

Tempo

Written By

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First Draft

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EXT. JAZZ CLUB FRONT - AFTERNOON

A brick facade on a busy street with a queue forming. A young woman hurries down the sidewalk and turns into an alley. Just noticeable, a van parks across from the club.

EXT. JAZZ CLUB BACK - CONT.

The young woman rushes by chefs stubbing out their last cigarette, past the bubbling pots in the kitchen, through the hallway, past its raucous green room, and into:

INT. JAZZ CLUB MAIN

She joins a group of wait-staff and adjusts her uniform. She is Poor Man, mid 20s. A senior wait-staff member, SALLY, gives Poor Man a glare.

Behind them all is the stage: populated solely by a spectacled man adjusting his drum set. This is Rich Man, late 30s.

INT. / EXT. SURVEILLANCE VAN - DUSK

A man unwraps a candy bar in the front seat, watching the line grow. He is Beggar Man, late 40s. He watches a lavishly dressed woman cut to the front of the crowd.

Beggar Man has disappeared into the back of the van. Visible before the door closes behind him: a control panel and whirling tapes.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONT.

Past the chefs who are busy with last minute preparations to the green room door. It opens releasing a gush of smoke followed by the band.

They walk, single file, onto the stage and past Rich Man without acknowledgment. They take their places.

As does the wait-staff. Sally opens the front doors and the band commences.

Waiters escort customers to their tables as they enter. A man is about to take the lavishly dressed woman when Poor says something to him.

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He exits and Poor Man takes the woman to her seat. This is Thief, late 50s.

POOR MAN
How's the weather today?

THIEF
Bloody dreadful or something.

Poor stands by quietly waiting while Thief adjusts her belongings. Thief notices.

THIEF
God . . . Rain. midnight rain,
nothing but the wild rain.

POOR MAN
You've not a drop on you.

THIEF
Yes, well, you see a few went to
the brook that went out to sea.

Poor Man, satisfied, makes to leave but Thief grabs her wrist.

THIEF
Darling, make that dirty martini a
double.

On the stage, Rich plays the drums and watches Poor walk away from Thief. Her table is perfectly situated in Rich Man's view.

INT. BACK OF VAN - CONTINUOUS

Beggar Man, sporting large headphones, taps his foot to the beat. He licks melted chocolate off his thumb.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONT.

Poor Man returns to Thief and sets down her drink. Thief takes a sip.

THIEF
I sent for a martini, not olive
water.

POOR MAN
Play along or don't, but there's
no martinis in prison.

Sour, Thief chews an olive. Poor Man scans the crowd. But Rich Man sees him first.

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Rich Man crashes on his drums causing the entire club to notice him, except for our agents. Thief and Poor turn to the entrance and see:

A TALL MAN handling a cane enters. He takes off his hat and scans the crowd. He spots his date and walks to Thief.

Rich Man adds a noisy flourish to his set.

INT. BACK OF VAN

Beggar Man pulls himself close to the control panels and start flipping switches.

BEGGAR MAN
Show time.

He rips open another candy bar and pops it into his mouth as he continues.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Tall Man takes Thief's hand in his and kisses it. He takes off his coat and sits right as Poor Man arrives.

She offers a menu to him but is waved away. She stands still, waits, nothing. She walks away.

TALL MAN
I was pleased to hear everything
went smoothly with our last
performance.

THIEF
Of course, of course.
(She looks around)
Of course, there was that little
hitch at the end.

In his van, Beggar raises an eyebrow. Rich does another showy, noisy flourish.

TALL MAN
You told me everything had worked
out.

THIEF
Well -

Poor appears with water.

POOR MAN
Refill?

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Thief sees who is standing above her, shakes her head no.

Poor exits.

THIEF

I did say that. Even if it worked out, there was still a hitch.
Right, darling?

TALL MAN

Ah, of course. So, tell me, why are we meeting now? Is there a problem with our next show?

THIEF

You know how by the fact of your being here.

TALL MAN

What's the delay? We have a rapidly closing window.

THIEF

Newly attracted attention. We're having issues acquiring our materials.

TALL MAN

When has money been an issue?

THIEF

Less so the carrot and more the stick.

TALL MAN

Time to show your face.

THIEF

That time has already passed. I think we someone that carries more weight.

Tall Man takes her glass and swirls her martini. He inhales.

TALL MAN

Although unusual, I could always -

THIEF

No, not you. That won't do.

He leans in.

TALL MAN

Say it then.

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Beggar presses his headphones closer to his ears. Rich watches intently.

Thief leans in.

THIEF
The Director.

Tall Man lights a long, thin cigarette.

TALL MAN
It's as I feared.

THIEF
No word from him in months. No idea where he is. We are totally in the dark.

TALL MAN
So you want him to come down?

THIEF
Even being able to reach him would be enough.

TALL MAN
You don't need his face then?

THIEF
I . . .

She looks away and takes a drink. Over her shoulder, Poor is watching. Thief loses her composure.

Poor notices and marches forward but is intercepted by Sally.

SALLY
Marcel wants to chat in the office.

POOR MAN
It's rush hour now. We can do that later.

SALLY
He said it's about your tardies.

POOR MAN
(Trying to push past)
Later.

SALLY
The sooner you go, the sooner you're back. I'll watch your tables.

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Sally starts walking towards Thief's table.

Rich watches as Poor heads into an office. Meanwhile, Sally walks right past Thief's table.

Thief takes the gloves off her hands and throws them over the lit candle which goes out. He holds her hands in his.

Beggar jumps as a loud thud plays on his headphones. He tries to listen but things are muffled.

Back on Thief:

THIEF
- couldn't possibly understand.
The strain. We can't continue on
without some sign.

TALL MAN
There have been signs. There have
been signals. More than you or I
deserve.

THIEF
It's not enough anymore.

TALL MAN
And you want to put our mission at
risk? Just to contact him?

Thief can't look him in the eyes anymore. This old woman is trying to hide her tears.

TALL MAN
I need to hear you say it.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Poor stands in front of an empty desk. Marcel the Manager enters.

EXT. / INT. BACK OF VAN - CONTINUOUS

A large maintenance vehicle double parks alongside our surveillance van.

On Beggar: The signal is going screwy. Can't hear a thing. He shuffles to a door but the other van blocks it from opening.

The opposite door is blocked by equipment. He rolls down the window:

BEGGAR MAN

Hey! Hey! I'm in here. I'm talkin'
to yew. Christ.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - STAGE

Rich watches Thief and Tall Man. She turns her head away. At the same time, a couple of patrons join their friends at a table, blocking Rich's view.

Rich searches for Poor, sees her in the office as Marcel opens the door to enter. Rich looks at the band. He has to keep playing.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - DINING AREA

Thief still can't look at Tall Man. She searches for Rich's help, but the group of friends blocks her line of sight.

She turns back to Tall.

THIEF

I need to know the Director's
location.

Tall Man nods. He stands and puts on his coat wordlessly.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - OFFICE

Marcel walks around to his side of the desk.

MARCEL

What is it?

POOR MAN

What do you mean?

MARCEL

Whatya mean what do I mean? How
come yer not working?

POOR MAN

Sally said you wanted to talk
about my tardies.

MARCEL

I never said nothing about that,
but now that yer here -

Poor, in a flash, understands. She bursts out the door.

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INT. JAZZ CLUB - DINING AREA

Tall Man pulls the coat over his shoulder, but he does not leave. He bends over and whispers something in Thief's ear.

With a shudder, she gasps. Tall Man leaves her side.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - STAGE

Rich is trying desperately to peak over the group. They finally sit down and he sees Tall Man walking away, leaving.

He looks back at Thief. She is still in shock. She turns. A river of blood is flowing down her side from a dagger.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - DINING

Poor bursts out the door to see Thief collapse off her seat, the dagger prominent. The drums stop. Standing upright, arm outstretched, Rich aims a pistol at Tall.

A gunshot rings out. The music stops and the patrons instinctively duck. A scream.

Rich drops to the ground, blood pouring down his shirt. Among the tables, Sally fires at him again.

The jazz club patrons panic and run out, overwhelming Poor who is trying to get to Sally.

In the chaos of the crowd, Sally walks right by Poor.

EXT. JAZZ CLUB FRONT

Poor makes it outside. Buffeted by fleeing patrons, she is just able to spot Sally getting into the maintenance van, Tall Man visible as she opens the door.

It screeches away revealing the surveillance van's door riddled with bullet holes.

Poor has vanished from the city street.

EXT. JAZZ CLUB BACK

In the distance, Poor runs down the alley. She tosses her heels to the side and throws her wig to the ground.

>ROLL CREDITS

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