

WESTERN TALES OF TERROR  
"THE STRANGER WAITS FOR ME"

by David Hopkins

PAGE ONE

1 - Large panel. In an Old West saloon, a man is seated at the piano, playing a song. (Music notes float through the air?) This piano player (with his back to us) wears a bowler hat, vest, a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up to his elbows, and his suspenders dangle unused from the waistline of his pants. In the saloon, everything is a wreck from a recent shootout. Everything that could be broken is, except the piano. Bodies litter the floor. Specifically...

- \* Poker players lie near the front door with their table overturned, chips and cards scattered everywhere.
- \* In the back, one barmaid is slumped over, against the wall, next to the piano.
- \* A bartender is dead behind the counter (probably not visible in this panel, but useful for later in the story).
- \* A lone cowboy is dead.

All dead, all except the piano player. Blood is splattered on the walls, and gathering in pools on the floor.

This first panel is very important. It ought to give the audience an understanding of what happened.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

How many hours has it been since I heard the last of them? The deep primal howl, incoherent and unholy-- the sound one makes before they die.

How long since the last one finally gave in?

2 - Close on the piano player's hands on the ivory keys.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

Has it been hours?

Possibly days?

I'm not sure.

3 - Side view of the piano player's face. Sweat pours down his face in grotesque amounts. This man is not attractive. He's terrified.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

If I stop to turn around, if I stop playing, the Stranger will kill me. He said so.

## PAGE TWO

1 - Medium shot of the piano player with his back to the audience, still playing.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

When the music dies, I die.

2 - An iconic Old West town, at dusk, a lone cowboy dressed in black rides on a black horse. The street is empty except for a few town folk curiously watching the stranger enter town.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

He entered our town on the first warm breeze of Spring.

3 - Low angle up at the Stranger on horseback. His face is in the shadows of his cowboy hat. He is more than a gunslinger. He is a force of nature-- death incarnate.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

He entered with the will of God in his six-shooter, to take life and offer no clemency.

4 - The Stranger enters the saloon with a six-shooter in each hand. The doors swing wide open.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

Each bullet, a verdict on our soul.

## PAGE THREE

1 - The Stranger's POV. People in the saloon. The piano player is in the far corner, barmaid near him. Up front is a table of people who were playing poker. Everyone in the bar is looking at the Stranger (i.e. looking out toward the reader).

NOTE: In panels 2, 3, and 5, I know it's unrealistic that two six-shooters would do the damage of a machine gun. However, the Stranger is death itself. These panels should show the reader that this man is a supernatural force. No one has a chance against him.

2 - The poker-players. A spray of bullets from the Stranger's gun fills the air, piercing through each of the players. As they fall, the table tips over. The cards and chips fly in the air.

3 - The bartender is shot. The bullets also shatter the mirror behind him and several bottles.

4 - Close on the Stranger's two six shooters, firing away.

5 - A cowboy is shot from a hail of bullets. He partially rose from his chair, hand reaching for his holster.

#### PAGE FOUR

1 - Bullets flying around the piano player who is scared, but still playing.

2 - The barmaid is shot. She leans against the wall, next to the piano player. Her eyes are wide open in shock and pain.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

Friends, all around me, died-- while I kept playing. I was too afraid to stop.

3 - The Stranger now stands directly behind the piano player.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

What else could I do?

4 - Close on the piano player. The Stranger has a gun to his head.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

The Stranger said as long as I kept playing he wouldn't shoot me.

5 - The barmaid slumped to the floor near the piano. She is bleeding, her hand clutched to her bullet wound. She is gasping for life.

BARMAID:

Please... please don't let me die...

#### PAGE FIVE

1 - Close on the piano player's hands on the ivory keys (identical to page one, panel 2).

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

I play the songs I know.

Camptown Races. Oh Susanna. Lakes of Killarney. Pop Goes the Weasel. Lou'siana Belle.

2 - The face of the piano player, still terrified. We don't see anyone behind him.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

Open Thy Lattice Love. Old Dog Tray. The Girl I Left Behind Me. Saints Go Marching On. Hot Time in the Old Town. Amazing Grace.

3 - The piano player. The Stranger is gone. However, the piano player stares faithfully ahead, too afraid to turn around.

PIANO PLAYER (CAPTION):

How long can I delay my death?

4 - Large panel. High angle on the entire saloon with the bodies and the piano player. The Stranger is nowhere to be seen. The piano player is alone with the dead.