATHAN

Well what did Marcus say?

Glenn storms out of the room.

SAM COOKE

See now ya pissed off my engineer, gonna be a long session. Anyway, no one's talk to Marcus since he got busted up in that fight.

Jonathan hangs his head.

JONATHAN

So what's the name of that bar?

INT. EVANSTON - THE CHI TOWN JOINT - NIGHT

Blues play softly, the balls crack from the pool tables. The cigarette smoke is thick, and the liquor flows.

Jonathan surveys the patrons, mostly the women. He steps up to the bar.

The bartender sizes him up, then approaches.

BARTENDER

Can I get you something?

Jonathan nods, keeps his eye on the people behind him.

JONATHAN

Not much of a drinker-

The bartender sighs, he turns and grabs a ginger ale. Pops the cap and pours it into a glass, drops in a couple of ice cubes.

BARTENDER

Come back when you grow up.

Jonathan takes the drink from him, takes a sip.

JONATHAN

I was looking for Marcus Trudeau,  
got into a fight?

The bartender rolls his eyes.

BARTENDER

Haven't seen 'em-

Woman walks up, puts her hand on Jonathan's shoulder.

WOMAN

Buy me a drink?

Jonathan turns to see a woman, big afro, tight dress and heels. Jonathan is frozen, the woman motions to the bartender.

BARTENDER

Two gin and tonics coming up.

She takes Jonathan by the hand.

WOMAN

I have a table in the back.

Hypnotized, Jonathan is led by the woman to her table. The bartender brings the drinks, he smirks as he walks away.

They sit, the woman takes her drink, takes a sip.

WOMAN

People call me 'BECCA, what do  
they call you?

JONATHAN

Jonathan-

BECCA

Nice to meet you Jonathan. Haven't seen you around before.

Jonathan looks around for help, nervous.

JONATHAN

First time here, in town for work.

Becca nods, sipping. She sizes Jonathan up.

BECCA

I got a place not far from here, you up for that?

She finishes her drink, then grabs the other one.

JONATHAN

Well actually, I was looking for Marcus Trudeau, you know 'em?

Becca takes a swig.

BECCA

I know a lot of people, if I'm not what you fancy, we can say goodnight.

Jonathan stands, Becca looks up at him with big sad eyes.

JONATHAN

Goodnight-

BECCA

--You turning me down? Are you some kind of sissy? Pay for the drinks Sissy!

Embarrassed, he drops ten dollars on the bar, walks out.

EXT. THE CHI TOWN JOINT - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan stands outside, looks for his car. He steps to the left. Someone creeps up behind him, hits him over the head. Jonathan is out cold.

INT. ENGLEWOOD, ILLINOIS - VACANT HOUSE - NIGHT

In a semi dark room, Jonathan sits, tied to a chair.

A tall muscular black man lites a cigarette, he's dressed in a nice suit, fedora hat.

Jonathan wakes slowly.

JONATHAN  
What? What happened?

Jonathan struggles with his bindings.

JONATHAN  
Who are you? Why are you doing  
this?

SMOKE  
Call me SMOKE, Jonathan.

Smoke inhales deeply, blows smoke from his nose. He reaches inside his coat. He produces a hypodermic needle.

Smoke rolls up Jonathan's sleeve, he sticks the needle in his arm.

Jonathan flinches.

JONATHAN  
No stop! Ouch! What is that?

SMOKE  
Smack, heroine. You gonna fly  
baby, really fly.

Jonathan hyper-ventilates.

SMOKE  
No, no breath my man. Relax, you  
didn't get a full dose. I'll be  
back shortly, then we'll talk  
about Marcus Trudeauux.

Smoke walks out, locks the door.

Jonathan's head rolls back, he sweats.

JONATHAN (laboring)  
I, I need to get, I need to get  
home.(Crying) I need to get home.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Earlene sits at the table, wringing her hands.

There's a knock on the door.

*FRONT DOOR-*

Earlene opens the door to see Mary Kim. They embrace.

Mary Kim and Earlene sit on the sofa.

MARK KIM

I don't know what I'm doing here,  
but-

EARLENE

--It's fine, how are you?

MARY KIM

I'm fine thank you, how are you?

Earlene stands.

EARLENE

Okay I guess, would you like some  
coffee?

Mary Kim nods. Earlene moves to the kitchen.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Mary Kim follows Earlene to the kitchen.

She sits at the table.

Earlene gets a pot going, she walks to the cabinet and grabs  
two cups.

MARY KIM

How's Jonathan?

She reaches in the fridge for the creamer, Earlene sighs.

EARLENE

I don't know it's been two and  
half weeks since I've seen him.

Mary Kim looks concerned.

MARY KIM

I'm sure he's fine.

Earlene places the creamer on the table, she grabs the  
sugar.

EARLENE

I have a bad feeling, like  
something's not right.

She grabs the pot off the stove, pours the coffee.

Earlene sits at the table, she stirs her cup.

MARY KIM

Is this the longest he's been  
gone?

Earlene nods.

EARLENE

Yeah, you think he's okay?

Mary Kim takes a sip.

MARY KIM

Let's hope so, when you do see him, tell to stay away from Bourbon Street.

Earlene looks as she sips.

MARY KIM

I feel like Daddy lost his way on Bourbon Street somehow.

EARLENE

Why didn't you tell him that before?

Earlene puts her cup down.

EARLENE

You coulda said something-

MARY KIM

--I'm sorry... There's a mystique 'bout Bourbon Street, an aura, especially at night. All of 'Nawlins' for that matter. Daddy got a hold of something he couldn't let go of.

EARLENE

You think something like that is gonna happen to Jonathan? Is there something you wanna tell me?

Mary Kim stands.

EARLENE

You don't have to rush off-

MARY KIM

--No, I'm sorry, I have to go.

Mary Kim rushes to the front door.

*FRONT ROOM-*

Earlene watches Mary Kim get in her car from the front door.

INT. ENGLEWOOD, ILLINOIS - VACANT HOUSE - DAY

Sun-up, Jonathan's wide awake.

He listens as footsteps approach the door.

Smoke enters the room.

SMOKE  
You're awake, good.

Jonathan is still high.

SMOKE  
So tell me, why are you looking  
for Marcus Trudeauux?

Smoke lites another cigarette.

Jonathan again struggles with his bindings.

JONATHAN  
I never met the man, but a woman  
is looking for him.

Smoke moves in closer.

SMOKE  
This a paternity case? You a  
private investigator?

JONATHAN  
You could say that, actually I'm  
just a piano player.

Smoke stares, he moves back and taps on the door.

A man walks in.

He's dressed nice also, he removes his hat.

Slim, black man, light complexion 50ish with wavy hair.

MR. VERN  
I'm Mr. Vern, the man you're  
looking for owes me a lot of  
money. Do you know where I can  
find this man?

JONATHAN  
No, no I'm trying to find him too.  
I told Smoke a woman is looking  
for him.

Mr. Vern looks at Smoke, he nods.

MR. VERN  
You find him, you find Marcus  
Trudeauux and I'll put some money  
in your pockets, understand?

Jonathan nods.

Mr. Vern walks out.

Smoke again pulls out the needle.

Jonathan shakes his head.

JONATHAN

No, no stop please!

Smoke grins.

SMOKE

Might as well finish this, you  
hold up pretty good. After this  
you can go okay?

He grabs Jonathan's arm and sticks him again. He injects the  
last of the heroine in his arm.

SMOKE

When you need more, I'm your guy.  
Free of charge of course, since  
you're gonna find our guy...see ya  
tomorrow.

Smoke walks out.

Jonathan's head spins as if he has *VERTIGO*, he passes out.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - BEDROOM - DAY

Earlene rolls over on her side, she tries to stand.

She steps timidly to the bathroom, stands over the toilet,  
Earlene throws up.

Earlene holds her stomach, heaves again. She opens the  
medicine cabinet.

She finds a test.

INT. ENGLEWOOD, ILLINOIS - VACANT HOUSE - DAY

Jonathan wakes up as Smoke unties him. Smoke looks him over.

SMOKE

Damn man, you don't look half bad,  
anyway...your car's outside, full  
tank of gas.

Smoke takes a wad of cash, he stuffs it in Jonathan's  
pocket.

JONATHAN

What's this for?

SMOKE

That's \$500.00 man, walking around money. In a few hours, you're gonna need another fix. You come to this house around 5pm okay?

Jonathan nods.

JONATHAN

Where are the keys-

SMOKE

--Oh.

Smoke digs in his pocket, produces the keys.

SMOKE

Come at five, don't miss ya fix. This is important. That's how ya go crazy on this stuff if ya miss it.

He stands Jonathan up.

SMOKE

Is that piss I smell?

Smoke look down at his crotch.

SMOKE

Damn okay, let's get you cleaned up.

INT. EVANSTON, ILLINOIS - DOWNTOWN - STUDIO - DAY

Jonathan knocks on the door. He waits.

He knocks again, Glenn appears. He lets Jonathan in.

GLENN

Sam is pissed, you just like Marcus Trudeaux huh?

Jonathan walks pass him. He walks upstairs into the studio, he sits at the piano.

Glenn walks in.

JONATHAN

Say uh could you get me some staff paper and a pencil?

Glenn shakes his head, disgusted. He walks out.

Jonathans plays the keys, nothing happens. He tries again, again nothing, he's stuck.

He rubs his hand over his head, he tries to remember the right keys.

Glenn walks in with the staff paper.

JONATHAN

Thanks man.

GLENN

I'll be down downstairs-

JONATHAN

--Okay.

He watches Glenn leave. Jonathan plays again, and again.

It's almost 5pm, now he has to go meet Smoke.

JONATHAN (yells)

Glenn...I'll be back!

INT/EXT. ENGLEWOOD, ILLINOIS - VACANT HOUSE

Jonathan tries the door, it swings open.

Smoke walks him back to the room.

Jonathan is surprised.

SMOKE

Made a few changes.

There's a nice bed and chair setup. Becca sit's on the bed.

SMOKE

You be nice this time or else.  
Have a seat.

Jonathan anxiously rolls up his sleeve. Smoke gives him the injection.

Smoke nods at Becca, as he leaves.

She walks over and takes Jonathan by the hand. They sit on the bed. Jonathan lays back on the bed. Becca un-buttons his shirt.

INT. THE CHI TOWN JOINT - NIGHT

*SUPER- ONE YEAR LATER*

Mr. Vern, Smoke, Becca and Jonathan sit at the back table.

Jonathan is thin, a regular user now. They discuss business.

MR. VERN

Any chance we find this guy?

JONATHAN

He's out there, I can feel it.

Smoke and Becca look at Jonathan. Mr. Vern rolls his eyes.

MR. VERN

Smoke, Becca...give us a minute.

They get up and leave.

Mr. Vern looks Jonathan in the eyes. He finishes his drink.

MR. VERN

I'm gonna be straight with you. I know about the piano.

Jonathan is startled.

JONATHAN

What do you mean?

MR. VERN

I mean if anybody's looking for Marcus Trudeau, then they must know about the piano too. Yeah, *THE RIGHT KEYS*. Am I in the right neighborhood?

Jonathan nods.

MR. VERN

And my guess is you know the right keys, but due to your new addiction, you can't remember.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry Mr. Vern-

MR. VERN

You got a wife? A kid somewhere out in this crazy world?

Jonathan eyes get moist.

JONATHAN

Wife, no kids.

Mr. Vern nods.

MR. VERN

I believe you'll remember the right keys, my advice would be to get a tattoo on your arm, problem solved.

Jonathan looks at the tracks in his arm.

JONATHAN

How'd you know about the piano?  
About Marcus?

Mr. Vern sits back in his chair.

MR. VERN

What do ya see when you look at  
me?

Jonathan looks, hunches.

MR. VERN

Go on, tell me.

JONATHAN

Creole?

Mr. Vern smiles, nods.

MR. VERN

Yes exactly, on my mother's side.  
She's from 'Nawlins'. So my  
grandmother was a maid. She worked  
for this woman in this mansion.  
This lady had this piano.

Jonathan listens.

MR. VERN

So the story goes that this piano  
had powers if you played the right  
keys. Now my grandmother had  
endeared herself to this woman.  
She had said that the piano was  
hers when the old lady passed on.

Mr. Vern stops.

JONATHAN

Go on sir please.

MR. VERN

Anyway the old woman dies, my  
grandmother forgets about the  
piano while grieving her death.  
Some joker buys the piano in an  
estate sale. By the time my  
grandmother remembers, the piano  
and the guy are gone.

Jonathan swallows hard. He waves at the bartender for a  
drink.

The bartender brings him a gin and tonic.

Jonathan downs the drink.

JONATHAN

Mr. Vern, that's some story. Damn!  
Imagine that.

Mr. Vern sternly looks at him.

MR. VERN

So the woman you know, knows  
Marcus Trudeau right? My guess is  
family, right? That piano is  
rightfully mine, you're time is  
running out.

Becca and Smoke walk up.

Jonathan stands to leave-

JONATHAN

I've got work to do-

As Jonathan walks by Smoke, Smoke places heroine in his  
hand.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOME - FRONT ROOM - DAY

Earlene sits on the floor, plays with *DONITA LEANN*, *three  
months old*.

Calvin sits on the sofa.

EARLENE

Hi baby, that's momma's big girl.

She lays on the floor, swinging her pacifier.

CALVIN BROOKS

She'll be walking in no time,  
she's a cutie, just like her  
momma.

Earlene blushes, she picks up her baby, giving her a big  
kiss.

CALVIN BROOKS

So, no word from Jonathan?

EARLENE

It's been over a year.

Calvin gets up and sits on the floor next to Earlene.

CALVIN BROOKS

You know I'm here right? Anytime,  
anything you need.

Earlene smiles, nods.

EARLENE

I know.

INT/EXT. INTERSTATE - CAR - DAY

1961-

Smoke and Jonathan drive into Chicago.

JONATHAN

What about the post office in  
Evanston or Englewood?

Smoke stares straight ahead.

SMOKE

Chicago, the big one. That's the  
order I got, that's where we go.

INT. CHICAGO POST OFFICE - DAY

Jonathan is impressed with the size and all the people.  
Smoke is all business. He looks at his watch.

SMOKE

It's 11:15am, I'll be over by  
p.o. box # 3476. Once I get the  
drop, we'll be on our way.

Jonathan looks around, he sees the restroom.

JONATHAN

Gonna take a leak.

He walks toward the restroom, Smoke watches him.

INT. POST OFFICE RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan goes inside a stall, does his business. Now high,  
he *GLIDES* over to the sink.

An older black man, a janitor exits a stall, walks up to the  
sink.

Jonathan's face turns flush, he's hot all of a sudden. Beads  
of sweat appear on his forehead.

He quickly dries his hands.

JONATHAN

Marcus Trudeauux?

Worried, the man keeps quiet.

Jonathan steps closer, pulling out the picture Mary Kim gave him.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

You know me?

JONATHAN

I know Mary Kim, she said she misses you.

Jonathan hands him the photo. Marcus takes a look, he gives it back.

His eyes tear up, he turns on the faucet, splashing water on his face.

JONATHAN

Some people are looking for you.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

You must know the right keys then, right?

Jonathan nods.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

I forgot 'em-

Smoke walks in the restroom with a package under his arm.

He sees Jonathan and the older man, curious, he walks over.

SMOKE

We know each other?

Marcus's eyes get big.

Jonathan grabs Smoke by the arm.

JONATHAN

Ah, just small talk, we better get back.

SMOKE

Small talk?

JONATHAN

Yeah, the Bears man, come-on.

Smoke looks at the janitor, but turns to leave. Marcus Trudeau watches them before he leaves.

INT. CHICAGO POST OFFICE - THIRD FLOOR - STORAGE ROOM -DAY

*SUPER- TWO WEEKS LATER*

Jonathan stands at the window, looks out at the city. He turns to face Marcus.

JONATHAN

So you didn't abandon your family,  
you just forget the right keys?

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

I was making good money, playing  
all over, but the parties, the  
drinking, and women got too much.  
Especially the drinking.

Jonathan agrees.

JONATHAN

Is that still a problem?

Marcus stands, walks over to window next to Jonathan.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

I manage. I'm able to keep this  
job, but I would go back so fast,  
if I could. What about you?

Jonathan looks embarrassed.

JONATHAN

Uh, can two people go back? I mean  
if we could remember the right  
keys?

Marcus hunches his shoulders.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

How's Mary Kim doing?

JONATHAN

She's fine, works at the airport.

Marcus is quiet.

JONATHAN

Can you go back by playing a  
different piano? Say a piano store  
in town or church. I always played  
the one I came in on to go back  
(sighs).

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

Good question. Never tried that. I  
was always alone playing the right  
keys.

Jonathan smiles.

JONATHAN

Maybe, maybe if you play on a different piano, you go somewhere else. You only go home on the same piano you came in on.

Marcus nods.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

Damn, that's it son.

The two men ponder.

JONATHAN

Yeah, so about Mr. Vern, he's trouble. You owe him money?

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

No money, he wants the piano.

As he turns from the window, Jonathan has an *EPIPHANY*.

JONATHAN

Mr. Vern can never have that piano. It's in the future, it's in 2024. That piano is in my house... Mary Kim gave me the piano.

Marcus is quiet.

JONATHAN

Let's meet next week-

They shake hands.

INT. THE CHI TOWN JOINT - DAY

Jonathan, Mr. Vern and Smoke watch Becca work a new customer at the bar.

SMOKE

Damn, guys know she running a game, it always works.

Jonathan smirks.

JONATHAN

Not always.

MR. VERN

He's got a point.

Smoke lites a cigarette.

Jonathan stands, stretches.

JONATHAN  
Gonna run down a lead.

Mr. Vern looks.

MR. VERN  
Oh?

JONATHAN  
Uh yeah, in the city, I'll be back  
tonight.

As Jonathan leaves, Mr. Vern points at Smoke.

MR. VERN  
Keep me posted-

Smoke gets up and walks out the door.

INT/EXT. CHI TOWN JOINT - PARKING LOT - DAY

Jonathan sits in his car, he pulls out a small pouch.

He shoots up. Jonathan leans back, passing out.

Smoke watches discretely from his car.

Thirty minutes pass by. Jonathan comes to.

He starts his car.

INT. CHICAGO POST OFFICE - THIRD FLOOR - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Marcus and Jonathan brainstorm.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX  
There's a store, not ten minutes  
from here. They sell Steinways.

Jonathan paces.

JONATHAN  
Okay let's try it. Say uh how did  
you find out about the right keys?

An evasive look appears on his face.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX  
Uh, well, when I played on Bourbon  
street-

*Suddenly* the door to the storage room swings open, Smoke  
walks in.

He stands disgusted.

SMOKE

Thought ya looked familiar. Let's go fellas, we got business to attend to.

INT. ENGLEWOOD, ILLINOIS - VACANT HOUSE - DAY

Mr. Vern sits in the chair, Marcus and Jonathan sit on the bed.

Smoke stands nearby, gun in hand.

MR. VERN

Smoke, we have a problem. Jonathan here found our guy, but was holding out on us. However now neither one can remember the right keys. Well one was my fault, the other is, well just bad luck. What a dilemma.

SMOKE

They have a plan-

Mr. Vern perks up.

MR. VERN

--Do tell.

Jonathan looks at Marcus.

JONATHAN

Maybe play together to remember the keys, that's all we got.

Mr. Vern walks over to Jonathan.

He looks at Smoke, nods.

Smoke leaves.

Mr. Vern pulls out a pistol. He looks at Marcus.

MR. VERN

What's your angle?

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

You know I drink, my memory's shot.

MR. VERN

So you're the joker that bought the piano from under my grandma. How old are you?

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

I was born in 1925. If I was to go back with Jonathan, I won't survive, I'd be dead.

MR. VERN

Dead?

JONATHAN

My time is 2024, he'd be 99 years old.

Mr. Vern thinks.

MR. VERN

I see.

Jonathan looks at Mr. Vern.

JONATHAN

Here's another thing Mr. Vern. You can never get your hands on that piano, do you play? NO. Do we know the right keys to play? NO, thanks to you. That piano is in the future, you can't go there, seems like nobody can at the moment.

Mr. Vern feels like he's been had, he points the gun at Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Go ahead-

The realization hits him, Mr. Vern pulls back the gun.

INT. ENGLEWOOD, ILLINOIS - VACANT HOUSE - DAY

*SUPER - ONE HOUR LATER*

*FRONT ROOM-*

Smoke walks in. Two guys lug a piano into the front room.

Mr. Vern motions for Jonathan and Marcus to come and play.

Smoke pays the piano movers, they wait until they walk out.

Marcus sits down at the piano, he tries to play.

Mr. Vern watches Jonathan. Marcus tries to remember, he plays a series of chords, and another.

Jonathan sits next to him, they play and play and play.

MR. VERN

No wait, Marcus you stop, get up.

Marcus stands and walks away.

Jonathan plays, he hits the keys like he always has, but nothing happens.

Mr. Vern isn't convinced.

MR. VERN

Keep playing-

JONATHAN

--For what? If I disappear, what are you gonna do huh?

MR. VERN

You disappear, ya got one hour to come back. If you don't, I'll put a bullet in your friend's head.

Marcus looks at Jonathan.

MARCUS TRUDEAUX

Tell Mary Kim I'm sorry and I love her.

Marcus rushes Smoke, knocks him to the floor, they tussle for Smoke's gun.

Smoke quickly overpowers Marcus. The gun goes off.

Marcus lays still, as he bleeds out. Eyes open.

Smoke gets up, dusts himself off. He picks up his hat and gun. He steps outside to gather himself.

Jonathan is mortified, he buries his face in his hands. At that moment he remembers, and plays *THE RIGHT KEYS*.

Jonathan quickly fades into nothing and is gone.

MR. VERN

Smoke! Smoke!

Smoke rushes thru the front door.

SMOKE

What's up boss?

MR. VERN

He's gone, that bastard's gone!

Helpless, Smoke walks to the door, opens it.

Smoke motions for Mr. Vern.

SMOKE

Let's move boss, I'll send a crew to clean up.

Mr. Vern walks out with Smoke, they shut the door.

INT. THE CHI TOWN JOINT - NIGHT

*SUPER- TWO DAYS LATER*

Becca, Smoke and Mr. Vern sit at their usual table.

MR. VERN

I got played for a fool, Smoke.

Smoke inhales deeply on his cigarette. He exhales.

SMOKE

Never saw it coming.

Becca rolls her eyes.

BECCA

You two fools act like somebody stole your puppy! Move on to the next grift.

Smoke ignores Becca, Mr. Vern is pissed.

MR. VERN

I financed his smack habit for a year, then he stiffes me.

BECCA

Liar, you got him hooked. I say you got what you deserved. And that poor old man, you disgust me!

Angry, Mr. Vern kicks her chair.

MR. VERN

Get out of here, go run ya grift Becca, let us men talk.

BECCA

Hmm!

Becca gets up, she walks over to the bar.

SMOKE

That chick man.

Smoke shakes his head.

MR. VERN

Where do you suppose Jonathan is?

Smoke raises both hands, hopelessly.

INT. JONATHAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

*SUPER- 25 YEARS LATER 2049*

Jonathan now an older man appears in what use to be his studio. He turns on the lights.

Now a bedroom, he studies the pictures of a young girl on the dresser.

He creeps down the hall to his bedroom to find Earlene.

*BEDROOM-*

Jonathan peeks in to see Earlene and a man asleep.

Earlene stirs, as she sleeps. She sees the bedroom door close.

EXT. JONATHAN'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Jonathan sits on the steps, looks up at the stars. Earlene appears at the door.

EARLENE (whispers)  
Jonathan? Is that you?

He looks back over his shoulder, he stands.

Earlene walks out, they embrace and cry.

They embrace for the longest time. Then sit on the steps, holding hands in the darkness.

JONATHAN  
Who's the girl? Is that-

Earlene smiles proudly.

EARLENE  
--That's Donita Leann, your daughter.

Jonathan leans back, eyes wide.

JONATHAN  
*WHAT? She's beautiful. OH I'VE MISSED SO MUCH.*

He wipes his eyes, laughs.

EARLENE  
25 years babe?

Jonathan's smile fades.

JONATHAN

I know. Took me twenty years to  
kick my heroine habit-

Earlene recoils.

JONATHAN

-And another 5 years to get the  
courage to come home. I was just  
like Mary Kim's father, lost in a  
place I didn't belong.

Earlene squeezes his hand.

EARLENE

But you were doing sessions,  
making money?

JONATHAN

It wasn't worth it babe. Not by a  
mile. I lost you and Donita,  
(sniff).

EARLENE

You haven't lost me Mr. Jonathan  
Quince.

Behind them, the front window blinds open ever so slightly.

They go silent, holding hands, looking out into the night  
sky. The cicadas serenade them.

EARLENE

I got rid of that piano, I painted  
over those chords too.

Jonathan shows her his tattoo.

JONATHAN

So I don't forget, but you know it  
wasn't the piano.

He points to his arm.

JONATHAN

It's the chords, that's how I got  
back.

Earlene rubs his back.

JONATHAN

Will you forgive me?

EARLENE

Of course. When you peaked in the  
bedroom just now, I knew it was  
you.

I didn't know when, but I always believed you would come back to me.

Jonathan huffs, hugs Earlene tightly.

JONATHAN

So now what? Calvin treating you good?

Earlene shrugs.

EARLENE

I'm okay, but he's not you.

Jonathan pauses.

JONATHAN

You think maybe I could come by sometime and meet Donita?

Earlene cries, then laughs.

EARLENE

You better, when she's in town.

They stand, embrace. Jonathan kisses Earlene on the forehead, and then on the lips.

He lets go of her hand, walks away.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY - DAY

Super - *TWO WEEKS LATER*

Mary Kim and another officer check boarding passes. The line moves quickly.

Jonathan gets in Mary Kim's line, several people ahead of him. She looks up, recognizing him.

Jonathan walks up to her.

MARY KIM

Welcome back Jonathan Quince.

JONATHAN

Hello, Mary Kim.

Mary Kim raises her hand, an officer comes over to relieve her.

Jonathan and Mary Kim step over to the side.

MARY KIM

How are you?

JONATHAN

How much time do you have? I'm doing okay, now that I'm back.

Mary Kim looks around, pensive.

JONATHAN

I know you got questions, I did find your dad. He said he loves you and misses you. Unfortunately, he passed away.

She nods. He hands her the photo of her dad.

MARY KIM

Thank you, I felt the very moment that he died. And you found out, there was nothing special about that piano.

JONATHAN

I did, but why didn't you tell me?

Mary Kim ponders the question.

MARY KIM

The same reason my daddy didn't tell me, the magic, the power, the mystique, needs a place to live. Not in the heart, because my daddy not coming back broke my heart. You not coming back to Earlene broke her heart.

Jonathan listens, stoic.

MARY KIM

With a broken heart, people lose hope.

He scans the checkpoint and crowd.

JONATHAN

Mary Kim, that was-

MARY KIM

--I know Jonathan Quince. You didn't expect that from someone-

JONATHAN

--Stop it. Oh I'd better get thru security to catch my flight.

MARY KIM

Where you going?

Jonathan clears his throat.

JONATHAN  
Bourbon street-

Mary Kim pauses. A look of disapproval appears.

MARY KIM  
Not using the *RIGHT KEYS*?

They embrace.

JONATHAN  
Don't wanna get lost for another  
25 years.

Mary Kim watches Jonathan go thru security. She goes back to her position.

Her partner watches Jonathan too.

OFFICER  
Who was that Mary?

Mary Kim watches Jonathan walk down the long corridor. She stares as if she was hypnotized, her eyes flutter.

MARY KIM  
Oh nobody, he's just the one who  
took my daddy's place. Guess  
Bourbon street only destroys one  
fool at a time.

*FADE TO BLACK-*

Hura Hill

678-571-0011

Doublehhjr@gmail.com



