

**MAN.** I've heard it. So?

**JAMIE.** Well, that's what I'm saving for. I play piano. Graduated from music school a few years ago. Got my MA. But I think I still suck.

**MAN.** Where'd you go to school?

**JAMIE.** University of Rochester. Maybe the best music school in the country. Know it?

**MAN.** No, but if it's so good, how come you suck?

**JAMIE.** It takes a long time—

**BOTH.** “—to be able to play like yourself.”

**JAMIE.** Yeah! I mean, really, my left hand is pretty good, but my right is kind of an idiot.

*(He holds up his right hand as he speaks.)*

I'm talking about you! I'm sorry, this is so boring. Hey, let's talk about something else . . . *Rocky III* is out, you see it?

**MAN.** Wait, wait, show me.

**JAMIE.** What?

**MAN.** You ever play that old Steinway you got here?

*(He points to the piano.)*

**JAMIE.** Sometimes. I think that's why I got this job. Basically, I just need to know “Auld Lang Syne” and “Danny Boy.”

**MAN.** OK, your right hand, show me what's going on.

**JAMIE.** What?

**MAN.** I used to teach a little. Come on . . . Whattayagottolose?

*(They go to the piano. JAMIE sits and plays something, a few random notes.)*

**JAMIE.** Well, look, it's these quick runs that mess me up sometimes. Like . . .

*(He plays something fast like a boogie woogie piano blues piece. He gets into it but it's a little rough here and there.)*

**JAMIE.** Dammit!

*(He stops. MAN sits in.)*

**MAN.** Can I suggest something?

**JAMIE.** OK . . .

**MAN.** You're trying to muscle your way through the piece. You have to float, like Ali . . . float and jab and stay above it. And practice it slowly, your release is weak. Going slower will build that up.

**JAMIE.** Show me.

**MAN.** See? Slow at first. Walk before you run.

*(MAN plays the piece slowly but then accelerates. He's having fun. He leans back and smiles as he does.)*

And smile. Don't show it you're afraid!

*(He smiles broadly, comically.)*

Get in here!

*(They briefly play together on the same piece, passing it back and forth and finishing with a flourish. MAN picks up his drink and moves away.)*

**JAMIE.** Thanks, thanks a lot!

**MAN.** I taught for a while . . . Anyway, you were saying, you want to play better, play like yourself. How are you gonna do that?

**JAMIE.** Well . . . I think I just need to get really serious. Quit doing things halfway. I'm not a kid anymore.

**MAN.** You're not that old, believe me.

**JAMIE.** I'm just saying, it's now or never. So, I've been saving up so I can just practice and play and gig around, not have to work for a while. I've got almost ten thousand dollars, I figure I just need a few more. It'll be like a "sabbatical," so I can get better, you know? I'm gonna . . . I want to leave a mark.

**MAN.** What do you mean?

**JAMIE.** You know how right around New Year's, on the news they do a piece about all the great people that died that year? "In Memoriam"? I want to be one of those someday.

**MAN.** You want to be dead?

**JAMIE.** Yeah, no, but hey, I'm going to be anyway, right?

**MAN.** No one gets a pass.

**JAMIE.** Right? I just mean that I want to have done something, something so people say, "Hey, I liked that guy. He was good!" And then they show pictures of you in slow motion and play sad music. It makes me think, what are we doing here, right?

**MAN.** *(Beat.)* You really should do it, the sabbatical thing. If you have a chance like that, you can't let anything stop you.

**JAMIE.** I won't.

**MAN.** Listen to me, I know! *(Realizing that he sounds like a nut, he taps the brakes.)* I mean, I'm an OLD guy. I buy sympathy cards in bulk! I'm just saying, if you don't do that, if you get sidetracked . . . you'll regret it.

**JAMIE.** OK . . .

**MAN.** It'll kill you.

**JAMIE.** OK . . .

**MAN.** It'll eat you the hell up. You can't let anything or anyone stop you.

*(The door opens and ABBY enters. She has a coat over a waitress outfit and carries a Tupperware container.)*

**ABBY.** Hey babe!

*(She walks straight over to JAMIE and kisses him across the bar.)*

**ABBY.** Almost ready to go?

**JAMIE.** Almost. How was your shift?

**ABBY.** Eh, the usual . . . Not that many sloppy drunks overtipping me. You're letting me down here!

**JAMIE.** Sorry. I'll do better.

*(She notices that MAN is looking at her.)*

**ABBY.** Hi there.

**MAN.** *(He's trying not to stare at her.)* Hello.

**ABBY.** *(A bit weird so back to JAMIE:)* . . . so, you're closing up? Want a Rice Krispie treat?

**JAMIE.** Of course! . . . but I think you love them more than I do.

**ABBY.** Well, if you don't want one . . .

*(JAMIE quickly takes one.)*

**JAMIE.** NO ONE said that! *(Chews a bit.)* Wow, these are great!

**ABBY.** *(To MAN:)* I'm sorry, do you . . . ?

*(He comes out of his reverie a bit.)*

**MAN.** What? . . . Oh, thanks.

*(He takes one and eats it. It's chewy and takes a while. She puts the open Tupperware container on the bar.)*

**JAMIE.** Say, pal, I'm sorry. I have to—