

GRAND PIANO

by

Damien Chazelle

Sandra Lucchesi, Frank Wuliger
The Gersh Agency
(310) 205-5872

Gary Ungar, Tyler Ruggeri
Exile Entertainment
(310) 573-1523

A PIANO. Sleek. Dark. Polished wood. Figures reflected on the surface.

It's a Steinway concert grand. The cream of the crop.

A blanket is thrust over it. All at once, we are in:

INT. MOVING TRUCK - DAY

Rumbling. Shafts of daylight cutting in. The piano is fastened by thick ropes. A MOVER kneels by it, holding it steady.

He knows if this piano is so much as scratched, it's his ass.

In a flash, we find ourselves elsewhere--

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

Peeling orange-lemon wallpaper. Watercolors hanging.

A HAND comes into view. Gloved. Moving quickly.

Loads a high-end RIFLE with a retractable barrel.

INT. MOVING TRUCK - DAY

The truck comes to a stop. Doors open. Cold January light spills over the piano.

Hands reach for it, undo the straps, roll the instrument down a ramp. In a hurry but careful. It's precious cargo.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The rifle is split into parts. It's a small weapon -- light-weight, convenient...

The parts are tossed into a carry-on bag.

EXT. ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - DAY

Around the back of a giant CONCERT HALL. Workers push the piano, ease it down another ramp.

They're in a hurry. They're on a clock...

INT. MOTEL ROOM - DAY

The bag zipped up. An extra box of bullets slid in a side pocket.

The GLOVED HAND flicks up, revealing a wristwatch. The second-hand chipping away.

This guy's on a clock as well.

EXT. ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - DAY

The piano rolls through the entrance. STAGE-HANDS are there to meet it.

We're in CHICAGO. A busy thoroughfare. Sleet-gray buildings. Honking cars.

Across the street from the concert hall and the moving truck stands a MAN.

Ochre trench coat. Tousled blonde hair. Eyes watery blue. Watching the piano enter the hall...

Absolute concentration. A poker face.

He checks his watch.

The BUZZING of a phone. His eyes unmoving, he reaches into his pocket, pulls out a cell.

There's a text message.

"ALL SET. HAS THE PACKAGE ARRIVED?"

Beat.

Expression unchanging, the MAN dials a response. Three digits:

"YES"

INT. AIRPLANE - EVENING

A voice. Thin. Wavering.

VOICE
God... Please, God...

It belongs to a YOUNG MAN. Dark hair. Black suit and tie. Locked in a window seat as the PLANE dives in for a landing.

His neighbor, a beer-belly BUSINESSMAN, turns to him.

BUSINESSMAN
You alright, mister?

The young man's face is ghostly pale, with splotches of blue and purple. His hair is mottled with sweat.

He's 27 but looks two decades more worn. Crease lines on his forehead. Bags under his eyes. He's handsome at the root, but right now he's a shivering mess.

His name is TOM SELZNICK.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT'D)
Mister?

Tom can't even look at him. He shakes his head, waves his hand.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT'D)
I hear you. Flying used to scare the bejesus out of me, too.

Tom keeps his eyes locked...

ON THE WINDOW... We see the RUNWAY... Coming closer... Closer... Tom grips his seat...

TOM
Come on... Come on...

The Businessman keeps chirping away:

BUSINESSMAN
But in my line of work, a beat-up Civic on a bunch of backroads just doesn't cut it. You know what I mean?

Almost at the runway... Almost touching down... Then--

THUD. The wheels of the plane hit the ground. A safe landing.

BUSINESSMAN (CONT'D)
You see that? Nothing to be scared of.

ON TOM. The anxiety on his face giving way...

...to full-on dread.

TOM
We landed.

BUSINESSMAN

These things always do. Built to last.

TOM

What time is it?

The INTERCOM spurts on -- and, with it, the voice of the PILOT. Calm. Professional.

PILOT (O.S.)

On behalf of the flight crew, I'd like to thank you folks again for flying with us this evening. The time in Chicago is now 5:57pm.

TOM

I'm screwed.

The Businessman raises an eyebrow. Did he hear that correctly?

BUSINESSMAN

Excuse me?

INT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT - EVENING

Marching down the concourse, a wad of music in his hand and his cell to his ear:

TOM

(angry, frantic)

It's January and it's Chicago. But were we delayed? No. We were early. Do you know the chances of that happening? They didn't even put us in a holding pattern!

INT. BEDROOM - EVENING

EMMA SELZNICK, 27, a shy, rose-cheeked beauty, strands of scarlet hair tucked behind her ear, pulls clothes out of a suitcase, her phone balanced on her shoulder.

EMMA

Well, what did you expect?

She's heard her husband go off like this before. She takes it all in as she always does -- with love.

TOM (O.S.)

I don't know... Chicago things. Some kind of delay... Ice on the runway, or... One of the wings falling off.

She laughs.

EMMA
I know, life just isn't fair.

INT./EXT. CHICAGO O'HARE - CONTINUOUS

Tom spots an EXIT, heads for it...

TOM
It's a jip is what it is. That flight was
my last possible way out...

Steps OUTSIDE -- into the bitter cold. His breath escapes
in a wisp.

EMMA (O.S.)
Your cab could crash.

TOM
That's true. There's still hope.

EMMA (O.S.)
Or you could just cancel.

TOM
I can't do that to Norman...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Back to Emma. Unveils an evening gown of sapphire blue.
Lights up at the sight of it.

EMMA
Well, I'm excited. C&T after the show?
Milkshake and a burger?

TOM (O.S.)
*I can't think about food right now, I'll
vomit.*

A female VOICE calls from another room.

VOICE
Emma!

Emma turns, whispers into her phone.

EMMA
Shit, that's Ashley.

TOM (O.S.)

Oh God... Don't put me on the phone with her. Tell her and Wayne I said hi, thanks for coming, all that -- Christ, do they even know what a classical concert is??

EMMA

You know her, she's going to have me in a vice all night--

TOM (O.S.)

Why do we have to see them??

EMMA

Tom. We can't spend a whole week in Chicago and not see them.

ASHLEY'S voice rings out again:

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Emma!

TOM (O.S.)

Yeah, 'cause she still thinks you're her friend. But it's ok -- as long as it's just you and me after the show. Just you and me.

EMMA

I'll try...

About to say bye, when--

EMMA (CONT'D)

Wait--

ASHLEY'S voice rings out again:

ASHLEY (O.S.)

Yoo-hooooooooo!

EMMA

I got you something. I packed it in your carry-on. The back slip.

TOM (O.S.)

What?

EMMA

It's a gift. Your return to the stage.

(adding with a grin)

It's about time you joined the twenty-first century.

EXT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Tom nods. Bemused, but still on edge. Pulls at his hair.
A nervous tic of his.

EMMA (O.S.)

You'll know what I mean. Gotta run.

TOM

Bye.

A moment. Emma hasn't hung up.

EMMA (O.S.)

Are you pulling your hair?

Tom stops. Finishes the job. A few tufts of hair fall
from his grip.

TOM

No.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma... A smile. She knows he's lying.

EMMA

I love you.

She puts her phone away, approaches the door. Emerging
through the crack is ASHLEY: 28, loud, the life of a
party -- whether others want her to be or not.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Sorry, Ashley...

ASHLEY

Holy crap Emma, you look *hotttt!*

EMMA

Oh... Thank you...

Barging in, tight jeans, heavy make-up, mascara...

ASHLEY

So what's the agenda? He meeting us or
what? 'Cause I know the bartender at
Corpo, he said shots right now are 50%
off, Wayne's on his way over and--

EMMA

Sorry... Tom has to head straight to the
hall...

ASHLEY

He does? Well what about pre-gaming?

EMMA

It's a...classical concert, Ashley.

Ashley stares at her blankly.

EMMA (CONT'D)

So...it's better if Tom is...not drunk.

ASHLEY

Oh. Ok. We'll post-game then.

EXT. CHICAGO O'HARE AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Tom. Stepping forward. Eyes out for a car.

We MOVE IN CLOSER... DRIFT down to his side, where the left-hand pocket of his winter jacket hangs open...

Suddenly, a DARK FIGURE passes by. A HAND drops a SMALL BLACK OBJECT into the pocket. It happens in a flash.

We MOVE BACK up to Tom...

He hasn't noticed a thing.

A BLACK TOWN CAR pulls over. The DRIVER leans out.

DRIVER

Tom Selznick? Anthony Phillips Hall?

TOM

That's me.

INT. TOWN CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Zooming down the road. Night settling in over the Windy City. The skyscrapers whiz by, decked out in lights, hovering over snow-capped streets. It's Christmas season, and the city at dusk is like a red-and-green jewel.

Tom anxiously pores over sheet music on his lap. The fingers of his left hand tap the page while the fingers of his right dance in mid-air, fluttering down an imaginary piano.

TOM

(under his breath)

Ta-tee-ta-ta-ta-ta. Ta-tee-ta-ta-ta...

He pauses. Remembers something. Looks through his CARRY-ON. Unzips the back pocket. There's a tiny parcel, wrapped in white.

And a note. Cursive in blue ink. It reads: "I PUT ALL YOUR MUSIC ON IT."

Tom unwraps the item. It's an iPod.

A smile barely makes its way across his furrowed face.

TOM (CONT'D)
(now he gets it)
Join the twenty-first century...

DRIVER
You talking to yourself again?

Tom looks up. Confused--

TOM
Again?

The DRIVER turns around to face him for a second. 38, doughy, sweet-faced. His name's CHICK JONES.

TOM (CONT'D)
(surprised)
...Chick...?

CHICK
That's right.

TOM
What...? I didn't recognize you.

CHICK
It's been a long time, Selznick.

TOM
So you're driving now?

CHICK
Well, still security, but they let me give you a lift, special. I cannot tell you how excited I am for tonight.

Beat. Tom manages a smile. The sight of an old acquaintance comforts him. And then -- the sounds of MUSIC. A classical orchestra, wafting from the radio...

CHICK (CONT'D)
To get you in the mood. What do you say?

Tom lets out a chuckle. Easing up more...

CHICK (CONT'D)
I've been doing my homework. Mozart -- I love that guy. Bach's all right, too.

TOM
(laughing)
All right?

CHICK
And I got headphones for my security shifts now. Can listen to Mozart all night long. And they're noise-cancellers.

TOM
Is that a good idea for a security--

CHICK
And they've got so many classical stations on the radio now.
(turning the radio dial)
Look... This one... Every few dials...

A blast of classical trumpets. Then a soft piano. Then--

RADIO JOCKEY
...and after a five-year silence and amid widespread rumors that he had abandoned performing for good, Tom Selznick--

Tom shoots up in his seat. Chick almost bounces, giddy.

CHICK
It's you! Oh my God--

He steadies the dial. But Tom seems anxious once again.

TOM
It's ok, Chick, we don't need to listen to--

RADIO JOCKEY (O.S.)
--the stage again tonight, performing as a soloist with the CSO and guest conductor Norman Reisinger. The piano Selznick will play was bequeathed to the show by one of his former teachers -- the late Patrick Godureaux, famous for his composition "La Cinquette", dubbed by many "The Unplayable Piece".

TOM
Really, Chick, you can change the dia--

RADIO JOCKEY (O.S.)

So what do you think, Dan? Is this a must-attend event?

SECOND JOCKEY (O.S.)

Charles, I'd say it's the must-attend event of the season. Let's not forget that Tom Selznick was, at 19, the great new hope for classical music. No one had seen playing like that before.

Chick looks back at Tom. A big fat grin. Tom takes it in. Maybe this isn't so bad after all. He manages a smile...

SECOND JOCKEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But this show is a must-attend for an altogether different reason...

Tom's smile fades. What's the reason, then?

SECOND JOCKEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I don't think anyone in the music world has forgotten what happened five years ago when Selznick tried to play "La Cinquette".

Tom's stomach climbs to his throat.

SECOND JOCKEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

And even before then he was just as famous for his tendency to choke on-stage as he was for his skill...

Chick, mortified, reaches for the dial. But when he turns it, the station stays the same...

SECOND JOCKEY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

So this "return to the stage" of his...

TOM

Do you...do you think you could--

CHICK

I know, I'm trying, I don't know what's wrong--

He gives up on the dial, presses one button after another, but still the station won't change...

SECOND JOCKEY (O.S.)

...could prove to be a must-see for its disaster value more than anything else...

Finally, Chick goes for the volume. MUTES it.

Silence.

Neither Tom nor Chick says a word for a moment. As if on auto-pilot, Tom starts pulling his hair.

Then--

CHICK

So... Let me tell you about my noise-cancellers...

INT. TOWN CAR / EXT. LOBBY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

The town car rolls up. Tom steps out.

TOM

(a bit shaken)

Emma's coming after me... You'll be on your shift?

CHICK

In ten minutes. How's her singing going?

TOM

Oh, real well...

(then,)

Thanks for the ride, Chick...

CHICK

Alright, Tom... Sorry about...

TOM

No worries.

He waves, and Chick, waving back, drives off. Tom turns and looks up. Before him stands the newly opened ANTHONY J. PHILLIPS HALL. Huge, cold, foreboding. Slabs of polished granite staring passersby down. Giant white colonnades giving way to an expanse of asphalt.

To the side, holiday-themed one-sheets for THE NUTCRACKER. And up front, emblazoned on a larger-than-life poster, Tom's own face, and the words: "TOM SELZNICK and the CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA. Conducted by NORMAN REISINGER."

Tom is not the type to rejoice at the sight of his own image. With a gulp, he approaches the hall and ascends the front steps.

TOM (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve...

Reaches the thirteenth step. Skips over it and continues upward.

INT. LOBBY / BASEMENT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

Steps in. Makes his way down a flight of stairs to the side. Reaches a bustling hall. The sight of PEOPLE -- MUSICIANS carrying cases, ASSISTANTS running with music stands, various hangers-on and busy-bees -- immediately fills him with additional dread...

MUSICIAN #1
Selznick. Welcome back.

Tom nods. Smiles.

MUSICIAN #2
Hey, Tommy. Big show.

Another nod, another feigned smile.

MUSICIAN #3
Good luck out there.

This last comment goes down like a pill.

He spots a table-spread decked with food trays: steaming potatoes, bowls of pasta, barbecue chicken. Musicians grab at the items, wolf down what they can.

Each dish looks heavier than the last, and each brings Tom closer to nausea...

ASSISTANT
Your chart.

Tom spins around, startled. The ASSISTANT has appeared out of nowhere -- a chipper young guy, freckle-faced, smart-aleck, same age as Tom but years apart in confidence.

He hands Tom a thin BLACK FOLDER.

TOM
A folder? Can't just be a single sheet?

ASSISTANT
We put all the charts in there. In case you ever need them.

TOM

I only needed the intro. What am I supposed to do with the rest? I don't have a page turner...

ASSISTANT

(not listening, an automaton)
And may I add how exciting it is to have you back on-stage, Mr. Selznick.

Tom takes the folder. Embarrassed. Glances back at the photo in the paper. Then returns to the Assistant.

Nods "thank you".

He spots a DRESSING ROOM with a handwritten sign on the door: "TOM SELZNICK".

TOM

And the floor map?

ASSISTANT

The floor map?

TOM

I always need a floor map. Every show. I need to see the seat layout and know how many of them are occupied. Otherwise I can't play.

The Assistant is befuddled.

TOM (CONT'D)

It's a...thing of mine. Sorry.

The Assistant nods.

ASSISTANT

I'll get on it.

TOM

Thank you.

He steps into...

INT. DRESSING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

...and slumps into the folding chair, dropping the folder and his winter coat on the table. His iPod slides out of his coat pocket. The room is bare: mirror, table, keyboard.

KNOCK KNOCK.

He turns. A 41-year-old man of smooth features and slicked hair stands at the doorway, a newspaper tucked under his left arm. NORMAN REISINGER, guest conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

REISINGER
If it isn't the great Tommy Selznick.

Tom sighs.

TOM
Hi, Norman...

REISINGER
You holding up? Flight ok?

TOM
It was fine... How's the piano?

REISINGER
Third B-flat's a hair sharp. But other than that, it's a knock-out. Real pity we can't hang onto it. You think Patrick would've wanted it dragged out right after a show?

Beat. The name hangs over Tom...

TOM
Patrick... He'd be embarrassed by me now. I'm going out there with sheet music, for Christ's sake.

REISINGER
Tom...

TOM
You think he'd want me playing his precious piano? The great screw-up?

REISINGER
Come on, Tom--

TOM
He loved that thing more than he loved his own kids.

Beat. Reisinger sees an opportunity to change the subject.

REISINGER
(dropping his newspaper on
the table)
Clearly.

On the front-page, a mid-size photo of a distinguished-looking 70-YEAR-OLD MAN. A headline reads: "THE UNPLAYABLE WILL: FAMILY IN SHOCK AS GODUREAUX INHERITANCE RAISES QUESTIONS."

Tom glances at the paper. Recognizes the story.

REISINGER (CONT'D)

Have you been reading this? No one even knows where the money went. Some people think he handed it off to a gardener or something.

But Tom's still thinking of other things...

REISINGER (CONT'D)

You imagine? You're waiting around for your share of 90-mill, instead all you get is a sheet of music. Thanks, Dad.

TOM

"La Cinquette..."

Reisinger looks at Tom. Realizes he brought up something he shouldn't have. *La Cinquette...* Then, memories drifting--

TOM (CONT'D)

It never made sense to me. He was born rich. He never needed the money. So why did he perform...?

REISINGER

Because, as crazy as it sounds to you, some people enjoy it.

Beat. Tom shakes his head. He doesn't even need to say it: *Not me.*

REISINGER (CONT'D)

You could've been a stock broker, you know.

TOM

I'll add that to the list of regrets.

Searching for yet another subject, spotting the iPod...

REISINGER

You got an iPod... What changed?

TOM

Emma gave it to me. Now I just gotta buy some headphones.

Reisinger manages a laugh. Scrolls through the iPod tracks.

REISINGER

How's Emma anyway? Still singing in Ohio?

Condescension in his voice. Perhaps unintentional. Either way, Tom notices.

TOM

Yeah. Still singing in Ohio. Boston, too.
She was in the Globe, you know.

Reisinger looks at Tom. Puts down the iPod. Earnestly--

REISINGER

Listen to me... Patrick would be proud of
you. Not embarrassed. Proud.

A moment passes. Tom shakes his head again.

TOM

No... I'm gonna screw up, Norman... I
know it.

REISINGER

We all screw up. You can't play these
charts without a fudge note here and
there. But wrong notes mean nothing to
these people. They're a bunch of wine-and-
cheese fogeys who listen to Bach because
it's respectable. They don't know the
difference. A wrong note doesn't matter.

Beat. Tom nods. Reisinger has a point.

REISINGER (CONT'D)

(earnestly)

I've never seen everyone so excited. They
waited five years for this, Tom.

Tom nods appreciatively. Then adds--

TOM

I could wait another ten.

REISINGER

And what does that say about all the
other pianists in the world? Do you know
how many people would do anything to have
what you have? Have fun up there, for
God's sake.

Beat. He looks at Tom. Smiles. Turns to head to the door
and, right before he steps out--

REISINGER (CONT'D)

And after all, Tom, remember -- it's only music.

We linger on Tom. He's alone again. The words echo in his mind: *It's only music...*

He glances over at a clock above the doorway. 7:51. Nine minutes to go...

TOM

Ta-tee-tee-ta-ta. Ta-ta-tee-ta-ta.

He catches his reflection in the mirror. Frazzled. Frayed. Frightened.

INT. WAITING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

Musicians straighten their ties, brush off their instruments.

A CELLIST finds Reisinger, flags him down.

CELLIST

So what's the deal? I've got friends and family out there and they paid good money for the show. Is he going to freeze?

Reisinger casts a stern glance. Offended.

REISINGER

Selznick played more concert halls by 20 than you've played your whole career.
(leaning in--)
So show some damn respect.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

THE CLOCK. The minute hand nudges forward. 7:54.

Tom takes it in. Breathes deeply. *Everything's going to be ok...*

TOM

Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta. Ta-tee-tee-tee-ta-tee-ta.

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

ATTENDANTS and GAFFERS scramble. Push aside stands, clear a path for musicians. Plush red curtains line their way.

HEAD GAFFER
 (on walkie-talkie)
 Lights are go.

VOICE
Lights are go.

The momentum's building. It's almost showtime as we MOVE TO...

INT. WAITING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back with the MUSICIANS. A clock reads: 7:55.

REISINGER
 Ok, cats, five of. Grab your weapons.

A few familiar chuckles. The MUSICIANS grab their instruments. Flutes. Violas. Oboes.

They're on the move, passing STAGE-HANDS and TECHNICIANS, the whole place buzzing with life, throbbing with pre-show energy, clocks ticking away...

INT. LIGHTING CONSOLE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

7:56. A handful of LIGHTING TECHNICIANS huddle over dimmers and console stations. The window of their cramped headquarters peers out over the theater.

HEAD LIGHTING TECHNICIAN
 Set lights... Program one...

INT. DRESSING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

7:56. Tom looks again at his reflection. *Get it together. You can do it.*

Slides his iPod into his pants pocket. Rises to his feet.

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Finds a stool. Drops his COAT on top, pulls out his cell phone, places it on the coat. Deep breaths. Nervous glances.

Stops by the edge of a curtain. A sign plastered above him: ENTRANCE STAGE-LEFT.

Checks his watch: 7:58...

ASSISTANT

Mr. Selznick.

Looks up, meets the eye of the freckle-faced assistant.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

(unfolding a sheet of paper)

Your floor plan... Full house. 3,986 people.

Tom nods. Takes the sheet...

A printed diagram, showing a horse-shoe shaped theater, a few isolated box seats on the sides, numbered one-to-five counter-clockwise.

Tom points to separated dashes on the lower level--

TOM

What are these?

ASSISTANT

Handicap seats. Had to put them in last year. Waste of space if you ask me.

TOM

Those filled too?

ASSISTANT

Everything's filled.

With dread mounting--

TOM

So they've all come...

ASSISTANT

Anything else you need to know?

Then, spitting it out, like the smart-aleck he is--

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

Janitor does a trash sweep back-stage ten minutes into first set, takes a half-hour dinner break, then dumps the bags down--

TOM

That's fine, that's fine, long as he doesn't make noise... All I need is the floor plan.

ASSISTANT

(nodding)

Ok...

(MORE)

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
(then--)
Can I ask...why?

TOM
It's a habit of mine.

He hesitates. He knows it's going to sound ridiculous.

TOM (CONT'D)
I have to know the enemy's position.

ASSISTANT
The enemy's?

Tom takes a step forward, inches wider a curtain gap.

OUT THERE is the theater... We get just a narrow glimpse, but we can tell it's HUGE. Vaulted ceiling, a panoply of seats. A cavernous pit. The lights still on, ushers still roaming the aisles.

And a MASS OF PEOPLE -- some seated, some taking their seats... A blurry fresco of expectant spectators... Thousands of them... A hive of activity... Buzzing, murmuring, trembling... Ready to sting...

TOM
The enemy.

The Assistant raises an eyebrow. Nods.

ASSISTANT
(you have issues)
Well... Break a leg.

He leaves. Tom stays in place. Leans back. Takes another deep breath. Feels the folder in his right hand. Checks his watch again. 8:01.

Peers down at the folder... Uneasy...

One PAGE is peeking out... A stray sheet...

Tom opens the folder a hair. Catches the title on the sheet.

LA CINQUETTE.

A grimace crosses Tom's face. He didn't expect to see that one. He RIPS it out and CRUMPLES it in his hand. TOSSES it into a small trash bin -- the bag of which is WHITE PLASTIC with BLUE LINER on the ends.

Suddenly the BACK-STAGE LIGHTS DIM. A hush comes over the crowd beyond...

TOM

Shit...

A LIGHT FLASHES ON two feet above his head. His signal.

He takes another deep breath... Closes his eyes...

TOM (CONT'D)

(about to step off a cliff)

Here we go...

... And walks ON-STAGE.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Only part of the stage is lit -- and there sits a regal black-wood GRAND PIANO, feet away from the back curtains.

Just past the piano, the stage descends to a slightly lower level -- filled with seated musicians, still shrouded in shadow.

And, just beyond that, a yawning expanse of BLACK...

One can't make out a single audience member. It's a giant swath of darkness, looming in front of you...

APPLAUSE greets Tom's arrival. He manages a smile, but tries not to look at the darkness. He's learned to block it out...

He hurries to the piano, takes a seat. His RIGHT PROFILE faces the orchestra and the audience. He looks down at the KEYS.

He recognizes them. He's played them before. Now seated, he feels a bit more at ease.

Wipes the keys with a handkerchief from his pocket. A few specks of dust catch the stage-light.

The applause dies. Silence... A throbbing, anticipatory silence...

Tom props up his folder. Steering the uneasiness away. Cracks a knuckle. Readies himself.

Opens the folder...

A BLANK WHITE PAGE.

He leans in closer, confused. There're multiple pages here. At the bottom right edge of this first page is an ARROW, drawn in pencil.

He follows the arrow. Turns the page.

And then he sees it -- another white sheet, but this one with handwriting.

A simple message, easily legible:

"PLAY ONE WRONG NOTE AND YOU DIE."

Tom freezes. Stares at the note. It glares back at him, as though in mockery.

He looks to his left. He has a view of back-stage, through a pathway concealed from the audience. But there's no one there.

Looks to his right. The orchestra musicians are turned away from him, away from the light.

And where the audience is -- just darkness.

He looks back at the note. Regains composure.

TOM
(a murmur)
Very funny. Assholes...

Turns the page. On the right, a sheet of music. A single introductory piano solo. The heading: "MUSSORGSKY'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 10. FIRST MOVEMENT."

And on the left, another white page -- and another penciled note:

"DO YOU THINK I'M KIDDING? LOOK TO YOUR RIGHT."

Beat. Tom does so.

There, in the darkness where the audience is, a TINY RED LIGHT flashes. Like the laser dots professors use -- or the trace dots SNIPERS use...

The dot flashes ON, then OFF. ON once more, then OFF.

Tom's eyes go wide. He stops breathing. This can't be happening... This must be a prank...

He looks back at the sheet music. On the right-most margin is scribbled another note:

"CALL FOR HELP OR TRY TO WALK OFF-STAGE AND I'LL SHOOT YOU BETWEEN THE EYES."

Another arrow points to turn the page. Tom does so.

Another note: "I HAVE GOOD AIM."

The sweat piles up on Tom's brow. He feels the stage-lights now. Hot. Burning...

He spots another ARROW. Another margin note.

"PLAY WITH NO MISTAKES OF ANY KIND AND YOU'LL LIVE THROUGH THE NIGHT."

He shakes his head. Must be a sick joke...

He RISES TO HIS FEET. Murmurs from the orchestra...

AUDIENCE POV. Tom backing away from the piano, heading for the curtains.

ON A FEW AUDIENCE MEMBERS. Perplexed looks.

BACK WITH TOM. We stay close as he nears the back-drop curtain. He's about a yard away...

Then he FREEZES. His eyes are glued to his hand, hanging by his waist.

Jiggling just above the knuckle is the RED DOT.

ON TOM. Realizing he's being aimed on...

The dot scoots leftward. Climbs past the wrist, past the cuffs. Up the arm. To the shoulder...

AUDIENCE POV. We're too far away to see the red dot now. Tom seems to have frozen for no reason.

BACK TO TOM. His heartbeat going haywire, he ever so slowly turns around...

Sees the PIANO. The opened FOLDER. The SHEET MUSIC.

The RED DOT glides down the stage. Hops onto the keys. Points to the sheet music.

Its message is clear. Get back now.

Tom considers his options. Shaking, he retraces his footsteps. Makes his way back to the piano. Takes a seat.

The RED DOT is still there, on the music. It beckons him to turn another page. He does -- and finds a final note:

"ARE WE DONE WITH ON-STAGE ANTICS? PLAY THE GODDAMN PIANO."

TOM (CONT'D)
(under his breath)
Ok... Ok...

He flips back two pages -- to the beginning of the chart. Arches his fingers. Gets in position.

Notices his palms are coated in SWEAT. Rubs them against his slacks.

CLOSE ON THE KEYS. The tips of Tom's fingers hover overhead... Waiting... Waiting... Waiting...

He glances up at the music. The first few bars are CLUTTERED with notes. It's a dizzying spread of notation.

He looks back down at the keys. Untouched. Threatening. As though begging for a mistake.

He takes a deep breath. This could still be a prank...

He BEGINS.

His nerves are apparent, and his attack is unsteady. But he's playing the right notes. No slip-ups yet.

TOM (CONT'D)
(as he plays)
Ta-tee-tee-tee-ta-ta-tee-tee-ta-ta-ta.

He glances to his right for a second. The same great stretch of darkness.

And the same TINY RED DOT, occasionally blinking...

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Honking... Stuck in the worst gridlock you've ever seen...

Three passengers in the back. Emma, looking radiant. Ashley, plastered with yet more makeup. And WAYNE, 29, Ashley's boyfriend -- short, plump, more Ashley's puppy than her lover. As Christmas carols blare from the radio--

EMMA
We're so late... We're so late...

ASHLEY

Who cares? You'll see most of it.

EMMA

No, you don't get it, Tom is panicked about this one. He used to always have his teacher in the audience.

ASHLEY

(fiddling with Wayne's tie)
It's too tight on the top. It looks like a clip-on. And what did you do to your hair?

(back to Ashley)

Teacher? Like a biology teacher?

EMMA

Patrick Godureaux. Seems like he was a lunatic but he was always by Tom's side.

WAYNE

I didn't know you needed a tie for these things...

ASHLEY

Of course you need a tie!

WAYNE

Well you're wearing jeans.

ASHLEY

Shut up!

EMMA

(to the CAB DRIVER)

Sir -- aren't there back roads we can use?

CAB DRIVER

Sorry, ma'am. That accident on A's got the whole city backed up.

Emma shakes her head. Can't believe it.

EMMA

And I was supposed to be by Tom's side tonight...

ASHLEY

(turning to her)

Emma, it's not the end of the world. When you sang in college I was always late.

Emma looks at her. Thanks.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

And -- and -- when you do your singing now, don't they let stragglers in?

EMMA

You're talking about jazz clubs. This is Anthony Phillips Hall. It's night and day.

ASHLEY

Just slip in. He'll never know you missed the beginning.

(a wink)

And what a guy doesn't know won't hurt him.

Wayne looks at Ashley for a second. She catches the tail-end of the look.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Fix your tie.

INT. LOBBY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

Heels clanging marble. Emma hurries in, runs her purse through the scanner. Chick is idly seated, now at his security shift.

EMMA

Chick! Have they started yet?

CHICK

I think it's just started.

EMMA

Shit, shit, shit...

Grabs her purse at the other end.

CHICK

I think he's got something good up his sleeve tonight, Emma.

EMMA

Thanks, Chick! We'll see you after the show!

She runs off, Emma following after her, Wayne straggling, still picking at his tie...

WAYNE

Slow down... Isn't there an opening act?

We STAY with Chick -- and his SUPERVISOR, a decade younger, a foot shorter, fifty pounds thinner.

SUPERVISOR
(approaching from behind)
Something good up his sleeve?

CHICK
Well, I--

SUPERVISOR
Why are you still harassing patrons?

CHICK
Harass--

SUPERVISOR
Always talking their ears off. They came here to listen to music, not to you.

CHICK
I'm sorr--

SUPERVISOR
You're a security guard, damnit. You're paid to sit still and keep your damn mouth shut. Compriendo?

CHICK
Yes, sir...

Beat. The Supervisor begins to walk away...

CHICK (CONT'D)
Just so you know, I think it's compiendo.

Turning around--

SUPERVISOR
What?

CHICK
Compiendo. Not comprien--

SUPERVISOR
Shape up, Jones.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Emma splits ways with Emma and Wayne, who head in through a lower entrance. She follows the signs for BOX SEATS...

Hands an USHER her ticket. Continues on. Stops at BOX SEAT 5.

Tom's piano playing can be heard -- fast, frenetic...

She slowly opens the door, steps inside...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

...and takes her seat. Careful not to make a noise.

She's perched up high, to the side of the theater, with a clear view of the stage -- and of her husband.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back to Tom. Concentrated. Playing for his life.

TOM

Taa-tee-ta-ta-ta-taa-tee-ta-ta-ta-taa--

Ripping through the chart. Hardly looking at the sheet music. Nearing the end of his solo...

He glances again to his right. Just darkness.

His left hand swings down and joins the right for the final arpeggio. Building... Building...

A new bank of STAGE-LIGHTS goes on. Now revealed to all and brightly lit is the CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, seated just a few yards away from Tom. Instruments at the ready, their backs to the piano...

And NORMAN REISINGER, standing at a perch, his back to the audience, his baton poised in the air.

It's a dramatic set-up, specially designed for Tom's return to performing, Tom singled out as the man to watch.

He races down the keys as Reisinger cues his players. The ORCHESTRA COMES IN -- joining Tom on the next downbeat and taking over the melody. A slow string passage, a French horn holding it up.

Tom taps out a few more lines. Then stops. Breathes out. He's still alive.

On his sheet music, we see a thirty-seven-bar REST indicated.

And another handwritten margin note: "IF YOU'VE MADE IT TO THE REST, EXIT STAGE-LEFT AND GO TO YOUR COAT."

Tom takes it in, looks toward the curtains... Then he looks back at the music. Below the note is an addendum, in INK:

"MAKE EMMA PROUD."

He goes pale.

Turns again to his right. He can't make out a thing beyond the orchestra. Just darkness...

He staggers to his feet, eyes the passage between the curtains on stage-left, and heads for it...

A few more MURMURS escape from the audience as he does...

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The orchestra swelling behind him, Tom dodges back-stage. Bee-lines to his coat.

There, sitting atop, is his CELL PHONE, right where he left it.

He knows what to do. Not wasting a second, he whips the phone out. Hurrying forward, his eyes peeled for help.

Then, suddenly -- a BUZZ. Tom looks at the screen. He has a new TEXT MESSAGE. Sender: UNKNOWN.

He opens it. Still walking.

"I SEE EMMA REACH FOR A PHONE AND I'LL SHOOT HER."

Tom stops in his tracks. His stomach in a knot.

A second MESSAGE pops up. He opens it.

It's a SNAPSHOT of Emma. Sitting in her box seat and watching the show.

TOM

No...

Then another SNAPSHOT. Emma in the box seat again.

And this time there's a RED DOT. The same one Tom saw. Centered on her neck, just above the clavicle.

A third MESSAGE. Reeling, Tom opens it.

"YOU HAVE THREE SECONDS TO GET BACK TO YOUR COAT BEFORE I STAIN THAT LOVELY DRESS OF HERS."

ON TOM. No time to think.

Springing in a flash, he BOLTS back down the corridor... RACING against time...

The stool up ahead... The coat...

His phone BUZZES again.

Terror in his eyes, he opens the new MESSAGE...

"LEFT-HAND POCKET OF COAT."

He picks up his coat, checks the left-hand pocket. He's shocked to find something in it... A small black object... No wider than a thumb...

It's an EARPIECE.

A new TEXT MESSAGE appears on the phone: "ACTIVATE BY FLIPPING TAB. PLACE IN LEFT EAR."

Tom looks. Flip what? Then he sees it -- a tiny dial on the concave side of the earpiece. He flips it up. Places the piece in his ear, hooking it to the top lobe.

He hears a VOICE:

VOICE

Get back on-stage.

It's a man's voice. American. Not too old. Plain. Unremarkable...

TOM

Who is this?

VOICE

You're wasting time. You've been backstage too long.

TOM

You think I don't know what you're up to?

Beat.

VOICE

What am I up to?

TOM

Did Norman put you up to this?

VOICE

Norman?

TOM

(praying he's right)

Look, I get it. It's funny. The guy with a bad case of stage-fright. Hasn't been on-stage in five years. So scared he needs sheet music to keep him company. You know he's wetting his pants. So you send him these messages.

VOICE

Are you?

TOM

Am I what?

VOICES

Wetting your pants?

TOM

No.

VOICE

Would you like me to change that?

TOM

Listen to me--

VOICE

Are you sure this is a prank?

Tom hesitates. He knows he might be playing with fire...

TOM

Yes.

VOICE

How sure?

TOM

I'm sure.

VOICE

Then let's have a bet. I'll bet it's not a prank. You bet it is. If I win, my friend in the audience gets to spray your wife's brains all over her Gucci purse. If you win, you get to tell me off.

TOM

*(clenched teeth)**Go to hell--*

VOICE

Come on, this'll be a fun bet. Let's do it.

TOM

I'm calling the cops.

VOICE

(dead serious)

My friend sees one cop car so much as pull into the lot and the ushers will have a corpse to clean up in box seat five.

Tom goes white. His anger gives way. What if this is really happening?

VOICE (CONT'D)

Are your pants still dry?

No response. Tom can't think straight...

VOICE (CONT'D)

Well then, seems to me you don't really know the meaning of the word "stage-fright". Let me help you out. Look at the curtain four yards ahead of you. Past the gap.

Tom looks up. Finds the curtain. It's off-colored, a single swatch of red hanging just behind stage-left, visible to the audience.

TOM

I see it...

VOICE

Look closely.

TOM

I see it.

Suddenly, a TINY BURST OF SMOKE AND FABRIC. Silent. Instantaneous.

The curtain trembles, as though by a gust of wind. But the orchestra continues. The burst was so small, so quiet, that no one beyond the stage even noticed...

Tom, paler by the second, approaches the spot. There's a small hole in the fabric... About a centimeter wide... Clean... A perfect circle...

Tom touches it. His hand springs back.

It's hot.

VOICE

That's the entry wound of a Rochester .47 automatic. Scope laser aim and zoom control. The most precise weapon on the market. And the quietest.

Tom teeters back. It hits him like a brick.

This is real.

He feels vomit course up his throat. He puffs his cheeks, grabs his stomach. His whole body is shaking.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Now you know the meaning of "stage-fright". Get back on stage or it's Emma's head.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Reisinger conducts with gusto, as the ORCHESTRA builds in intensity... Clarinet lines swoop while the strings get faster and faster...

THE AUDIENCE. Mostly middle-aged or older. Well-to-do. Respectable.

Oblivious.

A few whispers among the crowd as Tom RETURNS on-stage, slowly heading to his piano bench.

We can make out one bearded HUSBAND's aside to his WIFE:

HUSBAND

Guess he's still an odd-ball...

ON TOM. He takes a seat. Feels the eyes on him. Staring him down.

Trying to stay calm. Trying to stay focused. His vision blurred. The keys are slipping in and out of focus...

Deep breaths. In. Out. In. Out.

Feels his earpiece. Since only the right side of his face is visible to the audience, the earpiece is hidden from their view...

VOICE

Does this mean we have an understanding?

Tom nods.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Say it. Quietly. They'll just think you're talking to yourself. Another 'tee-ta-taa', or whatever the hell you do.

TOM

Yes.

He's too far from the nearest orchestra member to be heard -- and all the audience can see is a slight moving of lips.

VOICE

Good. Here are the rules. I can see and hear everything you do. Call for help and I will hear it. Leave the stage and I will see it. Get a cop or a guard involved and I will know about it.

Tears well up in Tom's eyes. His jaw tightens. He's about to crack.

BACK TO THE AUDIENCE. The HUSBAND and WIFE from just before, bemusedly whispering to one another again:

WIFE

God, look at him... He looks like he's about to throw up...

She can see Tom -- seated at the piano, hunched over, eyes closed, frozen in panic...

HUSBAND

Well, you know what happened to him five years ago... Froze like a cucumber in the middle of a piece. The guy's terrified of being on-stage. Can't say I blame him...

BACK ON TOM. Up-close, it's a lot clearer that what he's going through is no ordinary bout of stage-fright...

VOICE

If you do any of these things, your wife will die. If you play a wrong note, you'll no longer be any use to me and you will die. That's two people I can kill if and when I feel like it. So I'm hoping that's double the chance you'll do what I say.

A BLAST of horns. The orchestra is at a fever pitch. The sound rattles Tom to his core.

He SHIVERS -- visibly startled.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Stop shivering.

Tom freezes again. There's the proof. The man on the other line can see him.

He peers again into the DARKNESS. Still searching...

VOICE (CONT'D)
See me?

TOM
 (looking away from the audience so he can talk)
 How...how are you talking to me?

VOICE
Look at the keys. Your entrance is in two bars. Come in late and it'll be the last downbeat you ever play.

Tom does as told. Waits two more bars. Comes in on cue.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Now you can talk.

Tom's part is simple. Lots of space. He divides his attention between the music and the voice on the line...

TOM
 Where are you?

VOICE
The question is: Where are we?

Beat. Tom looks again toward the audience.

VOICE (CONT'D)
One of us is in the audience. Wireless signal from the Rochester. Hi-res night vision. I'm somewhere else, enjoying the images on my screen. Meaning -- not only can I see everything you do, I can see everything Emma does. Right now she's yawning. I think she's bored.

Tom reels back, still playing -- but barely.

TOM
 What do you want from me...?

VOICE

I want you to hold it together. Keep your talking to a murmur, a mumble. We wouldn't want the audience or the orchestra getting the wrong idea. Someone could get hurt.

Tom hunches over. Speaks in a short, clipped voice, his lips barely moving...

TOM

I'll give you all the money I have...

VOICE

I don't want money.

TOM

Then what?

Silence on the other end. Then--

VOICE

I want you to play the most flawless concert of your life.

ON REISINGER. Baton in the air, cheeks red with passion. The orchestra climbs higher and higher... Reaching the final cadenza...

The musicians are models of concentration. Unaware of the goings-on by the piano, their minds on their music. The music is all that matters...

Thinking fast--

TOM

Fine. Ok. We can do this. But you don't need Emma.

A moment of silence on the line...

Then--

VOICE

You're right.

Surprise. Tom sighs with relief. A deep exhalation. It's the first real chance he's had to breathe out.

Thank you...

VOICE (CONT'D)

There, it's done.

The breath is sucked back in. What?

TOM

What's done?

VOICE

What you asked.

TOM

What -- what do you mean?

VOICE

Well, naturally I couldn't let you call her, since that would violate our first rule. But you made a good point. She was muddling things. So I had my accomplice shoot her.

Tom's hands freeze.

His face goes a new shade of white...

VOICE (CONT'D)

Now it's just you and me. Like you suggested.

Begging for it not to be true, Tom springs back, turns to his right. He hasn't heard a thing. He can't see a thing.

Only DARKNESS beyond the stage.

Anything could have happened.

VOICE (CONT'D)

You saw the curtain, Tom. We're lucky enough to have an A-grade silencer. My accomplice is in the last row. One of those newfangled handicap seats. No one on either side. Total darkness. Top of the slope, so his gun can hang low. The tip just over the crest of the seat. Jacket flung over. Removable eyepiece. Looks like he's reading his program. And your wife... All by herself in a box seat. Could've just slumped over she was so goddamned bored.

(then--)

Isn't it amazing what you can get away with in a crowded theater -- when all eyes are on the stage?

Tom... Tears welling up again... Dizzy... A panic attack coming on... About to rise to his feet...

VOICE (CONT'D)

You go anywhere you'll be shot.

Tom shakes his head. Does he even care anymore...?

VOICE (CONT'D)

Come on. Isn't this what you wanted? You said yourself she was muddling things. Muddling your whole life, it seems. The poor woman so bitter she hasn't progressed past Boston jazz clubs while you get Carnegie Hall. You're a person of note, you're in the history books. She ain't the only one jealous of you.

(then, enjoying this,)

You see, this is the thing, Tom. Because you're a person of note, I know everything I need to know about you. I know you just moved to Akron, Ohio. Settling into the quieter life, right? I know you'd opted for some sheet music for this show. I know you mutter when you play. I know you always leave your cell phone backstage. I know you have the fastest, most agile fingers of any pianist alive... And I know you have stage-fright.

Tom looks again toward the audience. Pitch black. As always.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Now think about it. Are you sure I just killed her?

Beat. No response.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Would you like to bet on it?

Still no response.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Start playing. No wrong notes, remember?

AUDIENCE POV: It looks again like Tom is muttering, his eyes on the keys... Counting perhaps... Nothing suspicious...

ON TOM: Struggling to hold it all in--

TOM

Go to hell. I'm not playing a thing until I have proof she's alive.

VOICE

What, you think you're in control? The audience has control, remember? And right now -- I'm your audience.

Leaning in. Fury poking out--

TOM

Then listen to me, you--

Suddenly he STOPS. He sees something.

Something to his left... Something backstage, through the curtain gap...

VOICE

You were saying?

No reply.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Good. Start playing. You almost missed a cue.

Tom's eyes shoot back to the keys. He plays.

Counting the whole way... Absolute precision...

He returns his gaze to stage-left. Finally, we can see what he sees, between the side curtains...

A MAN. Mid-fifties, Italian, ruggedly handsome, greased-back hair, uniformed. Reaching into a garbage basket. Tying the BLUE ENDS of the bag inside.

It's a JANITOR. He's doing the preliminary sweep, getting the back-stage corridors in order before intermission.

He's visible only through the curtain gap stage-left. Totally hidden from view from any orchestra or audience member...

And -- from his vantage point, hunched over the garbage, his head pointed toward the piano on-stage -- he could easily see Tom.

The look on Tom's face tells it all. This man is his only hope.

Tom mouths the words: "Come on..." His eyes are glued to the Janitor. "Look up... Look up..."

The Janitor LOOKS UP, the garbage bag in his hand. Turns to his side, starts plucking dirt from the curtains.

GLANCES Tom's way...

Tom LOCKS EYES with him. This is it.

Beat.

The Janitor smiles. Nods. Goes back to his work.

ON TOM. Shit. Barely hides his dismay...

He keeps playing. Keeps counting...

But this isn't over yet. The Janitor is still there. Tom is still in his view.

Just then -- a SLIP-UP. What sounds like a FLUBBED NOTE.

Tom freezes. Fuck...

Was it wrong?

He keeps playing. Keeps his cool. It wasn't a wrong note per se, just a grazing of his thumb. A slight hum of dissonance, but subtle...

He's still safe.

He stares at his fingers. Why did they betray him? Looking closely, he can see the sweat dripping. His cuffs are drenched, his knuckles are coated, the keys slippery...

He looks up. An overhanging STAGE-LIGHT glares directly above him.

Sweat trickles down his forehead. More sweat gathers in his hair. The light is hot... Burning hot...

Then it hits him.

An idea.

He looks at the Janitor. Still there. Then he looks down at his left wrist...

His WATCH. Silver, with a GLASS coating on the head...

He looks back up at the light. He knows what to do.

Slowly -- still playing, still counting -- he tilts his left wrist to the right. Moves his arm, twisting his hand back to stay in the same exact position on the piano.

He's flexible, his wrists and fingers able to bend back dramatically...

He inches his wrist forward until it's where he wants it. The glass head CATCHES a ray of the stage-light.

His eyes move to the Janitor -- still in the same spot, inspecting the curtains.

Tom inches his wrist up -- so that the watch CATCHES MORE LIGHT.

Tilts it leftward... Toward the Janitor...

It sends a FLASH of light in the Janitor's direction. Small, precise...

Tom tilts the watch rightward, then leftward again. Another flash of refracted light. Then another. With the subtlest flicks of his wrist, in time with the music, he's able to flash the light at precise intervals...

One-two-three flashes... Wait three beats... One-two-three flashes...

He waits.

Repeats the signal. One-two-three flashes... Three beats rest... One-two-three flashes...

The Janitor LOOKS UP.

STOPS.

He's seen something. Tom's eyes freeze on him.

He's seen the signal.

TOM
(under his breath)
Yes...

The Janitor stares forward, immobile. His gaze ON TOM.

Tom stares hard -- dead ahead -- right INTO THE JANITOR'S EYES... Trying to explain to him... Trying to tell him through a look alone...

His lips press together. He can't say anything. But his face reads desperation... Fear... A call for help...

Then, subtly mouthing the words--

"Help...me..." "Help...me..."

The Janitor peers in closer. It's clear that he can make out something -- that he knows something is wrong...

Tom's spirits lift. His eyes remain pinned on the Janitor.

The Janitor reaches into his pocket... What will it be? A phone? An alarm?

He pulls it out...

A comb.

ON TOM. What?

The Janitor raises the comb and, like a pro, SLICKS back his greased hair.

Eyes on the same spot. A smile crosses his face.

It dawns on Tom...

JANITOR'S POV: He can see his reflection in the round back of the piano. Clear as daylight in the polished black wood.

That's what he was staring at so intently. He never noticed Tom's signals.

Tom sinks into his seat -- as though he could sink any deeper...

The Janitor finishes up, winks at his reflection, and struts out of sight like a million bucks, the garbage bag in hand.

On auto-pilot, Tom taps out the final notes of his part. Reisinger cues a fermata. The FIRST MOVEMENT ends.

Silence. Then APPLAUSE.

Tom is still. His face a blank. His eyes dead.

REISINGER
(turning to the audience)
Thank you... Thank you...

Reisinger clears his throat, as the applause subsides. Approaches a single microphone, perched at the very edge of the stage.

REISINGER (CONT'D)

I know it's not customary to speak between movements, but -- well, the problem with conductors is we're all stage-hogs.

Chuckles from the audience. He's got charisma, an ease with the microphone, a love for the spotlight. He's the opposite of Tom.

He scratches his ear, then continues--

REISINGER (CONT'D)

(slowly, savoring his words)

Tonight we're offering you Mussorgsky's Piano Concerto No. 10.

He points to the piano -- and to Tom, who's pulling his hair.

REISINGER (CONT'D)

A perfect vehicle to reunite us with one of the world's greatest pianists and a dear friend... A musician whose genius I, even in my performing years, could never hope to match... The one and only...

(with emphasis)

...Tom Selznick.

APPLAUSE. Reisinger turns to Tom. A big grin on his face, he gestures for Tom to stand up.

Tom has no choice. The clapping rattles him, the stage-lights blind him, but he staggers to his feet and does as beckoned.

Before him is the orchestra, Reisinger at the head.

And above and beyond -- the DARKNESS. Like a wide open mouth, threatening to swallow him whole.

Tom manages the faintest fake smile. Bows. Regains his seat.

REISINGER (CONT'D)

Now, the piano we've got here is a very special piano. It comes to us via the estate of the great Patrick Godureaux, and to tell you the truth, this is only a pit stop. The piano's off again at eleven tonight for Switzerland, so...talk about music on the fly.

A few more laughs and chuckles.

Reisinger switches tones--

REISINGER (CONT'D)
Patrick's passing last summer was a blow
to all of us. I would therefore like to
dedicate this performance to his memory.

Murmurs from the audience. Nods of approval.

REISINGER (CONT'D)
And to really showcase the instrument
properly, Tom will be closing the
evening, sans orchestra, with -- no, not
"La Cinquette"...
(a smirk)
I think we've heard enough about that one
in the news...
(light laughter from the
crowd)
...But Beethoven's "Tempest" Sonata.

Just then, Tom feels something in his side. An
uncomfortable wedge... Something in his pants pocket...
The left one, invisible to the audience...

REISINGER (CONT'D)
But first things first...

Tom remembers. Reaches in. Feels it.

His CELL PHONE.

His memory races... The IMAGES FLASH... *Dropping the
phone in his pocket backstage, not thinking, after
putting on the earpiece, only minutes ago...*

He holds still. Regaining hope. He's got a weapon.

REISINGER (CONT'D)
The second movement of Mussorgsky's
Concerto No. 10. Hope you enjoy it.

Reisinger turns back to the orchestra. Raises his baton.

Eyes Tom. Making sure he's ready.

There's a piano part on the very first bar. No rest. No
time to think.

Tom returns Reisinger's gaze. Locks on the baton.

It whips through the air. Tom BEGINS -- accompanied by
cellos, violas, and double basses...

The music is rubato, flowing out of time... All eyes must be on Reisinger and his baton -- including Tom's...

So, while his face is turned rightward, Tom stretches his right thumb and index finger to take over his left hand's part on the keys. He needs that left hand free...

Breathing deeply, his right fingers straining to cover all the notes, Tom REACHES his left hand back into his left pants pocket.

Where the cell phone is...

AUDIENCE POV: Tom's left hand is completely hidden from sight, blocked by his body. It's impossible to tell what he's up to. His eyes are on Reisinger, his mind seems to be on his music...

Nothing suspicious...

CLOSE ON THE POCKET... Fingers gripping the cell phone... Pulling it up just an inch...

Tom turns to his left for a moment, surveys the back-stage curtain gap. Has to make sure there's no one there watching.

The coast is clear...

THE POCKET... Out pokes the phone... Tom slides it up, ever so carefully...

BACK UP... Tom's right hand glides along the keys. Settles into chords. In tempo. Short spaces between the fingers. A safer spot in the music...

THE POCKET... Tom makes absolutely sure not to move his left shoulder, nor his left upper arm, nor his left elbow... Anything that could be visible to the sniper...

All he can move of his left side are his wrist, his hand, and his fingers...

Keeping his head completely still, he moves his eyes downward... To the left... Catches the phone in his sight...

Twists it up, so the screen is visible... Presses with his thumb... The phone SPRINGS open... He catches it midway, eases it open the rest of the way... Slow... Silent...

AUDIENCE POV: Still impossible to tell that anything is going on on Tom's left side... He's still playing...

THE PHONE. On to the center key... Tom PRESSES it...

His eyes drift rightward... To the big stretch of black where the audience is... He's hoping for his life they can't see what he's doing...

BACK TO THE PHONE. The CONTACT LIST appears. With his thumb, Tom presses "9". Once, twice, three times. "W".

Aims his eye at the phone... Keeps his head in place...

Wally... Water Co...

Wayne.

He STOPS. Inches his thumb toward the DIAL button...

The DIAL SIGNAL illuminates. Letters flashes on the screen: "CALLING".

Tom's eyes widen. Here, at last, is his chance.

TOM
I want to talk...

Beat.

TOM (CONT'D)
Are you there?

VOICE
I'd rather you play than talk, Tom.

Eyes on the phone -- still "CALLING"...

TOM
I want to know why you're doing this to me.

VOICE
I'm afraid that's none of your business.

Tom looks again at the phone. Still "CALLING"...

He mouths the words: "Pick up..."

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

More than twenty rows from the stage, plopped in their seats, beyond bored, are Ashley and Wayne.

Suddenly, a loud CELL PHONE RING-TONE blares to life, cutting through the music.

"Give me a siiiign... Hit me baby one more time...!"

Ashley's face. She is fucking MORTIFIED.

ASHLEY
(demon-eyed)
Wayne...

Wayne scrambles, his arms flailing like an oversized baby.

"...Oh baby baby... Oh baby baby..."

He digs into his pockets.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Are you freaking *kid*-ding me?

WAYNE
(frantic)
I'm looking for it, Ash...

Neighbors turn, stare at the couple.

ASHLEY
They're *looking* at us. *Hurry up.*

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back to Tom. Eyes on the phone. Stalling.

From where he is, the orchestra makes Wayne's ringing inaudible.

VOICE
You hear me, Tom?

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back to Wayne. Still rummaging. Clawing his way into the pockets of his coat, flung over his seat. The people seated behind him grumbling.

"...Tell me baby 'cause I need to know now..."

Ashley. Her face buried in her hands. Wishes she could disappear.

ASHLEY
Why didn't you turn it off before the *show?*

WAYNE
I thought you could take pictures... Is
it in your purse?

Without even looking, Ashley flings her purse at Wayne.
Jackpot. The ringing is even LOUDER now.

ASHLEY
Turn it off *now*.

Wayne pulls out the phone. Presses and lifts to his ear.

WAYNE
Hello?

Ashley's face almost drops to the floor.

ASHLEY
What??

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom sees the phone.

VOICE
Tom?

The word "CALLING" is replaced by "WAYNE ON LINE." Tom
seizes the moment.

TOM
I wanna know why I'm being forced at
gunpoint to play pia--

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley SWOOPS in like a hawk. Grabs the phone from Wayne,
presses it off, shoves it back in her purse.

WAYNE
Bu--

ASHLEY
Don't *even*.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom sees it. The screen goes blank.

The line is dead.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Like a child imploring his mother--

WAYNE

What if it was important? Let me see who called.

Like a mother this close to smacking her child--

ASHLEY

Wayne, I swear to God.

A moment. Ashley keeps her gaze fixed on the stage. No sympathy for Wayne.

WAYNE

I... All I could hear was muttering...
(reflecting)
Gunpoint?...

ASHLEY

One more word, Wayne. One more word.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

On Tom. His hopes dashed yet again.

VOICE

I apologize. Next time I'll force you to play trumpet.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne sits in silence like a scolded boy. Ashley shakes her head to and fro. Pissed.

ASHLEY

So goddamn embarrassing.

No reply from Wayne.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

(eyes still on the stage)
What would Tom think?

She can't see it, but Wayne is now slowly reaching over... His hand nearing her purse... Sliding in...

In a flash of motion, he successfully SPRINGS out the phone.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Wayne!

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom plays. The music is growing more hectic. More involved. His fingers move quickly...

Another plan foiled. There's anger in his face -- and it's going into his playing...

VOICE

Careful, Tom. This is a tricky part. No wrong notes, remember?

Tom's playing getting louder and louder--

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back to Wayne... Checking the screen of his phone... Last received call...

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back to Tom... Fingers careening...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne... Eyes on his phone... Shock at the name on the screen...

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom... Playing furiously...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne... Turning to his wife... Showing her the phone...

The name on his screen: TOM SELZNICK.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom playing... Comes to a rest. Takes a breath.

VOICE

*Very good. You're doing an excellent job,
Tom. Soon you'll be ready for what's
coming next.*

Tom looks up. What does that mean?

TOM

What? What's coming next?

VOICE

You'll find out soon enough.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley shakes her head. She's moved past her embarrassment. Now she's just piqued by Wayne and his perennial idiocy.

ASHLEY

(turning to him)

It's obviously Emma who called. Probably by accident.

WAYNE

No... It was a man's voice...

ASHLEY

Wayne, don't be an *idiot*. Look at him. He's playing the piano. He couldn't possibly call you.

Wayne leans in. Squints. Tries to get a better look.

WAYNE

He's saying something... He's talking...

ASHLEY

He is not talking, he's counting. Isn't that what musicians do, they count while they play?

WAYNE

No... That's not it...

Beat. After thinking for a second--

WAYNE (CONT'D)

He was trying to say something to me. Forced at gunpoint... Forced at gunpoint to play... That's it. That's what he said.

ASHLEY

What?

WAYNE

He's being forced to play at gunpoint.
Something like that.

Ashley turns to the stage. A dismayed sigh.

ASHLEY

Well, there's Tom for you...
(turning back to Wayne)
I'll be honest, I don't know *why* Emma
went for him. Seems to me he's a total
downer. Oh, look at me, I'm Tom, I'm *sooo*
mistreated, everyone's *forcing* me to
return to the stage, I'd so much rather--

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Shhhh.

Ashley stops. Turns around. The culprit is sitting right
behind her -- a suit-clad WOMAN of forty.

ASHLEY

Ex-cuse me. You do not *shhhh* me.

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I'm trying to listen to--

Their catfight fades away as we ZERO IN on Wayne...

Turning it over in his mind...

WAYNE

Gunpoint... Gunpoint...

Another look at the stage. There's Tom. Looking panicked...

Wayne makes up his mind. Rises to his feet. Leans over to
his feuding wife:

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I've got to go to the bathroom.

She hardly notices.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne exits the theater. He stays close, takes out his
phone.

He dials a few digits, selects "CALL BACK" and--

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

BEEP-BEEP. BEEP-BEEP.

Tom's phone goes off.

Shit.

Without missing a beat, he SILENCES the call.

VOICE

What was that?

Recovering, taking a breath. He holds up his watch.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Huh? Tom? What the hell was that?

Taps at his watch. Tightens the screw.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Tom--

TOM

My watch.

VOICE

What?

TOM

An alarm.

Beat. Does he buy it?

VOICE

*An alarm? You expect me to believe you
let your alarm go off during a show?*

TOM

It was a mistake...

Groping for something... Something believable...

TOM (CONT'D)

*It's been five years... I forgot to turn
it off...*

Silence on the other line. Tom waits... Then--

VOICE

I hope you're telling the truth.

Beat.

VOICE (CONT'D)
*Don't open your mouth again unless it's
 to count.*

Tom nods. Eyes his phone again. Anxious... Thinking...
 Pulls at his hair...

VOICE (CONT'D)
And don't pull your hair.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne is still on his phone. Waiting...

We hear the call go to VOICE-MAIL.

WAYNE
 Hi, Tom, it's Wayne.
 (what should I say?)
 I... I got a call from you and... I mean,
 aren't you playing right now? Anyway,
 I...I heard something kind of odd...

He holds off. Thinks for a second.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
 I'll try you again.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom sees the phone's screen darken. The line's dead.

A look of resolution crosses his face. Make this count.

He makes as if to reach for the edge of the piano and, as
 though by mistake, SWIPES his hand against his MUSIC
 FOLDER. It falls to the floor, landing over the phone.
 Looks just like a clumsy accident.

Casually, he leans over and scoops up the folder --
 secretly SLIDING the phone in between the pages in the
 process. His agile fingers hiding everything...

Leans back up, repositions the folder.

Opens it up. Just barely visible BEHIND THE LEFT PAGE is
 the phone -- propped up, its screen facing out.

Tom points his index finger to the music. Traces the
 notes. Making as if reading, preparing himself for his
 next entrance.

TOM

One-two-one-two-three-one-two-three. One-two-one-two-three-one-two-three. Ta-tee-ta-ta-ta. Ta-tee-tee-ta-taa.

Taps his finger against the page in time. Keeps muttering. Turns his attention to the bottom of the left page... Where the phone is concealed...

VOICE

What are you doing? You think you're in practice?

TOM

I play a wrong note and I'm dead. I'm preparing for my next entrance.

Beat.

VOICE

Fair enough.

Tom's finger TAPS the page, hitting the PHONE. The screen lights up -- its glow barely peeking through the white of the page.

AUDIENCE POV: For all intents and purposes, it looks like Tom is practicing in his head. Tapping out the beats. Counting to himself.

Our same old bearded HUSBAND whispers in his WIFE's ear:

HUSBAND

Look at this...

The WIFE shakes her head in agreement.

CLOSE ON THE PHONE. Tom's finger lands on it again. A letter flashes on the screen.

"A"

His finger moves elsewhere. Then taps on the page again -- pressing another button through the paper.

"N"

Then another.

One tap after another after another -- as a message slowly takes shape...

"EMMA IN..."

AUDIENCE POV: The trick is working. Tom seems only to be reading his music, tapping out beats on the page and counting them. Practicing, readying himself for his entrance.

Perhaps unbecoming of a concert pianist, but certainly nothing suspicious...

CLOSE ON TOM. Still tapping, still counting:

TOM
One-two-one-two-three-one-two-three.

He picks up speed. His message is coming along.

"EMMA IN DANGER. SNI..."

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne paces back and forth. What to do? What to do?

Then -- *BEEP*. He looks at his phone. ONE NEW TEXT MESSAGE.

The sender: TOM SELZNICK.

Breathless, Wayne opens it up. It reads:

"EMMA IN DANGR. SNIPR IN THEATR. GO 2 BOX SEAT 5 GET HER OUT NOW. NO COPS."

Wayne's eyes bulge.

WAYNE
Oh my God...

He's frozen in place for a moment. Has no idea what to do.

Hyperventilating. Takes a breath, fans himself off. Looks back at the message.

WAYNE (CONT'D)
Box seat five...

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom... Still tapping...

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne... Hurrying down... Trying to find his way...

Spots a bored USHER.

WAYNE

Excuse me... Which way to box seat five?

USHER

Up the stairs, to your left.

Wayne sees the STAIRCASE. Springs for it.

Another BEEP. Takes out his phone. A new message.

"CAREFUL. HES AIMED ON HER"

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The piano rest is over. It's time for Tom's entrance.

A rumble of the keys and he's back in. His eyes locked, his body still. Careful. Cautious. Precise.

He eyes the phone, still hidden. No more typing possible...

INT. UPPER LEVEL - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Wayne... Racing up the stairs... Panting... He's already out of breath...

He turns left, eyes the numbers on the doors...

WAYNE

Five... Five...

Two... Three... Four...

Five.

Wayne stops. Prepares himself.

Reaches for the door.

ASSISTANT

Excuse me, sir.

Wayne spins around. Just behind him, only a foot away, is the chipper, freckle-faced ASSISTANT.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)

May I help you?

WAYNE

No, I... Well... I just need to go in there...

ASSISTANT

I'm sorry, sir, no entry while the performance is underway. You can go in during intermission.

WAYNE

No, it's not... It's... There's someone I need to talk to...

ASSISTANT

There's no talking allowed during the performance, sir.

WAYNE

I know, it's just... There's a situation...

The Assistant raises an eyebrow.

ASSISTANT

A situation?

Wayne is stumped.

WAYNE

I... I...

He makes up his mind. Procures his phone. Shows the Assistant the message.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

I just got this from the man on-stage.

The Assistant nods. All business.

ASSISTANT

I see...

WAYNE

And he said no cops.

ASSISTANT

Right...

He looks at Wayne.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
It's too risky to go in there. I can't allow it.

Gestures toward the other end of the hall.

ASSISTANT (CONT'D)
Why don't you follow me? I think I know what to do.

A relieved Wayne. He doesn't have to do this on his own.

WAYNE
Ok... Thank you...

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom playing... His fingers are growing weary, but there's hope in his face now...

He glances up to his right. Eyes scanning...

TOM
(under his breath)
Box seat five...

Thinks back...

AN IMAGE FLASHES: *The floor plan... The box seat numbers going counterclockwise, one to five...*

Five on the left end...

Tom fixes his gaze on a specific spot in the darkness, to the left of his field of vision. Around where box seat five must be.

He's watching for something... Murmuring...

TOM (CONT'D)
Open the door... Open the door...

Waiting... Hoping...

Then--

VOICE
Tom.

Eyes returning to his music--

TOM
Yes.

VOICE

*I have a surprise for you. To the left of
your folder. On the music stand.*

Tom looks.

There's nothing to the left of his folder. Just a slab of wood -- part of the piano's MUSIC STAND, against which the folder is propped.

VOICE (CONT'D)

You looking?

TOM

What am I looking at?

VOICE

Do you see your reflection?

Tom pulls back, sees himself in the polished wood.

TOM

Yes.

VOICE

Look at the curtains behind you.

Tom trains his eyes on the wood -- on the reflection of the stage-right curtains.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Look closely.

A second later, the curtains PART a few feet. Tom turns. The curtain gap is tucked away, deep in the corner of the stage.

Invisible to any orchestra or audience member. The reflection on the piano is the only view.

VOICE (CONT'D)

Keep your eyes on the reflection.

Tom does as told.

Then, TWO FIGURES appear, reflected in the wood and glimpsed between the curtains. They step forward.

Tom keeps looking, his eyes on his music stand.

The FIGURES take another step forward. And now Tom can see who they are.

A 40 year-old BLONDE-HAIRED MAN...

And WAYNE. His mouth DUCT-TAPED. A KNIFE to his throat.

Both men still hidden from anyone else's view.

ON TOM. Terror taking over...

VOICE (CONT'D)

Are you watching?

Tom can see the BLONDE-HAIRED MAN's face in the wood. His lips moving.

He's doing the talking. He's the "voice".

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN

(audible through the
earpiece)

Tom? Are you watching?

He's tall, well-built, clean-cut, in an evening suit. Looks just like any other upper-crust audience member.

Wayne squirms and twitches, but the Blond-Haired Man holds him tight. He presses the blade closer to Wayne's throat. It's an eight-inch boot knife with a rubber handle.

There's panic in Wayne's eyes. He's begging for mercy...

TOM

(still turned toward his
keys)

Please... Please let him go...

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN

Don't turn around. I want you to watch this.

TOM

Please, listen--

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN

Keep your fingers on the piano and your eyes on me. This'll teach you some coordination.

With that, the Blonde-Haired Man JAMS the knife deep into Wayne's throat. A gush of blood. Moving like the wind, the Man pulls out a handkerchief and presses it against the wound, soaking it up.

Wayne sinks into his arms. The Man DISAPPEARS in a flash, Wayne's corpse in tow.

ON TOM. About to lose it. Dizzy. Nauseous.

He has just witnessed a murder.

His fingers go haywire. A chord slips off-tempo.

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

Pull it together. Keep playing.

More clumped chords -- still off-tempo...

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

Tom.

His body shaking... Tears building up...

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

(with emphasis)

Tom.

Trying in vain to steady himself...

Reisinger notices him -- going off-tempo, going too fast, gyrating...

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

Tom, if you don't pull it together in one second I'll have you shot.

Tom struggles to focus... Block out what he's just seen... Stay concentrated...

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

Keep your mind on the music.

Tom slows down. Returns to tempo. Reisinger still looks worried.

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)

(CONT'D)

Make your conductor think everything's ok or he'll be next.

Beat. Tom slowly turns to Reisinger. Meets his gaze.

Barely manages a look of embarrassment. Mouths: "Sorry."

Reisinger buys it. Nods: "It's ok."

BLONDE-HAIRED MAN (O.S.)
(CONT'D)

Good.

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The BLONDE-HAIRED MAN... Switching off the EARPIECE in his ear...

Latex gloves on his hands... Begins to drag Wayne down a CORRIDOR... Eyes a passageway... No one in sight...

Stops at a corner. Lays Wayne on the floor. Pulls out a phone. Examines the screen.

It's a VIDEO FEED -- of Tom on-stage, playing his piano.

ASSISTANT

You're gonna give him a heart attack,
Clem.

He turns -- spots the freckle-faced ASSISTANT. Lowers his phone. Looks the Assistant in the eye.

CLEM

Now he knows who he's dealing with.

ASSISTANT

This is all goddamned preamble. Don't you think he's practiced enough?

CLEM

I had to know he could still play under pressure. I knew he'd have to be at gunpoint to play the damn chart, he's so scared of it. Now I know he can play at gunpoint.

ASSISTANT

You're wearing him out. By the time you get past intermission he won't know an A from an E.

Clem leans in. He's poker-faced, but you can tell he doesn't like being lectured.

CLEM

Listen to me. We have one shot at this. That's it. I needed him from step one. The piano's history in less than an hour. You want to try pulling this off in an airport? Or flying Selznick to Switzerland?

(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

Could we have done this when the piano was under lock and key on the fucking Godureaux estate? You know it as well as I do -- if Tom fails tonight, we fail.

He turns back to the corpse.

ASSISTANT

But shit, you could've had him play it in the beginning. Instead of that goddamned *Mussel-sky*.

CLEM

Wrong. It needed to be last because that's when he plays best. He's always wobbly at the start, tight at the finish.

ASSISTANT

Well, except for five years ago.

CLEM

To hell with five years ago.

Silence. Clem is pissed, and he's let it show. The Assistant keeps his distance.

Then, trying to collect himself--

CLEM (CONT'D)

You've gotta see the beauty of it. Don't you? He plays his concert, we play ours. Everything we're doing here -- it's a work of art.

ASSISTANT

I hate art. I hate music. I want what's coming to me and that's it.

CLEM

You hate music? What kind of a person are you? Do you hate oxygen?

Doesn't want to discuss this anymore--

ASSISTANT

Clem -- there were easier ways to do this. That's it. I've said my piece.

Snapping again, grabbing the Assistant by the shoulder--

CLEM

Well, allow me to say my piece. The world is 99.99% average. That means par. That means mediocre. You like your front job?

(MORE)

CLEM (CONT'D)

Then keep your nine-to-five paycheck and cling to your benefits and your dry-wall condo. Me, I'm gonna be remembered. What we're doing here -- this will be remembered and written and read and studied. I'm going for the history books. If you're content with the phone book, the door is to your right. But I'll tell you one thing. I'm not letting anyone -- not you and not some Twinkie-happy audience member -- get in my way.

Then, turning back and heading off--

CLEM (CONT'D)

Take care of the body. I gotta get ready for intermission.

(and, finally,)

And by the way -- it's Mussorgsky.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom plays. Holding it all in as best he can... He reaches a rest. He's got a few minutes off.

CLEM (O.S.)

Tom? You still there?

TOM

Why...? Why did you kill him??

CLEM (O.S.)

I'm sorry, did that upset you?

(before Tom can respond--)

Here's what it's come down to. I've gotten you into shape. It's time for you to take the dive.

TOM

What...?

CLEM (O.S.)

"The Tempest" Sonata. Last number on the program. Another solo piano bit to cap the evening off.

Tom edges leftward, angling his lips away from the audience, so he can speak more freely...

TOM

What about it?

CLEM (O.S.)
*You're not playing it. Change to the
 program. You're gonna play "La Cinquette"
 instead.*

Tom goes cold. *La Cinquette...*

WE MOVE TO...

The audience... Twenty rows back... Ashley turns to her side. Wayne hasn't returned...

A perplexed look crosses her face. It's been too long...

BACK TO TOM. Listening.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*That's right. "The Unplayable Piece." Or
 as I'd prefer to call it, "The \$90
 Million Piece".*

On Tom... Trying to respond, but Clem cuts back in--

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*You see, there're a few people who can
 play it -- who can move their fingers
 that fast and spread them that wide. One
 of them died in June. Another is you.*

TOM
 (stammering)
 No. You don't understand. I can't play
 it. I haven't played it in five years.
 Ever since that night, I...I can't...

CLEM (O.S.)
*Well here's your chance to put that five
 year-old meltdown behind you. Here's your
 chance to make history with me.*

TOM
 No, listen to me. You do not understand.
 I can't play it.

CLEM (O.S.)
*What, 'cause you played a few wrong notes
 that night? 'Cause you froze?*

TOM
 I don't know it by heart.

CLEM (O.S.)
Which is why I had it put in your folder.

Tom stops. Realizing the extent of the plan...

Grasping at straws, still trying--

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*I got faith in you, Tom. You've had your
 practice. Now it's time to take this
 home.*

(a beat)
*The final four bars of "La Cinquette".
 Play them to perfection and you and Emma
 will walk out of here alive.*

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley emerges. A bit puzzled, a bit pissed. She peers left and right. Heads right, her purse hanging from her arm.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom... Summoning his resolve... His focus returning to his music...

TOM
"La Cinquette"...

Then he stops. A memory. He reaches for the folder with his free hand, flips to the back. The remnants of a torn page.

It all comes back to him.

TOM (CONT'D)
It's gone.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem, standing outside Box Seat 5, hears this. Looks both ways to make sure no one is there. Presses his finger to his earpiece.

CLEM
What's gone?

TOM (O.S.)
*I tore it out. "La Cinquette". I tore it
 out and threw it in the trash before the
 show.*

Beat. Clem's poker face starts to crumble. He clenches his jaw. The first mistake he's made.

Calmly--

CLEM

Well, that was a stupid thing to do.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom is thinking... Digging through his memories...

CLEM (O.S.)

Play it by memory.

TOM

I can't. You know I can't. That's why you stuck it in there. That's why you needed me to have sheet music.

CLEM (O.S.)

Too bad for Emma.

TOM

You don't have a copy yourself...??

CLEM (O.S.)

Nope.

TOM

Wait -- I remember... The janitor... Does a -- does a backstage sweep -- then a half-hour dinner. Doesn't toss the bags 'til after...

CLEM (O.S.)

When did he take the bag?

TOM

I saw him do it... Half an hour ago.

CLEM (O.S.)

So he'll be tossing "La Cinquette" down the chute any minute now.

TOM

Not if you grab the bag before.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem, still stationed outside Box Seat 5... Shakes his head.

CLEM

I'm busy.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Way in the back... A handicap seat... Out of view of anyone else, a LONG-HAIRED MAN in black suit and tie is seated, hunched over...

He's looking through a viewfinder... In front of him, against the railing a jacket has been flung...

And underneath it, barely visible... The barrel of a RIFLE...

Thin... Black... Impossible to spot from afar...

At last, we've had our first glimpse of the SNIPER. Perched perfectly, his seat tucked away in the very back of the theater, hidden in the darkness...

An earpiece in his ear...

CLEM (O.S.)

We're all busy...

An AUDIENCE MEMBER rises in front, blocking the Sniper's view -- but only for a second...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Assistant drags Wayne's corpse across the floor, toward a stall.

CLEM (O.S.)

All of us...

He FREEZES. He hears footsteps. Waits. They pass and fade away...

INT. HALLWAY - BASEMENT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The footsteps belong to the JANITOR... Whistling while he walks, dragging a stroller filled with TRASH BAGS.

All the trash bags are small and white, with RED HANDLES. Except for one... Nestled underneath the others...

A bag of the same size, but with a BLUE HANDLE. And, just visible through the plastic, SHEET MUSIC...

A heading is visible. "LA CINQUETTE".

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Back to Tom.

CLEM (O.S.)

You'll have to do it yourself. Once it's intermission, get the chart. Don't get any more people killed in the process.

TOM

But it's not intermission yet. There're forty more bars in this movement, and I come in in three. It'll take too long. He's dumping them now. Once it's in the chute it's gone.

CLEM (O.S.)

Are those forty bars in tempo?

TOM

Yes...

CLEM

Then speed the tempo up. Get to the end sooner.

(the threat of death in his voice--)

And get that chart.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley turns a corner. Rolls her eyes. She's not pleased.

ASHLEY

(murmuring)

Where in the hell did he go...?

Keeping her eyes peeled, she DESCENDS a STAIRCASE...

INT. BASEMENT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Winds up in a basement corridor. Keeps walking.

Finally, with a groan, she reaches into her purse. Pulls out her own phone. Dials.

ASHLEY

I swear to God, Wayne...

And then -- very faint -- in the distance -- through a wall...

"Hit me baby one more time...!"

Ashley hears it. Stops in her tracks. A "what-the-fuck?" expression grips her face.

It's coming from behind a door, a few yards off. The door to the EMPLOYEES' MENS' BATHROOM...

Ashley takes a step forward. Knocks on the door.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Wayne?

"...Oh baby baby..."

More knocking.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Wayne?

She looks both ways. Opens the door. Steps inside.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom glances at his music. It's time for him to come back in. He does. Looks at Reisinger. And -- starts SPEEDING UP.

Reisinger's eyes shoot up at Tom. They read: What are you doing? Tom's moving faster than the orchestra...

Tom keeps going, speeds up even more, beckoning the other instruments to go with him.

Reisinger raises his baton to steady the beat. The musicians follow him.

TOM

Don't...

INT. HALLWAY - BASEMENT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Janitor walking and whistling. Stops at a door labeled RUBBISH.

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Pushes the stroller in. Nears the CHUTE. Opens it. Dumps a garbage bag in. It tumbles down into the dark.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom... Upping the tempo... Upping it some more... Playing louder, more forcefully. Demanding to be heard.

Reisinger shoots him another look. He's worried. The whole ensemble is about to crack open, Tom steaming ahead like a madman.

The ORCHESTRA MUSICIANS are visibly confused. A few of them start to follow Tom's lead, gaining in tempo...

Reisinger maintains the slower tempo with his baton. But he can see that he's losing control.

He stops. Holds his baton still. Unsure what to do. Nervously scratches his ear.

There's no choice. He resumes, this time following Tom.

The whole orchestra SURGES forward at twice its original speed -- diving through the lines, ripping through the flourishes, rolling toward the finish line...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley... Cautiously stepping forward... Following the ring-tone...

"...My loneliness is killing me..."

The bathroom appears empty. But there's a stall. Feet visible under the door. It's occupied.

She nears it -- while BEHIND, unbeknownst to her, silently and surely, the ASSISTANT creeps up...

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Janitor throws another bag in... At the bottom of his pile sits the BLUE-LINED bag...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom racing through the music... Ten bars to go...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley... Scared... Reaching for the stall...

ASHLEY

Wayne...?

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Another bag in the chute... The Janitor is moving like fire... Only a few more bags to go...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom speeding forward... Five bars left... Four bars left... The orchestra building... We're almost there...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley's hand... Pushing open the stall...

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Janitor... Throwing another bag in...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The orchestra climbing... A huge crescendo...

The TYMPANIST's mallets rolling... The TRUMPETERS lifting their horns in preparation... The CYMBALS PLAYER getting ready, holding the giant cymbals forth, one in either hand...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The stall door swings open... Ashley LOOKS.

Seated on the toilet is WAYNE. His face blue. His eyes frozen open. His neck caked in blood.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Reisinger raises his baton... Something big is about to happen...

He SWINGS it downward... The cue...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley LETS OUT A SCREAM.

But it's drowned out by...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

...A CRASH OF THE CYMBALS and a BLAST OF THE TRUMPETS.

The ORCHESTRA roars out the final note of the movement...

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Ashley... A HAND grasping her mouth... An ARM swinging around her throat...

Icy and swift, the Assistant SNAPS her head back, breaking her neck in one fell thrust.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Reisinger PULLS down his arms. The orchestra comes to a HALT.

A split-second of silence. Then -- APPLAUSE.

INT. EMPLOYEES' BATHROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The clapping audible as the Assistant drags Ashley's lifeless body into the same stall...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The music is finished. It's intermission.

Now is Tom's chance.

He RISES from his seat and HURRIES backstage -- as fast as he can without raising suspicion from the audience...

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Once out of view, he breaks into a RUN...

TOM
Where do I go??

CLEM (O.S.)
The stairs.

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Janitor dumps out another bag. He's nearing the bottom of the pile. Only two bags still lie atop the BLUE-LINED one...

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom... Dashing down the back-stage corridor... Leaping down the stairs...

CLEM (O.S.)
Turn left at the bottom. Three doors down.

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Another bag gone. The Janitor is one bag away...

INT. HALLWAY - BASEMENT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom makes it to the bottom of the stairs... SLIPS and FALLS... Scrambles to his feet...

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The other bag tossed... Reaching for the BLUE-LINED one...

INT. HALLWAY - BASEMENT ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Running as fast as he can... Spots the door... "GARBAGE".

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Janitor grabs the BLUE-LINED BAG... Opens the chute...

INT. HALLWAY - BASEMENT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom GRABS the handle...

INT. GARBAGE CHUTE ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Janitor CHUCKS the bag in just as--

Tom STUMBLES into the room. Teetering forward. Regains his balance. Looks.

The Janitor's stroller is empty. The chute is closed.

TOM
(helpless)
Shit...

He YANKS open the chute, stares inside. No bag in sight.

JANITOR
(Italian accent)
What ees wrong?

Tom makes his way back out the room, into the HALLWAY.
What now?

CLEM (O.S.)
You heard him. What ees wrong?

TOM
He threw the bag out.

CLEM (O.S.)
Then it's on to plan B.

Tom stops. An idea.

TOM
I have a copy at home. Let me go there.

CLEM (O.S.)
Yeah, right.

TOM
I can make it back in time, I just need to get the keys from Emma--

CLEM (O.S.)
Uh-huh. Emma gave you a present. Use it.

Tom remembers. Reaches into his pants pocket. Pulls out the iPod Emma gave him.

Opens the playlist. Scrolls through the tracks. Finds it: "LA CINQUETTE". *She puts all his music in...*

This is it. Tom knows how he can do this.

He feels his ears. There's only one thing missing...

INT. BACK ENTRANCE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Chick Jones leans back in his chair, feet on his desk, air-drumming -- and listening to JUMBO-SIZED HEADPHONES.

This is his post for the later part of the night -- and this is how he does it.

TOM

Chick.

He JUMPS. Spins around. Finds Tom right behind him. Head hanging low, trying to stay out of sight.

CLEM (O.S.)

(through Tom's earpiece)

I'm listening to you, Tom.

CHICK

For shit's sake, Tom, you nearly scared me to death. I'm a guard, I don't deal well with surprises.

TOM

I need to borrow your headphones.

CHICK

What? Hell no. These are my babies. You have any idea how much these things cost? They're noise-cancellers.

TOM

I'll get them back to you, I promise.
Please.

Chick considers it. Looks to either side to make sure no one's watching. Hands Tom the headphones.

TOM (CONT'D)

Thank you.

Tom takes a moment. Thinks.

Looks at Chick.

Eyes a piece of paper on the desk. A pencil lying nearby.

Maybe...

Then he sees the ASSISTANT. Stationed at the opposite corner. Staring him down. Cold. Threatening.

Tom stops. The Assistant slides his hand into his POCKET. Clutching something...

CHICK
(doesn't see the Assistant)
Tom?

TOM
Sorry.

Tom scurries off, the headphones in hand.

CHICK
(calling to him)
One scratch on those and I--

SUPERVISOR
You'll what, Jones?

Chick spins around again. The Supervisor stands behind him. Another damn surprise.

CHICK
(rolling his eyes)
Shit...

INT. DRESSING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Tom enters. His eyes flash on the KEYBOARD tucked away in the corner of the room.

He heads to it, grabbing a pen and paper from the table on the way. Takes a seat, turns on the iPod, slides on the headphones, listens.

The music is fast, frantic... He plays a few notes on the keyboard... Hums... Scribbles on the paper...

TOM
Ta-tee-ta-ta-ta-tee-ta-ta-ta-tee-ta.

Stops the iPod. Scrolls back to the beginning of the track. Starts scribbling again. To a layman's eye, it looks like mere doodling -- stray lines, scattered slashes, the pen moving furiously.

But there's logic to it. Here and there, we can make out a note... A sharp symbol... A bar staff...

It's shorthand music notation. Almost illegible to anyone but Tom. He's marking just the spots he needs to remember. The rest his mind can fill in through theory.

He's moving as fast as he can. Transcribing the entire piece...

INT. LOBBY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The Supervisor looms over Chick, none too content.

SUPERVISOR

A pair of headphones?

CHICK

That's all I gave him.

SUPERVISOR

And what are you doing with a pair of headphones on duty?

CHICK

(fed up)

Look, man, after folks go home I listen to music. Just like every guard here. This isn't a bank, this isn't an army barracks, this is a theater. Nothing happens here.

The Supervisor crosses his arms. Nods.

SUPERVISOR

(as smarmy as you can get)

Real go-getter, aren't you? I'll bet you're as distracted a driver as you are a guard. Tell you what, amigo. You slip up one more time and I'll fax over a recommendation to throw you back on the street. Compriendo?

He marches off. Beat.

CHICK

(under his breath)

It's comprendo, asshole.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

Tom stops the iPod again. He's near the end of the track. He closes his eyes. Hums. Tries to play what he's just heard.

He screws up. Repositions his hands. Stretches his fingers wide. Musters all the dexterity he has. Tries the notes again -- the pinkie of his right hand a whole twelve keys down from the thumb. About a foot's distance.

The left hand simultaneously playing counter-rhythms three octaves down.

But Tom can play it. He smiles. He can do this. He knows it.

He tries the passage again. Better.

He moves on. Scrolls backward in the track. Pauses. Scribbles some more. He doesn't seem to notice--

INTERCOM

Ladies and gentlemen. Tonight's performance will resume in five minutes. The concession stands are now closed. We ask that you please make your way back to your seats at this time.

Tom sets down his pen. Plays the track from the beginning. Listens to the headphones. Hums. Then starts PLAYING along. His fingers cascading down the keys.

A smile crosses his face as he keeps playing. It's all coming back to him. He can do this...

Suddenly, the DOOR OPENS--

And in steps EMMA.

Tom sees her. Snaps. Tears off the headphones.

Before he can even say a word, CLEM appears behind her, a grin on his face.

CLEM

Not interrupting, Tom, just wanted to give her a peek.

EMMA

Hi, sweetie. You didn't tell me you had an old friend here tonight.

(to Clem)

It's Clem, right?

Tom is stricken. The sight sickens him -- Emma, only an arm's length away from Wayne's killer. Unaware of the danger...

TOM

Emma...

CLEM

Hope you don't mind, Tom. You told me to give her a little tour backstage, right? During intermission?

Tom doesn't know what to say. Clem reaches into his pocket. Fires Tom a look: *Don't fuck this up.*

TOM

Right... That's right...

EMMA

It's not like you, Tom. Planning things for me.

CLEM

Well, Tom here's a changed man. Isn't that right, Tom? No more panic attacks? No more stage-fright?

Emma nods, smiles to Tom. Softly, tenderly--

EMMA

You've been playing beautifully, sweetie.

Butting in--

CLEM

If only we could hear you sing one of these days, Emma. I read in Boston--

EMMA

(laughing)

Oh, no... Not a chance...

CLEM

They don't just do classical piano here, you know.

EMMA

Stop it...

CLEM

What? All you need is a real break. Start off in a primo spot like this.

(turning to Tom)

Wasn't it like that for you, Tom? Eighteen year-old gets the title shot in Carnegie Hall?

Tom looks at them... Smiling together, as though nothing were wrong... He can't take it.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Must've been quite something. Just like Godureaux. Like teacher, like student.

(then,)

Must be something to be a person of note.

Emma sees the anxiety in Tom's eyes. She walks up to him...

EMMA

I think we're bothering you.

...and wraps her arms around his neck. Gives him a kiss.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I love you, sweetie. Thanks for looking out for me.

He stares into her eyes. There's nothing he can say...

She backs off and waves "good-bye".

CLEM

See you on-stage, Tom.

With that, he and Emma are out the door. Out of sight.

INTERCOM

Ladies and gentlemen. Tonight's performance will resume momentarily. Please take your seats.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The lights DIM... Audience members hurry to their spots. We can overhear one excited murmur:

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I can't wait for "The Tempest"...

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The door to Box Seat 5. Clem emerges, a smile on his face. The Assistant is waiting for him -- not smiling.

ASSISTANT

The plan's going to shit.

As they walk. Hushed...

CLEM

What, he talked to the guard?

ASSISTANT

No.

CLEM

Then we're fine. He's got the chart back in his head. He'll play it spot-on.

ASSISTANT

There's no guarantee. And I got two goddamned porkpies in the john. We're gonna get caught.

Clem stops. Turns to the Assistant. Resolute.

CLEM

Listen to me. I would've much rather stolen away with the piano, dragged in some goon with Selznick's chops and sat him down with a barrel to his skull. But you and I both know that wasn't a possibility. Tonight's the night. Four bars of "La Cinquette" and you're a millionaire.

The Assistant pauses. He's heard this argument before... But it sure is a convincing one.

CLEM (CONT'D)

We're not even robbing anyone. The old freak's family was stiffed anyway.

ASSISTANT

What about Selznick?

CLEM

What about him? Last chord of "La Cinquette" Ray shoots Emma in the head. We scoop her up during ovation, our man escorts Selznick back-stage, out of sight, drive man and wife to a cozy spot, put a bullet in his head and a pistol in his hand. A nice weekend suicide-homicide after the first big performance of a paranoiac OCD freak. Just right for an *artiste* like Selznick.

(then,)

All the great ones, the people of note -- they all fall.

The Assistant shakes his head. He's sick to death of Clem's "person of note" bullshit.

CLEM (CONT'D)

(sensing this,)

The plan is solid. No one will ever know.

(and, with a smile,)

Knowing Godureaux, he'd probably get a kick out of all this anyway.

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom takes his place on-stage. A deep breath. Props up the paper he has just covered with his notes -- his makeshift sheet music for "La Cinquette"...

But there's a look on his face...

Reisinger reaches his podium. Getting himself ready. The lights are just starting to dim, ever so slowly...

Tom looks uneasy... The sight of Emma has shaken him. He's thinking... Turning something over in his mind...

He looks at Reisinger -- as the conductor scratches his ear again.

Something comes to Tom.

TOM

How did you know I had an iPod?

Beat. Through the earpiece--

CLEM (O.S.)

What?

TOM

How did you know? I only got it today.

CLEM (O.S.)

I know everything, Tom...

But Tom's not listening. He's piecing it together. Looks back at Reisinger...

An IMAGE FLASHES: *Reisinger eyeing the iPod in Tom's dressing room...*

Tom stares at the conductor. His own friend...

MORE IMAGES: *Tom speeding up the SECOND MOVEMENT... Reisinger glaring at him -- then scratching his ear -- then all of a sudden following Tom's lead...*

Voices crowd Tom's memories... The voice of the RADIO JOCKEY: "Guest conductor Norman Reisinger..."

REISINGER's own voice: "Now, the piano we've got here is a very special piano..."

Tom turns again, putting it all together. Leans in. Zeroes in on Reisinger's face... WE MOVE CLOSER AND CLOSER...

And, for the first time, we can see that, nestled in Reisinger's left ear, is an EARPIECE.

Reisinger SCRATCHES it again.

TOM

You...

CLEM (O.S.)

What's that, Tom?

TOM

You and Reisinger cooked up the whole thing. You're after the piano...

CLEM (O.S.)

Why would I want a piano?

Tom's mind is racing. He's thinking out loud--

TOM

It's Patrick's piano... You're having me play Patrick's piece... The last four bars... The hardest ones... The--

He stops. Realizes something.

TOM (CONT'D)

The "\$90 Million Piece".

CLEM (O.S.)

Well, I'm glad you recognize your talent.

TOM

You're after his money.

The theater GOES DARK. Reisinger raises his baton. About to cue the orchestra...

CLEM (O.S.)

No, that would be Godureaux's dumb-as-shit relatives. Me, I'm looking at his money. I'm in line for it.

TOM

How...??

Beat. You can almost hear Clem smile.

CLEM (O.S.)

They all said he loved his piano more than his own kids. And you give all you have to the thing you love the most...

It hits Tom. He looks at the piano as though with new eyes.

The money is inside the piano.

And, with that -- the ORCHESTRA BEGINS. An ominous rumble fills the hall...

The strings glide in next. Reisinger's baton soars through the air, the musicians following his every move. Tom looks, catches his cue -- and comes in on the second bar.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

It's a simple lock actually. Instead of a key or a code, it's a specific pattern of hits that undoes it. Like piano keys.

(then,)

It's the container that's tricky. Solid titanium, built into the piano -- so you can't just tear the thing apart and walk out with it. You need the lock. And for that job, I'd say I was sorely underpaid.

Tom listens while playing. But he can barely believe what he's hearing...

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If I had only known what I was building the lock for. But no... The will told me that.

Beat. A moment passes.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Wouldn't you agree a human being deserves that money more than does a piece of wood?

TOM

You're just a petty thief...

CLEM (O.S.)

(offended)

Well excuse me, Rachmaninoff. You were born with a gift. Not all of us had that privilege. Not me -- and not your pal Reisinger, much as it pained him. A gift means you can make a mark on the world without even trying. You had your page cleared. But where does a nine-to-fiver figure in the history books? Under the "locksmith" entry?

No answer. Clem presses on, the anger spewing out--

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*Don't you dare call me a petty thief.
You're just like Godureaux, talking to me
like I was common. I may not have a gift
but I have plenty to offer. I am an
artist. Same as you. The lock I made,
what I've done tonight -- these are works
of art.*

Beat. Then--

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*So play the goddamned piece, play it
right, and enjoy your starring role in
the heist of the century.*

TOM

(leaning in)
Go to hell.

CLEM (O.S.)

*I'm sorry -- did I just insult a favorite
heist of yours?*

TOM

Why would you let me go? You won't.

Beat. And then, suddenly pissed--

CLEM (O.S.)

Play the goddamn--

TOM

*I've seen your face. How does that figure
into your artwork?*

Another moment passes. As though Clem is for once at a loss for words...

CLEM (O.S.)

*If you don't play the goddamned chart my
face'll be the last thing you ever see.*

At that instant, a TRUMPET BLARES. Reisinger whips up the orchestra, then calms it. He stops. SCRATCHES his ear again. Seems to be listening to something...

He nods.

Tom sees this. Knows the game is on.

He looks into the DARKNESS. Thinking...

THE FLOOR PLAN flashes in his mind... *Box seat five to the far left... The handicap seats on the lower level -- and CENTERED...*

Another MEMORY... *The blinking RED DOT...* Where was it?

VOICES... *"One of those new-fangled handicap seats, so his gun can hang low..." "Waste of space if you ask me..."*

Tom peers again into the dark... Retracing the dot...

His eyes freeze on a spot in the black -- low, in the center...

Then--

TOM
(muttering, to himself)
I see you, you piece of shit...

And, with that, WE MOVE INTO THE AUDIENCE... FLY DOWN THE ROWS... UP THE SLOPE... TO THE CENTER HANDICAP SEAT...

The SNIPER hangs low, cradling his weapon under a jacket. Peers toward his upper right... To BOX SEAT 5. To EMMA.

An AUDIENCE MEMBER regains his seat in the first row in front of the SNIPER.

Temporarily BLOCKS THE SNIPER'S VIEW of Emma.

Then SITS down...

BACK TO TOM... Formulating a plan in his head... His last chance...

TOM (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Get them to stand...

FERMATA. The orchestra finishes. APPLAUSE...

TOM (CONT'D)
(to Clem)
I'll play it.

Reisinger turns back to the audience, addresses them:

REISINGER
Thank you. And now, I have to admit I have not been entirely honest with you tonight. Here, to cap off the evening, in a surprise change to our program...

A few murmurs in the audience...

CLEM (O.S.)

*Take the rest of the piece easy... Don't
burn out your fingers... Save it for the
last four bars...*

REISINGER

...a change I am sure will thrill you
all...

More murmurs... The anticipation is building now...

CLEM (O.S.)

*One wrong note on those and you know what
happens...*

REISINGER

...Tom Selznick will play a piece very
appropriate to this piano. A piece you've
been hearing about in the news a fair
deal. The piece that made Patrick
Godureaux famous...

(flush, excited, building to
it)

Ladies and gentlemen... The Unplayable
Piece...

He turns to face Tom. Raises his arm, as though to cue him.

REISINGER (CONT'D)

"La Cinquette"!

A hush falls over the theater. Eyes widen. Patrons sit up
in their seats.

No one expected this.

Tom looks at Reisinger. Reisinger looks at him. A moment
passes.

Tom turns back, looks at his keys. Stretches out his hands.
Takes a breath.

CLEM (O.S.)

Don't disappoint me, Tom.

And then, with a slight smile...

TOM

I won't disappoint my audience.

...he begins to PLAY.

The piece starts off slowly. Easy enough. Then, before you know it, the sixteenth-notes become thirty-second notes, the thirty-second notes become sixty-fourth notes, the whole thing gains speed, complexity, intensity...

But, through it all, Tom's fingers stay poised, his aim dead-accurate. This is fluid, graceful playing. Free of the nervousness we've seen before. The work of a pro.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem listens through his earpiece. Smiles. He can feel it. It's all going to work...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom's fingers are moving so fast now you can barely make them out. It's a blur of movement. He leans into the keys, starts pounding furiously, weaves his fingers at speeds more impressive than any we have yet seen...

BACK TO CLEM... His smile fading. Worry creeping in.

CLEM

Tom... Don't go showboat-y on me. The last four bars are the key. Hold it together.

BACK TO TOM... He doesn't respond. Keeps going, keeps building. Leans back. Closes his eyes. Plays like we've never seen him play.

BACK TO CLEM... Getting antsy now.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Tom... Did you hear me? Don't tire yourself out.

The Assistant shoots him a look. *I told you so.*

BACK TO TOM... Still no response. He's still going strong, moving his arms as well as his hands, attacking the piano with force, going all out, giving everything he has and then some.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Tom. For Christ's sake, calm down... You're gonna burn your fingers out... I need those last four bars.

And Tom finally responds -- no longer afraid of showing his lips to the audience, speaking now with verve and confidence...

TOM
Tonight's your last chance with this piano, isn't it? So I have a suggestion: let me do my job.

CLEM (O.S.)
Your job? I tell you what your job is. If you don't play those last four bars to perfection you'll find bits of your wife's skull in box seat five!

Beat. Tom swallows the threat. Trying to stay in control...

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You hear me??

TOM
I hear you.
(then, slowly)
I know what I'm doing. You'll get your four bars. They'll be perfect.
(and, finally--)
Now please be a good audience member and shut the fuck up.

BACK TO CLEM... Total shock.

The Assistant swallows a laugh.

TOM... A new man. Not the nail-biting, hair-pulling, stage-frightened neurotic of before -- but a confident, surging, formidable stage presence, tearing a hole in Anthony Phillips Hall with a performance like no other...

THE AUDIENCE... Rapt... They're seeing the performance of a lifetime -- and they know it.

TOM... Powerful... Passionate... Possessed...

TOM (CONT'D)
(muttering)
Get them to stand... Get them to stand...

CLEM... Helpless... Waiting...

TOM... Launching into the coda... His impossibly adept fingers curving around the keys... Claiming their spot as the heirs to Rachmaninoff...

A WHISPER IN THE AUDIENCE...

AUDIENCE MEMBER
He's playing like he used to...

CLEM... Waiting... His four bars are coming up...

TOM... Nearing the finish... Pulling the music from his gut, playing with brim and fury...

CLEM... Still waiting... Muttering to himself...

CLEM
Come on... Come on...

TOM... Steam-rolling ahead... Closer and closer to the end.

Then -- Tom shoots a look at his music. The last four bars, there at the bottom of the page.

He looks back at his keys. Launches into the fourth-to-last bar. Fast, atonal, with sixty-fourth notes twelve keys apart. He plays it perfectly.

CLEM... Listening...

CLEM (CONT'D)
Yes...

TOM... Plays the third-to-last bar. His fingers stretching past the point one would think possible. Perfection.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Yes... Come on...

TOM... The second-to-last bar. Also perfect.

CLEM (CONT'D)
Come on...

TOM... The last bar. A flurry of notes. WE GO CLOSE on Tom's fingers... His left hand... His pinkie... He lines it up for a single C...

Eyes that C... Everything seems to slow down...

And, finally, he hits the key with the final chord.

Then -- silence. He has finished. The final note hangs in the air.

Beat.

CLEM... In disbelief.

CLEM (CONT'D)
That last note... That -- that wasn't
right...

TOM... He did exactly what he intended... Looks at his
audience... Waits... Mouths the words: "Stand up..."

The silence lingers. You could hear a pin drop.

CLEM... Beside himself.

ASSISTANT
Well, I liked that better than *Mussel-sky*.

Clem flicks a switch on his earpiece.

CLEM
Ray? Shoot her.

TOM... Terrified... Has his plan backfired?

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Tom. You just lost your bet.

THE SNIPER... His finger to the trigger...

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You knew that was the wrong note.

...when, SUDDENLY--

APPLAUSE. WILD, CACOPHONOUS APPLAUSE.

And, in a SURGE--

THE AUDIENCE MEMBERS RISE TO THEIR FEET.

The Sniper's view is BLOCKED before he can get off a shot.

TOM
Yep. But the audience didn't.

THE SNIPER... He removes his finger from the trigger. Feels
the weapon, concealed and positioned against the railing.
Impossible to move it right now without being seen.

CLEM... His hand to his ear.

CLEM
Do it, damnit!!!

THE SNIPER... Still seated. Into his earpiece, under his
breath--

SNIPER

I can't...

He's got no shot -- thanks to Tom's standing ovation.

TOM... Breathing with relief. His gamble has paid off.

The entire theater is filled with delirious applause. The audience is ecstatic, blown away. They've never seen playing like that before...

Tom rises to his feet. Waves to his audience -- for once not his enemies, but his rescuers.

CLEM... About to blow... The Assistant takes a nervous step back...

TOM... Approaches the ORCHESTRA. The musicians are also standing, clapping him on.

Shaking, he opens his mouth, about to CALL FOR HELP...

But he sees Reisinger.

Seething, a BULGE in his pocket... REACHING for it... Looking DESPERATE... CRAZY...

Tom thinks fast. Struts up to Reisinger -- and the MICROPHONE.

TOM

(addressing the audience)

Thank you, thank you...

Still more applause.

TOM (CONT'D)

Thank you... Please... Please sit down.

A few do so...

TOM (CONT'D)

Except for you, Emma!

He points to Box Seat Five.

A hush falls over the crowd. Confusion.

TOM (CONT'D)

Lights, please!

INT. LIGHTING CONSOLE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The HEAD LIGHTING TECHNICIAN, peering through his window into the theater...

He glances at his colleagues. Befuddled shrugs.

He reaches for the controls...

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The HOUSE LIGHTS go up. Audience members turn to Box Seat Five...

...and EMMA.

Still standing, but wavering. Uneasy. What's going on? What's he doing??

Tom can finally see her. The sight fills his heart.

TOM

Ladies and gentlemen, the lovely girl you see up there is Emma Bradford. Emma Bradford Selznick. One of America's great vocalists.

Emma's eyes open like saucers. What??

TOM (CONT'D)

The change to your programs Mr. Reisinger mentioned was not just "La Cinquette". No, we also have a special encore for you tonight... Emma Bradford performing a standard of her choosing, as a surprise treat for all you music-lovers.

EMMA -- her heart going to her throat.

The AUDIENCE -- thoroughly delighted. More CLAPS and CHEERS.

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem, losing his grip, screaming into his earpiece--

CLEM (O.S.)

Take her out now, for God's sake!!

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The SNIPER keeping quiet--

SNIPER
I can't. Everybody's looking at her.

Tom gestures to Reisinger.

TOM
To be accompanied on piano by Norman Reisinger.

MORE APPLAUSE. Tom smiles to Reisinger. He has the upper hand. He points to the stage -- and to the PIANO.

Emma waves her hands in protest. Her cheeks blushing, her face tiptoeing between embarrassed laughter and full-on dread...

TOM (CONT'D)
Come on, Emma! Any song you'd like!

He turns again to the audience.

TOM (CONT'D)
Please, ladies and gentlemen, give her another round of applause.

They eagerly oblige. Emma is overwhelmed... Trembling...

Below her, stretched out under her box seat and spanning her horizon, are people CHEERING HER ON... She can't believe her eyes...

Reisinger hasn't moved. Tom gestures to him a second time.

Reisinger has no choice. Feigning his own smile, he climbs ON-STAGE. Tom follows close behind.

TOM (CONT'D)
(soft, to Reisinger)
Don't worry... Like you said, an audience like that -- they don't care about a wrong note or two.

He turns up to Emma... She can hardly speak... Looks so nervous she seems about to flee...

TOM (CONT'D)
Any song you like, Emma! Which one shall it be?

She shakes her head. Raises her arm, about to wave "no" again... But this time she stops herself.

Thinks... Looks around... All of Anthony Phillips Hall in front of her...

TOM (CONT'D)

We're your audience, Emma.

Her teetering eyes take in her surroundings as though seeing them in a new light... Anthony Phillips Hall...

This is her shot.

She knows it's crazy -- but she decides to take the plunge.

Tentatively but loud enough to be heard--

EMMA

"La Vie En Rose".

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Another part of the theater... Clem and the Assistant marching down...

CLEM

Are you shitting me? We're gonna get
Edith Piaf now??

INT. THEATER - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom breaks into a big smile -- relieved Emma is going through with it...

He eyes Reisinger.

Reisinger looks back at him. About to pummel him. But his arms are tied.

TOM

You know that one?

Beat. Reisinger -- incensed but repressing it -- nods.

TOM (CONT'D)

Good. And after all, remember -- it's
only music.

He smiles and pulls out the bench for Reisinger.

TOM (CONT'D)
 (to the audience)
 Ladies and gentlemen -- Norman Reisinger
 and Emma Bradford!

A NEW ROUND of APPLAUSE. It only pisses Reisinger off more.

He takes his seat, positions his hands -- and BEGINS.

A few seconds of soft solo piano. And then, floating above it--

EMMA'S VOICE. Delicate. Fragile. Gorgeous.

EMMA
*"Hold me close and hold me fast,
 This magic spell you cast,
 This is La Vie En Rose..."*

She's shy, nervous... But she's got a beautiful voice, and the AUDIENCE is transfixed.

Tom slowly backs out of view. Retreats BACKSTAGE...

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

...Then turns and SPRINTS forward -- bolting down the corridor. Finds a STAIRCASE, runs up...

INT. THEATER / BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

EMMA... Growing in confidence... Can't believe she's doing this, but doing it all the same...

BACK TO TOM... Racing against time. Turns right, heading in the direction of the theater's seating.

EMMA... Reaching higher...

REISINGER... Seething... Stuck in place... But playing...

CLEM... In an empty hallway. Hand to his forehead. His plan crumbling to pieces.

ASSISTANT
 I'm out of here.

Clem springs around, pins the Assistant to the wall.

CLEM
 The hell did you just say?

ASSISTANT

(letting it all out)

Open your eyes! Open your ears! We need that piano opened now. But it's not, is it? No, because no-balls Norman is playing it. And because Norman is playing it, Tom isn't. And because Tom isn't, the lock is still locked. Added to which it's 9:30 -- which means, as of now, we have officially failed.

(breaking free)

Good luck with your history books.

He turns. Heading off...

Clem pulls out a HANDKERCHIEF and his TAURUS 9mm. Fires a silenced BULLET into the back of the Assistant's head -- catching and soaking the blood with the handkerchief.

TOM... Speeding down a HALLWAY...

EMMA... Moving her audience...

CLEM... Looks both ways. Procures a small SATCHEL from off the Assistant's belt. Opens a closet door a few feet away. Drags the Assistant over...

USHER

Hey. What's going on?

Turns. It's the bored USHER from before.

TOM... Spots a sign. BOX SEATS.

CLEM... Feigning laughter. The usher approaching.

CLEM

He's drunk. You imagine that? Drunk at the opera.

The USHER bends down for a closer look at the Assistant.

Clem pulls his gun back out and SHOOTs the USHER.

Now he's got two dead bodies on his hand. Sticks them both in the closet. Locks the door.

CLEM (CONT'D)

Shit...

Turns a corner. Finds a SIDE ENTRANCE to the theater. Opens it... Stares in...

Reisinger is in full view, on the piano.

Clem thinks... Raises his gun... Aims it on Reisinger...
Stops... Thinks some more... Hand to his earpiece...

CLEM (CONT'D)
Raymond? Get out of there.

THE SNIPER... Still seated in the theater... Nods...

TOM... Running... Passes Box Seat Three... Four...

EMMA... Nearing the end...

It's clear. We may not have noticed it before, but in her evening gown, cast in the warm glow of the house-lights, singing to the biggest crowd of her life, Emma is a star.

TOM... Box Seat Five... Reaching the door just as Emma FINISHES...

EMMA
*"Give your heart and soul to me
And life will always be
La Vie En Rose...
La Vie En Rose..."*

Then -- WILD APPLAUSE.

Tom bursts in. Emma turns to him. She's shocked.

A QUICK WAVE to the audience as Tom briskly pulls her away.

EMMA (CONT'D)
(in a daze)
Tom--

INT. HALLWAY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Just out of the theater... Tom hurrying her along...

Emma regains her senses, as if coming out of a trance--

EMMA
How could you do that? Making me sing
like--

TOM
Are you kidding? They loved you.

Holding her hand, he picks up the pace... They DESCEND a STAIRCASE... Turn a corner...

EMMA

Wha-- Where-- Where are we going??

TOM

We have to get out of this theater.

EMMA

What's--?

TOM

I couldn't call for help in there. Get out your phone now, call 9-1-1, we're--

CLEM

Freeze.

Clem's GUN meets Tom's temple.

Shock grips hold of Emma's face. Clem puts his hand to her mouth.

Tom... Eyes darting both ways... The hall is empty. No one in sight. No one has yet made it out of the theater.

Then he steals a view through a doorway to the side... A view inside the theater... A view of the stage...

Reisinger rising from the piano... A posse of STAGEHANDS already descending on the instrument...

TOM

You see that? Look in there. You lost your chance.

CLEM

Are you very sure?

TOM

You had one shot and you blew it.

CLEM

Oh, believe me, I have a much better shot where I'm standing now.

Digs the barrel of his gun into Tom's temple. So close to just pulling the trigger...

Beat.

A moment of quiet.

Then...

Sounds... Faint at first... Then building...

Voices... Footsteps...

Getting closer and closer...

Clem looks at Tom. Tom looks at Clem.

And they both realize what's coming.

The theater doors BURST OPEN and out spills a DELUGE OF PEOPLE. The entire audience flooding out of the theater, eager to catch a glimpse of the soloists. A throbbing crowd, heaving its way into the cramped HALLWAY.

Clem barely has time to react. Hides his weapon as people swarm in.

Exchanges another look with Tom. The tables have once again turned -- and Clem is unable to say a word.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1

Tom Selznick! Emma Bradford!

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2

Bravo!!! Bravo!!!!

And an impressionable TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL whose mother must have dragged her to the concert but who has been completely won over--

TEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL

Oh my God oh my God oh my God oh my God.

More shouts and cheers. Tom smiles, shakes a few hands -- then grabs Emma's arm and continues onward, his sights set on the EXIT...

More AUDIENCE MEMBERS emerge from around the corner... Others stream in from the LOBBY... They're all delighted to have caught sight of Tom...

The crowd thickens... Soon it's difficult to move...

Tom finds himself blocked... Only yards from the EXIT...

He turns.

Emma is gone.

TOM

Emma?

Voices volley toward him. A blur of people.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #3
 Fantastic show...

AUDIENCE MEMBER #4
 The new Rachmaninoff...

Tom spins a full circle, his eyes frantically reaching for Emma.

TOM
 Emma??

People everywhere -- but Emma is nowhere to be seen.
 Neither is Clem.

TOM (CONT'D)
 Emma!

He PUSHES his way through the mass... Spots an OPENED DOOR... A throughway to BACKSTAGE...

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Running as fast as he can... Breathless...

MUSICIANS and TECHNICIANS scattered here and there... The passage is still mostly empty...

He hears a SOUND. A squeak. The scuffling of sneakers.

Races for it.

Climbs an iron-railling STAIRCASE.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

The curtains have been drawn, the lights dimmed. All the orchestra seats are empty. TWO STAGE-HANDS are at work.

EMMA (O.S.)
Tom!

A cry for help, coming through the EARPIECE. Immediately stifled.

TOM
Emma!

CLEM (O.S.)
Did you hear that?

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem and Emma, his hand over her mouth, his 9mm pointing up under her chin.

They're obscured by darkness, up on a railing, tucked away... Near a FIRE ESCAPE hatch... A FIRE EXTINGUISHER just a few feet off...

Clem is all barely contained rage.

CLEM
This is not over, Tom.

Sticking his gun IN EMMA'S MOUTH--

CLEM (CONT'D)
Remember your muddling wife? There's a gun in her mouth.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Tom... About to collapse. He can hear Emma's muffled whimpers. His eyes welling with tears.

TOM
Leave her alone... Please leave her--

CLEM (O.S.)
I want an encore. Play my four bars or I decorate the stage with her teeth.

Shaking, Tom spots the piano.

The STAGE-HANDS are already handling it. They've closed the lid, thrown a BLANKET over it.

Tom can see that Clem's plot is madness. It can't possibly work now. He clenches his teeth, takes a dive--

TOM
Bullshit. I don't play a single note until you let her go.

ON CLEM... Fuck.

ON TOM... Resolve building.

TOM (CONT'D)
Your precious piano has got stage-hands all over it. You're too late.

ON CLEM... Sticking the gun in deeper. His veins bulging.

CLEM

Do you have the slightest conception of
the world of shit you're entering? Do you
know what I did to your wife's girlfriend?

ON TOM... Fighting through his terror... He knows Clem is
desperate, ready to do anything -- ready to pull the
trigger at any second...

TOM

The same thing you're doing to yourself
if you pull that trigger, you fu--

He stops.

He's caught sight of something. Something up high...

CLEM (O.S.)

*Emma is thanking you for not finishing
that sentence.*

Up above... Perched on an iron-grate landing...

Clem and Emma. Off at the corner of backstage, atop one
of the railings. Clem is standing behind Emma, his hand
on her mouth, his gun now at her temple.

Tom sees them. And he now has an idea.

TOM

I'll do it.

ON CLEM... Barely suppressing a sigh of relief.

CLEM

Good. Tell the stage-hands you want to
bang out another song. Tell them they'd
better clear off until you're done.

ON TOM... A nod.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

See the bag stage-left?

Tom sees it -- the SATCHEL from the Assistant's belt,
lying at the foot of a corner curtain.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

*You'll need the drill in there to get in
the piano. Use it. And do it fast.*

Another nod. Tom grabs the satchel, heads to the piano.
Addresses the STAGE-HANDS.

TOM

Hey, fellas... Sorry, could I...? I just want to play another tune on my own if that's not a problem...

They're quick to respond.

STAGE-HAND #1

Sorry, Mr. Selznick, we're on a tight schedule.

STAGE-HAND #2

Gotta move this piano out to catch a red-eye freight flight to Europe--

TOM

I know, I understand, the clock's ticking and all, but... It was my teacher's piano, I'd just like... A moment with it by myself...

Beat.

STAGE-HAND #2

I'm sorry, Mr. Selznick. We gotta move it out now.

Clem's voice shoots through the earpiece:

CLEM (O.S.)

Get them off the stage or I will.

Tom turns back, looks up. Barely makes out Clem -- arm clutching Emma, gun pointed at the stage...

TOM

(to the stage-hands)

Please...

STAGE-HAND #1

Sorry, no can do.

The STAGE-HAND reaches for the piano...

In a flash, Tom grabs the man's hair and SLAMS him down against the instrument.

Picks up the piano bench and SWINGS it against the second stage-hand's head.

Both men are prostrate and knocked out.

Tom, panting, looks at what he's done. Amazed.

CLEM (O.S.)
*Good. You saved their lives. Now get this
 done before the next batch comes and
 you'll save your wife's.*

Adrenaline still rushing, Tom sits at the piano. Steals another look up at the railings.

From his new vantage point, he can no longer see Clem or Emma.

But it makes no difference. He knows what to do.

He raises his fingers. Starts to PLAY.

It's the same passage we heard before. The same four bars. Except for that last note...

Tom plays it correctly this time. Within a few seconds, he's done.

A TINY RED DOT flashes beneath the left-most A-sharp key.

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*And Godureaux thought his cash would
 never see the light of day.*

Tom nods. Then -- carefully, slowly, he reaches for his ear. No longer listening.

Removes his EARPIECE...

We HEAR Clem's voice wafting out of it...

CLEM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Do you see the dot?

TOM
 Yes.

CLEM (O.S.)
*That means it worked. Lean under, you'll
 see a small opening. Reach in and you'll
 feel a box. Take it out. The money's in
 there.*

Tom moves the earpiece to the middle of the keys... Holds it right next to them, only centimeters away...

Then POUNDS on the piano with his fist.

ON CLEM. A distorted CRACKLE -- as the LOUD PIANO blares through his EARPIECE and straight into his ear-drum.

It catches him completely off-guard.

He totters back -- his RIGHT ARM shooting up toward his ear -- freeing Emma from the grasp.

CLEM (CONT'D)
(in pain)

Fu--

Stunned, Emma seizes her chance.

Breaks free from Clem. Grabs the FIRE EXTINGUISHER feet away.

Swings it through the air. It CAREENS against Clem's cheekbone.

The blow sends him on his back.

He's out cold and bleeding.

ON TOM. Dashing to the side of the stage.

TOM
Emma!

EMMA (O.S.)
Tom!

He makes it to a BACKSTAGE CONTROL BOX... Opens it and unhooks the PHONE... Moving like lightning...

INT. BACK ENTRANCE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Chick. Reclining in his seat. Feet on his desk. Chewing a toothpick.

All is quiet where he is. He's far from the lobby and the main flow of people...

Suddenly--

BEEP-BEEP. BEEP-BEEP. Chick sees his DESK PHONE going off.

He groans.

At that moment, REISINGER appears. A long trench coat. Swollen eyes. Eager to leave and erase this night from his memory.

The phone still ringing--

CHICK
Night, Mr. Reisinger.

REISINGER
Good night, Chick.

He passes by. Chick picks up the phone.

TOM (O.S.)
Chick! It's Tom. There's an emergency--

CHICK
What? Did you lost my headphones??

TOM (O.S.)
(in a frenzy)
Chick! Get to the main stage as fast as you can. Bring your gun. If you see Reisinger, he's in on it.

CHICK
(disbelief)
Reisinger?

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

CLEM... Opening his eyes... Spotting Emma, her back to him...

In a SURGE of animal motion, he GRAPPLES her legs and PULLS her down... She lets out a SCREAM...

ON TOM... He hears it... Drops the phone...

TOM
Emma!

INT. LOBBY - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

CHICK... Hears the screaming through the phone...

Realizes this is no joke.

CHICK
Shit...

Drops the phone... Scrambles from his seat...

Turns around...

Reisinger is almost OUT THE DOOR.

CHICK (CONT'D)

Reisinger!

The conductor stops. Turns to face Chick. Can't hide his dismay...

Chick looks at him... The wheels turning... What did Tom mean?

Reisinger... Knows his time is up...

A moment. Still. Silent. Neither man moving.

Then -- a flurry of MOTION, as Reisinger SPRINGS out a PISTOL from his coat pocket and DRAWS for Chick--

But he's too slow. Chick FIRES a round into Reisinger before the latter can get off a shot.

Shock smacks the conductor's face. The shock of a fatal wound.

Blood dripping from a hole in his chest, he sinks to the floor.

Chick... About to have a heart attack...

CHICK (CONT'D)

But nothing happens here...

His mind racing... Grabs his cell... A walkie-talkie...

Bolts for the STAIRS...

INT. BACKSTAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem PINS Emma down. His blood drips to her cheek.

CLEM

Bitch...

He retrieves his TAURUS 9mm...

INT. STAIRCASE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

CHICK... Running... Out of breath already...

Turns left at the bottom of the stairs... His gun DRAWN...

Shouting into the walkie-talkie--

CHICK
I need a unit! Anthony Phillips Hall!
Now!

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - CONTINUOUS

Clem... Points the gun at Emma... About to pull the trigger...

Then--

A figure DIVES in. TACKLES him down.

It's TOM.

The gun SLIDES off the railing, PLUMMETS to the stage below.

Clem regains his balance. Locks on Tom. His face is plum-red, his eyes feral, his lips about to foam. A year's work has been stolen from him -- and he's pissed.

He sends his fist careening into Tom's jaw. A sickening CRACK as the knuckle makes impact.

Tom snaps back with his ELBOW, ramming it into Clem's ribs.

The two men go at each other... Struggling... Locked into each other's grips... Teetering backward... Toward the edge of the railing...

A slip.

They FALL off, plunging thirty feet...

...LANDING on the grand piano.

Wood splintering, the lid caving in, strings snapping...

A DISSONANT JUMBLE OF CHORDS as limbs hit the keys. Blood coating the ivory whites.

Tom is in a daze... Clem's face streaked with deep gashes -- from piano strings whipping back...

His vision blurred, Clem gropes for one of the loose strings...

Unfurls it...

Volley up from behind Tom, pins his neck back. The string digging into the skin...

Tom... Grasping for breath... His face going purple...
Blood bubbling underneath the string...

He sees the SATCHEL... Just within reach... The DRILL
poking out...

In a final gasp of strength, he GRABS the drill. DIGS it
into Clem's thigh.

CLEM screams out as Tom tumbles to the floor.

Spitting rage, murder boiling in his eyes, he yanks out
the drill, pulls Tom into a head-lock...

Wields back the drill -- the tip aimed for Tom's face...

Tom struggles to free himself, but can't. He's helpless...

Clem zeroes in. About to JAM in the drill, when--

BAM!

Blood spews out of a hole in his forehead.

In an instant, he's down on the floor, eyes frozen wide.

Dead.

Tom, shaking, looks up... Stunned to be alive...

There, standing before him, Clem's TAURUS 9mm in her
hands -- is Emma.

A moment. She can't believe what she just did. Her hands
trembling, she lowers the weapon...

Silence.

Husband and wife look at each other.

Their ordeal is over at last.

Then -- a door BURSTS open. Chick stumbles in, pistol in
hand.

He's immediately blown back by the sight: Two unconscious
stage-hands. A wrecked piano. A blood-splattered corpse.
A bruised Tom on the floor and Emma holding a gun. *What
the fuck???*

CHICK
(breathless)
Did I miss something?

EXT. PARKING LOT - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

A dark-clad man walks across the lot... Poise and purpose in his gait... He's got somewhere he needs to be...

He's carrying a GOLF BAG... And, by his long hair and the speckles of light cast on his face, we can recognize him...

He's the SNIPER.

He reaches a deep-red SUV. Hops in. Starts it.

A VOICE comes through... He reaches for his ear -- and his earpiece.

VOICE

You there?

The Sniper pauses. Suspicious.

SNIPER

Who is this?

VOICE

J. T. Bannon. Friend of Clem's. We got the package. Where you at?

SNIPER

I'm in the parking lot... Clem didn't say anything about a Bannon...

VOICE

Head out the main exit. Turn right.

The Sniper pulls out... Heads for the main exit... Turns right...

Where he's met by a QUARTET of POLICE CARS -- lights flashing to life, sirens spinning.

COPS dart out, weapons raised. The Sniper freezes.

SERGEANT J. T. BANNON -- tough-nosed, hard-lipped, a deep rasp of a voice -- bends down by the window. Knocks on the glass.

BANNON

J. T. Bannon.

The Sniper looks as Bannon unveils an EARPiece... Clem's earpiece.

He speaks into it with a grin--

BANNON (CONT'D)
Friend of Clem's.

INT. STAGE - ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

The place is abuzz with activity. Flashing cameras, voices in walkie-talkies, OFFICERS and MEDICS... Gurneys and body-bags, cups of coffee, chalk on the floor...

A MEDIC touches up the cuts on Tom's face. Emma is seated by his side, a shawl wrapped around her shoulders.

They're holding each other... Regaining their strength...

Bannon waltzes in, lifting the earpiece for view.

BANNON
We got him.

TOM
And Wayne Lansing?? Ashley Pine...??

BANNON
We found them.
(then,)
I'm so sorry...

Tom can't even answer. Too shaken. He looks at Emma. Tears bubble in her eyes.

EMMA
I can't... I can't believe it...

Tom holds her tighter. She holds the tears in. A moment passes...

Tom gazes at the piano -- now surrounded by WORKERS.

BANNON
You want to see what he was after?

Tom turns back to Bannon -- and Bannon unveils a BOX. The one to which Clem referred. Small, sleet-gray, built of some sort of titanium alloy. A RED LIGHT on the side.

It's already opened on top. Bannon reaches in. Unveils stacks upon stacks of BEARER BONDS.

BANNON (CONT'D)
We estimate \$93.5 million is in there.

Tom shakes his head. Still in disbelief.

TOM

He loved his piano most of all...

Beat. He turns. Steals a look at Emma...

Realizing just how close he came to losing her tonight...

He looks into her eyes. She catches his gaze. Waits...
Then--

BANNON

FBI's on its way, they'll want to ask you
some questions. Shouldn't take long.
You'll be free to go afterwards.

Tom nods. Looks back at Emma. Then catches Chick, to the
left, in the corner of his eye. Chick nods. Waves.
Frazzled, still in a bit of a daze himself.

Then Chick freezes.

He's seen something, too -- and he's not happy about it.

CHICK

Shit... Here we go...

His SUPERVISOR has just arrived. Spots Chick and beelines
toward him in a tizzy.

SUPERVISOR

Well, I'd love to hear you explain this
one, amigo.

CHICK

Look, it's--

SUPERVISOR

I get a call to come over here and who's
guarding the back? Who?

CHICK

Sir, I--

SUPERVISOR

I'm asking you a question. Who was
guarding the back when I arrived?

Forced to play along--

CHICK

I don't know...

SUPERVISOR

No one, that's who!

At that moment, a TRIO OF MEN gather behind him. Clean-cut, no-nonsense. FBI uniforms...

SUPERVISOR (CONT'D)
(doesn't see them)
And did you know there are dead bodies
here? Two in the goddamn bathroom?? What
in the hell is a guard good for if--?

FBI DETECTIVE
Excuse me, sir.

The FBI DETECTIVE steps forward. Pure authority. Brushes dismissively past the Supervisor. Shakes Chick's hand.

FBI DETECTIVE (CONT'D)
I want to thank you for your help, Mr.
Jones. Without you we might never have
caught Reisinger or Raymond Beck.

Chick is taken aback, flustered...

CHICK
Just... Just doing my job, sir...

FBI DETECTIVE
Well, you came through. I'd like to see
to it you're properly honored. I may even
recommend you to a post with us.

Chick is visibly floored. His cheeks turn red.

SUPERVISOR
Honored? Is that a joke? Will someone
please explain to me--

The Detective turns around. Irritated at the sight of the Supervisor--

FBI DETECTIVE
Why are you still talking?

EXT. ANTHONY PHILLIPS HALL - NIGHT

Outside the night is hushed. Sidewalks glistening with snow, Christmas lights here and there, a ribbon of yellow-green street-lamps lining the way. An hour or so has passed...

Emma and Tom appear, descending the front steps of the theater hand in hand. The giant colonnade rises above them -- regal, remote, like a stage-bound backdrop.

Tom feels the air... The cold soothes him... His face is looking better now, the bruises less inflamed, the cuts patched up.

He glances back at Emma. So thankful to be alive and with the woman he loves.

They hold each other for a moment... They kiss, their hands clutching, their eyes closed, blocking out the rest of the world...

Tom pulls back and looks into Emma's eyes. He needs her, and she needs him.

TOM

I love you...

EMMA

I love you so much, Tom...

About to kiss again, when--

WIFE (O.S.)

Oh dear Lord.

Emma and Tom look to their side. The Husband and Wife from the audience have just exited a restaurant next to the theater -- and they are instantly star-struck.

HUSBAND

We just -- we just saw you perform.

WIFE

You were amazing. Both of you.

EMMA

Thank you...

TOM

Thanks...

A CAR rolls up -- Tom and Emma's. Tom sighs in relief as he walks up to open the door. But the Husband and Wife keep talking, tripping over each other's phrases--

HUSBAND

Incredible show, really. I mean at first, well, I didn't know what to think, you were walking off-stage, muttering to yourself--

WIFE

--yes, a little odd--

HUSBAND

--looked like you were about to lose it,
but then, then I realized that was all
part of the show, that you were leading
us on, you see, so you could really
sideswipe us at the end--

WIFE

--yes, so astounding, so thrilling--

HUSBAND

(to Emma)

--and your singing--

WIFE

--and I'm hoping you'll both be doing
more concerts, yes?

Beat. Waiting for a response. It comes in a pair:

EMMA

Yes.

TOM

Yes.

Emma and Tom look at each other. Surprised. Tom smiles.
Lets Emma into the car first. About to slide in after
her, he turns back to the Husband and Wife--

TOM

Thanks again...

HUSBAND

Oh no, thank you. An incredible concert.
(beat)
You played as though your life depended
on it.

A moment. Tom thinks about this. And then, as he gets in--

TOM

Well... We try.

He closes the door, then waves to the Husband and Wife as
the car pulls out and drives off into the night.

FADE OUT.

THE END