

YOU BETCHA

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FADE IN:

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

STEVE (70) sits on a couch, listens worriedly to O.S. coughing --
RECEPTIONIST (25) sits at a desk, sighs, sympathetically.

RECEPTIONIST
Poor Ritchie. He's your brother?

STEVE
In law.

RECEPTIONIST
Oh, that's not so bad, then.

DOCTOR (50) and RITCHIE (71) enter from an examining room.
Ritchie coughs, wheezes.

DOCTOR
So, just keep doing what your doing.

RITCHIE
Renew the prescription?

Doctor glances at some paperwork on the receptionist's desk.

Receptionist looks up at the Doctor, awaits instruction.

DOCTOR
Well, that's the thing...

RITCHIE
Third time's the charm?

Ritchie coughs, fitfully -- Steve approaches the desk.

STEVE
Just refill it, right?

DOCTOR
Well, no.

Ritchie flinches, speaks softly --

RITCHIE
It won't help?

DOCTOR
Well... yes and no. Could. Could,
but you'll have to pay up front, you
see, and, well, there's no guarantee.

STEVE
Pay up front? Insurance won't --

DOCTOR

Insurance covered the first prescription because the odds of recovery were pretty good. The second time, I had to go out on a limb for you.

RITCHIE

So, what about --

DOCTOR

Can't. Can't make a valid argument for probable recovery.

Ritchie considers this, coughs, tries to stifle the cough.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Look, I can write you a prescription, I'll write it right now, if you want.

STEVE

Well, sure!

RITCHIE

What the heck.

DOCTOR

But you'll have to pay, full price. That's over a thousand dollars. I'm just telling you.

STEVE

For antibiotic? That's crazy.

RITCHIE

Double or nothing. Triple.

DOCTOR

You're a betting man, that's good. Well, game's on.

Doctor hands the scribbled prescription to Ritchie.

INT. STEVE'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Ritchie coughs, in passenger seat, Steve drives.

STEVE

Drop you off at your place, then I'll swing by the drugstore, okay?

Ritchie nods, coughs, sighs.

RITCHIE

I'll get you a check. Blank check.

Steve laughs, glances over, Ritchie looks morose.

STEVE

Blank check, you betcha.

RITCHIE

He says, "You a betting man?" Just 'cause I'm over seventy. Jesus, when'd that happen. All bets are off, all of a sudden...

STEVE

You want to get well? Get well.

RITCHIE

No, sir, over seventy the odds go way the hell down, down, down.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Steve exits parked car, watches Ritchie exit slowly.

INT. RITCHIE'S APT. LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Sign across elevator door "Out Of Service" -- Steve and Ritchie stare at the sign. Ritchie coughs.

RITCHIE

Six floors.

STEVE

Where's the freight elevator...

Steve grabs Ritchie's elbow, drags him to the other side of the lobby where OTIS (25), large man in coveralls, frowns, guards the freight elevator.

OTIS

Freight only. You ain't freight.

RITCHIE

Otis. I'm practically dead.

Otis leans menacingly toward the older man.

OTIS

You wanna be dead?

Ritchie, glassy-eyed, ponders the question.

Steve fumbles in his pockets for cash.

STEVE

You got a ten, Ritchie? Where's that killer cough when we need it...

OTIS

Cough? I hadda cough for a whole
year, once.

Noise from the side -- an upright piano trundles toward
Ritchie -- he coughs, sighs.

The piano stops, abruptly, guided by JO-JO, (40) small,
vivacious woman who peers over half glasses, holds piano.

JO-JO

Up to the sixth floor. Whoo! Not
like I've been carrying this on my
back, but whoo!

OTIS

(sternly)
Okay, in.

JO-JO

(breathlessly)
Mayor plays violin. Happy Birthday
to the building. Bicentennial. The
building, not the Mayor.

Jo-Jo notices Ritchie's weakened state, her smile wavers.

STEVE

(to Otis)
We're... we're with her.

Ritchie coughs.

JO-JO

Oh. Oh, right!

OTIS

Piano movers? On my worst day in
the world I could move more pianos
than these two.

All enter the freight elevator (with piano on casters).

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Otis pushes buttons, gate shuts, elevator jolts, ascends.

OTIS

One time I carried a whole piano up
two flights a' stairs. By myself.

All sway, ascend -- Ritchie coughs, Jo-Jo looks worried.

RITCHIE

You're a better 'en than I --

INT. SIXTH FLOOR HALLWAY

Elevator stops, Otis jolts the gate up, Jo-Jo, Steve and Ritchie push the piano out and down the hall.

RITCHIE
-- Donkey Kong.

Otis descends with the elevator.

STEVE
Mayor's gonna love that ride.

OTIS
(descending)
Mayor gets a helicopter.

Steve and Ritchie look up at the ceiling, woefully.

RITCHIE
Forget about the prescription, we'll
all die in the crash.

JO-JO
'Copter lands on the roof next door.

Jo-Jo continues down the hall, with piano.

Ritchie fumbles to open his apartment door.

RITCHIE
Help the girl, watch her with that
thing, would ya'? Piano on wheels...

STEVE
She's fine.

Jo-Jo waves cheerily, yells --

JO-JO
Feel better, Ritchie. If you see
any my students, send 'em along.

RITCHIE
(mumbles)
Piano lessons. Kids still do that?

INT. RITCHIE'S APT. - CONTINUOUS

Sparely furnished apartment, signs of a sick-room; tray with soup bowl, blanket and pillow on the couch, etc.

Ritchie stumbles to a chair, sinks into it, exhausted.

STEVE

Okay, I'll be right back with the
meds. You got your cell?

Ritchie signals he's fine, holds up a cell phone.

RITCHIE

Gotta live long enough to get brain
cancer someday.

STEVE

Helicopter's gonna kill us, first.
Or Otis. He's out for you, man.

RITCHIE

(brightens)
Bring it on, freight boy.

Steve exits, closes the door.

Ritchie coughs, his head sinks against the back of the chair.

INT. STEVE'S CAR - LATER

Steve drives, talks into his cell phone.

STEVE

I forgot the check. Would have
bounced anyway, right?

RITCHIE (O.S.)

Eventually. So, I'll give 'em their
cough back.

STEVE

So, I'll use my Club-Med credit card.
My Kim big-ass card.

Sounds of coughs and laughs, through the phone.

INT. RITCHIE'S APT. - LATER

Ritchie, asleep in the chair, looks dead.

From the hall, distant sounds of piano music and voices.

Ritchie opens his eyes, groans.

Sound of a helicopter circling the building.

Sound of commotion in the hall.

Phone rings, Ritchie retrieves his cell, squints at it.

STEVE (O.S.)
Got it. On my way back. Ritch?

RITCHIE
What'd it cost --

STEVE (O.S.)
I won't tell you, you'll die laughing.
One thousand twenty five sixty two.

RITCHIE
Cheap at half the price. Damn piano
students yucking up in the hallway...

Confused noises outside the apartment intensify.

STEVE (O.S.)
What are they playing, "Saints Go
Marching In"?

Ritchie smirks then frowns, worriedly.

RITCHIE
What's going on...

Noise from hall, like a gunshot.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
Frickin' gunshot? You kiddin' me?
Steve? Where you at?

STEVE (O.S.)
I'm in the lobby.

Ritchie gets up from the chair, hurries to the door.

INT. SIXTH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

NASTY KID (19), waves a gun, pushes by, races down the stairs.

Near the piano, Jo-Jo slides to the floor.

Ritchie, coughing, runs toward her, shouts into his phone.

RITCHIE
Kid running down the stairs shot Jo-
Jo, Goddamnit. Got him? See him?
Send up an ambulance!

Ritchie sits on the floor near Jo-Jo, turns her, face up.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)
I hear you, I hear breathing! Little
moppet girl. Little piano-playing,
moppet-headed --

Jo-Jo laughs, weakly.

RITCHIE (CONT'D)

Okay, pressure on the wound, I know that much, that's it, that's the stinker. Leakin' all over your nice dress. Goddamn kids.

JO-JO

My student! I don't think he was after the Mayor...

INT. APARTMENT STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

Nasty kid misses a step, tumbles, bounces off each landing wall, the metal railings "ping" like a glockenspiel.

Steve, with a shopping bag, hops out of the way.

INT. RITCHIE'S APT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Otis stares up at noises in the stairwell.

Nasty kid slides headfirst to the lobby floor, starts to stand -- gun falls from his pocket, clunk.

Otis punches the kid, who drops in a heap.

Otis yells up the stairwell.

OTIS

What the hell?

STEVE (O.S.)

Kid with a gun coming your way!

Otis kicks the kid in the head.

OTIS

Got him!

INT. SIXTH FLOOR HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Steve barrels up from the stairs, wheezes.

STEVE

They got the kid. Otis pounded him.

Freight elevator arrives, gate opens, PARAMEDICS hurry to Jo-Jo, POLICE rapidly secure area.

Death rattle coughing jag from Ritchie.

Paramedic turns away from Jo-Jo, toward Ritchie.

RITCHIE
The girl! The poor, wounded girl!

JO-JO
I'm okay. Surprisingly.

Steve pops pills from a blister pack, hands them and a water bottle to blood spattered Ritchie, who swallows the medicine.

RITCHIE
I'll bust that kid to a pulp.

Steve helps Ritchie to his feet.

JO-JO
Guess he really didn't like piano.

RITCHIE
I'll pulp-erize him. It's on!

STEVE
Oh, it's on...

Ritchie catches his breath, leans on the wall for support.

Paramedics take Jo-Jo away on a stretcher.

RITCHIE
Should we go? You go with her.
Should somebody go with her?

Skylight opens, suddenly, more PARAMEDICS and POLICE descend through it -- Jo-Jo and stretcher lift up through the roof.

JO-JO
Hee hee, hold down the fort, boys.
Pianoforte! Hee hee hee.

Steve and Ritchie watch her go, then look at the piano in the hall, blood on the floor, yellow police tape.

RITCHIE
Jesus, she's a great girl. What the
hell's a piano fort?

Ritchie coughs, he and Steve walk back to Ritchie's apartment.

STEVE
No idea.

RITCHIE
Maybe she's delirious. She sound
delirious?

STEVE
You sound delirious.

RITCHIE
She's kinda likes me, I think.

STEVE
No question about it.

RITCHIE
Just gotta get back my strength.
And wash up.

STEVE
You're half way there.

RITCHIE
Oh, I'm there, alright. You think
she's alright?

STEVE
Tough little babe, that girl is.

At his apartment door, Ritchie glances back to the bloody floor, looks horrified -- grimaces, shakes his head.

RITCHIE
Nobody's safe! Kids with guns!
Helicopters! And I gotta take care
of that piano, I guess...

STEVE
Busy day, buddy boy.

Ritchie wheezes, coughs.

RITCHIE
Wash, nap. Nap good.

STEVE
Nap good, Kong.

They laugh softly, re-enter Ritchie's apartment.

FADE OUT:

THE END

