

STRINGS

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. MUSIC HALL - BACK STAGE - NIGHT

A hand winds fresh strings onto a scratched Spanish Guitar.

The owner, LIAM (28), wipes polish onto a cloth.

Bustling MUSICIANS hand in hand in a circle. A DIRECTOR (40s) offers encouraging nods and gestures. It's a power-circle.

Liam is the only one absent. He soothes the wounds on his guitar. REBECCA (26), bounds over.

REBECCA
Can I borrow that, for my song?!

Liam clutches his guitar close.

A RUNNER (15) offers a basket of roses. Rebecca takes one, and gives the Runner a peck on the cheek.

REBECCA (CONT'D)
Beautiful!
(to Liam)
For you?

Liam shakes his head, applies more polish. His guitar shines.

INT. MUSIC HALL - STAGE/WINGS - NIGHT

A YOUNG MUSICIAN plays, a rose in his button hole. Liam watches from the wings.

In the audience, a stern CRITIC (50s) makes notes. Not impressed.

Liam takes a deep breath.

INT. MUSIC HALL - STAGE - NIGHT

A banner reads, "VALENTINES NIGHT; AN EVENING OF LOVE."

Liam plays Spanish guitar, focused on his instrument.

Some AUDIENCE MEMBERS smile. The Critic studies him.

He plays with ferocity, in a trance. The strings tense.

A small smile seeps through the Critic's visage.

Liam looks up for just a second, and beams a smile.

CLANG! When his high E snaps and catches his face. He bleeds.

The Director gasps. Sends the Runner to the stage.

Liam takes a pack of strings and unravels a fresh high E.

The Runner offers Liam a worn guitar with wood-worm.

Liam shakes his head. He's not touching that!

The Director panics.

DIRECTOR
Change. Change already!

The Runner takes Liam's guitar by the head. Liam tugs it from him, twisting the machine heads.

The Critic yawns.

Liam plays, but out of tune. He tunes up. Hands shaking.

Rebecca looks to the stage, to Liam. He's breaking down.

CLANG! Another string goes. The audience boo! Liam sweats.

When Rebecca kisses his cheek. He smiles, as if all time has stopped. She takes the guitar from the Runner, and plays.

It's beautiful. The audience calm down to listen. Liam agape.

She bumps his chair. He falls, and snaps his guitar.

She builds to a crescendo!

Then, silence. No-one moves or says a thing.

Liam cradles his guitar. Rebecca frowns, and casts hers down.

Applauds! Rebecca smiles, and curtseys. Liam picks himself up. It's a standing ovation. He leans into a bow, but...

No-one applauds Liam. Everyone claps Rebecca. The Critic smiles and makes notes as Roses land at her feet.

Liam paces back. Lots of happy faces, none directed at him.

The curtain closes in front of him, hides Rebecca from view.

His guitar held together only by its strings. He snuffles. Listens to the applauds. A red rose at his feet.

He teases his guitar together. It's a clean break. It slots perfectly together. He kisses it, and tramples the rose.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Liam busks, playing softly. His guitar fixed with black tape.

FADE TO BLACK.