

STACCATO

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OVER BLACK:

DING. The high-pitched note of a single **PIANO KEY.** It repeats itself. **DING. DING. DING. DING.**

CUT TO:

INT. THE LOUNGE - EARLIER

A pair of eyes BURST open with a **LOUD GASP.** PIANO MAN (20s, Latino), sits at a small table.

An eerily beautiful interior surrounds him. Neon lights up the place. A polished bar. An empty stage across from it.

It holds a lonely GRAND PIANO.

CHEZ (O.S.)
Drink?
Piano Man turns to CHEZ (30s, Latino), The Lounge's only bartender. He stands above him, notepad in hand.

PIANO MAN
W-what?

CHEZ
(in Portuguese)
Want a drink, brother?

PIANO MAN
Uh... Gin and Tonic?

Chez nods. He takes note.

CHEZ
Any food?

PIANO MAN
Sorry, where am I?

Chez grins. Puts his notepad in a pocket. Walks to the bar.

CHEZ
I made that drink a double for ya.
Obrigado.

Piano Man watches him go. Confused. He turns. Freezes.

A tall Gin and Tonic now rests in his hand.

AT THE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

Chez mixes a drink. He talks to a FRENCH COUPLE.

CHEZ (CONT'D)
Ça va? Envie d'un verre à emporter?

PIANO MAN (O.S.)
 Excuse me! What is this place?

Chez turns to Piano Man. Impatient.

CHEZ
 The Lounge. I call it The Lounge.

Chez gives the French couple their drinks. They make their way to an industrial door at the back of the bar.

An EXIT sign flickers red above it.

They open it. Cross through. A bright WHITE LIGHT invades The Lounge before it closes.

Chez smiles satisfied. Piano Man's eyes grow in fear.

PIANO MAN
 What's out there?

CHEZ
 Do you plan to ask questions the whole time? I'm busy.

PIANO MAN
 Please don't make me go through that door.

CHEZ
 Do what you want *amigo*, I just make the drinks.

Chez walks to the other edge of the bar. A LITTLE GIRL sits on a stool, wrapped in a blanket.

CHEZ (CONT'D)
 You're early, little one.

The girl giggles. Chez pulls a glass of milk and a cookie from under the bar. Piano Man watches.

He flops onto a stool. Takes a long gulp from his drink.

INT. THE LOUNGE - LATER

GUESTS come and go. Back on his chair, Piano Man scowls at the Exit Door. Empty drinks all around him.

DING. The high-pitched note of a single **PIANO KEY** startles him. Piano Man looks to the stage.

PIANO MAN

No way..!

A beautiful black woman in a red gown stands by the piano. A single finger on the keyboard. This is RED (20s, Latina).

She smiles wide as Piano Man meets her gaze.

DING. DING. DING. DING.

She beckons him. *Your turn.* Piano Man grabs an empty glass. He taps it with a spoon. Eyes still on Red.

TING. TING. TING. TING.

They laugh. Red plays a **SHORT MELODY** with her right hand.

She lifts her brows at Piano Man. *Got it?* He nods.

DING. TING. DING. TING. DIIING.

He gives her a standing ovation. She bows playfully. Hops off the stage and approaches him.

RED

You play nice tunes for a drunkard.

PIANO MAN

Learnt from the best.

Red rolls her eyes. They laugh. Hug tenderly. Sit.

PIANO MAN (CONT'D)

You haven't changed at all!

RED

You have. Are those grey hairs I see on your head?

She leans forward. Grabs his head in both hands. Inspects it.

RED (CONT'D)

Nah, it's just the usual dandruff.

She ruffles his hair. Sits back. Points at the piano.

RED (CONT'D)

Is it yours?

PIANO MAN

I don't play any more.

RED
When did that happen?

Piano Man chuckles awkwardly. He shakes his head. Looks away.

RED (CONT'D)
Ah, right. How could I forget.

Red pulls a tube of RED LIPSTICK from her purse. Unrolls it. She paints her lips.

Piano Man watches her tenderly. His eyes drift behind her.

GUESTS wait by the Exit Door. They cross, one by one. Red's head is enveloped by light as the door opens and closes.

She notices Piano Man's gaze. He points to the lipstick.

PIANO MAN
You'll need a new one soon.

Red looks down at it. Smiles. Shakes her head

RED
This tube was full when I got here. I was scared, but I made a promise to myself. The minute this lipstick runs out, I'm out of here. No excuses.

Piano Man's face falls. He nods. Red notices.

RED (CONT'D)
You should play something for me. You were *kind* of an expert from what I remember. What do you say? For old time's sake?

INT. THE LOUNGE - THE BAR - LATER

Piano Man sits on a stool. He and Chez admire Red as she **PLAYS** onstage. The **AUDIENCE CHEERS**.

CHEZ
That girl sure knows how to leave a mark. She's thrilled to find you here, you know? She's just scared you'll disappoint her again.

Piano Man gives Chez a look.

PIANO MAN
Are you purposefully nosy?