

# Moving On

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## Introduction

Some roads are paved, others are made of steel, and a few exist only in the melodies we carry with us. This fictional tale, is a story of connection, about a wandering musician named Zack, whose life on the rails spanned decades and continents, and a young pianist, Sarah, whose structured world was forever changed by the freedom of his music.

It's not a story about destinations, but about the moments that bind us along the way: the songs we share, the stories we tell, and the unexpected people who leave an indelible mark on our lives. As you listen, remember that the greatest journeys are often those we take together, and the greatest gifts are the connections we make in the most unlikely places.

Now, on with the story, "Moving on":



# Moving On

## 1. The Call of the Rails

Old Zack was a man whose very being resonated with the rhythm of the rails. At age 78, his life had been a symphony of wanderlust and storytelling, crisscrossing the United States and beyond. With his patched backpack slung over his shoulder, he carried not just belongings, but a lifetime of memories and dreams. Among the hobos, he was a legend—a master storyteller and musician whose songs could transport listeners to the golden days of rail travel.

He had seen it all: the misty forests of the Pacific Northwest, the arid stretches of the Mojave Desert, and the rail yards of Chicago. His tales spoke of camaraderie, danger, and the unyielding pull of freedom. Even as his steps grew slower and his walking stick more necessary, Zack's spirit remained as untamed as the open skies he loved.

To Zack, the world was a boundless tapestry of rails, each track a pathway to a new adventure, a new story waiting to be lived. But for all his travels, he never anticipated that his music would lead him to an encounter that would remind him of the joy of sharing his goals, hopes, dreams, and aspirations with someone new.

## 2. The Meeting by the Station

It was a crisp autumn afternoon when Sarah first heard the music. She was hurrying through the busy train station, her mind preoccupied with the usual rush of life, when a melody cut through the chaos. The rich, resonant strumming of a guitar floated through the air, drawing her gaze to an elderly man sitting cross-legged near the station's entrance.



The man, Old Zack, played with a relaxed confidence, his fingers dancing over the strings as if the guitar were an extension of his soul. The music was both haunting and uplifting, carrying with it the weight of countless miles traveled. Passersby threw spare



change into the open guitar case beside him, but Zack seemed lost in his world, playing not for the money but for the joy of it.

Sarah, a classically trained pianist, found herself rooted to the spot. She had always loved music in its many forms, but there was something raw and unpolished about Zack's playing that stirred something deep within her. She dropped a handful of coins into the guitar case, and their eyes met briefly. Zack gave her a nod of gratitude, his weathered face creasing into a kind smile. Sarah said, "Thank you for sharing your music. I regularly play the piano and sometimes play guitar." Zack stopped playing, looked at Sarah and said, "Thank you, fellow musician. Music is the universal language, and I am happy that my music spoke to you. Keep on playing." After saying that, Zack went back to playing his guitar.

That night, Sarah couldn't shake the melody from her mind. The notes seemed to echo through her thoughts, pulling at her curiosity. Who was this man? What stories did his music tell? The next day, she found herself back at the station, searching for him, but he was gone.



She approached the station master, describing the musician she had seen. The man chuckled knowingly. "Oh, that's Zack," he said. "He's somewhat of a legend around here. You might find him down by the hobo camp along the river, about a mile south of



the Old Covered Bridge."

Sarah thanked him, her mind racing with anticipation. She had to find Zack—not just to hear his music again, but to uncover the stories behind the man whose melodies had captivated her.

### **3. The Journey to the Campfire**

The sun was setting as Sarah made her way to the Old Covered Bridge.



The air was crisp, and the sound of rustling leaves accompanied her footsteps as she followed the river southward. Her thoughts raced with anticipation. What kind of place was a hobo camp? Would Zack remember her?





As the bridge disappeared into the distance behind her, she began to hear faint strains of music carried on the evening breeze. The melodies grew louder as she approached, mingling harmonica riffs with the rhythmic strumming of a guitar. The sound was unlike anything Sarah had heard before—raw, unfiltered, and alive.

Soon, she reached a clearing where a campfire flickered in the fading light. Around it, a small group of people sat, each one cradling an instrument. A man with a harmonica leaned into his tune with closed eyes, his weathered face illuminated by the firelight. Another tapped out a beat on an upturned bucket, while a violinist added soaring notes to the mix. One man seemed to almost be dancing while playing a concertina, an accordion favored by sailors and travelers, due to its small, portable size.



And there was Zack, seated on an old crate with his guitar resting on his lap. He was leading the group with a soulful melody, his fingers moving deftly across the strings despite his age.



Sarah stood at the edge of the clearing, mesmerized. She didn't want to interrupt, so she simply listened, her smile growing wider with every note. When the song ended, she clapped enthusiastically, startling the group.

Zack looked up, his sharp eyes recognizing her immediately. "Well, if it isn't the pianist from the station," he said with a grin. "What brings you to our little slice of paradise?"

Sarah stepped closer, the warmth of the fire reaching her. "Your music stayed with me," she admitted. "I just had to find out more about you."

Zack chuckled, his laughter a deep, resonant sound. "Then you've come to the right place. Pull up a seat, and let's see if you've got a tune or two to share with us."

The group made room for her, welcoming her with smiles and nods. As Sarah settled in by the fire, she felt an inexplicable sense of belonging. She had followed the music and found herself drawn into a world of stories, melodies, and camaraderie.

#### **4. Music Under the Stars**

As the fire crackled and the night deepened, the musicians began to play again. Each person added their voice to the tapestry of sound—Zeke's harmonica wove mournful melodies through the upbeat rhythm of Zack's guitar, while the violinist's bow danced gracefully across the strings. Even the makeshift drummer kept the beat with surprising precision.





Sarah sat quietly at first, soaking in the energy of the camp. The music was unlike the structured compositions she was used to. It wasn't about perfection or adherence to sheet music—it was raw, expressive, and alive with emotion.

“Hey, Sarah,” Zack called out over the music, his voice warm and inviting. “Why don't you share a little of that piano playing you told me about?”

Sarah hesitated, glancing around at the expectant faces. “I don't have my piano,” she said with a nervous laugh.

Zack grinned and gestured toward a shadowy corner of the clearing. “Oh, we've got one. It might be a little out of tune, but it's got soul. Just like the rest of us.”

Curious and a little unsure, Sarah followed Zack to where an old upright piano stood. It was worn and weathered, its keys yellowed with age, but it looked like it had seen its share of love.

She sat down, testing a few keys. The piano responded with a warm, slightly uneven tone, and she couldn't help but smile. “Okay,” she said, looking back at the group. “Let's see what we can do.”

Her fingers began to move, finding a melody that was simple yet sincere. Zack joined in with his guitar, his chords blending seamlessly with her tune. The harmonica and violin followed, and soon the camp was alive with a rich, spontaneous harmony.



Sarah's classical training added a touch of elegance to the rawness of the other instruments, creating a unique fusion that had everyone nodding and tapping along. For a moment, it felt as if the stars themselves were swaying to the music.

When the song ended, the group burst into applause. "You've got some real talent," Zeke said, tipping his hat to her.

"Thanks," Sarah replied, her cheeks flushed with excitement. "But it's not just me—it's all of us. This... this is something special."

Zack leaned over and patted her shoulder. "That's the beauty of it," he said. "Out here, it's not about standing out—it's about coming together. Music isn't just something you play; it's something you share."

Sarah nodded, feeling the truth of his words settle deep within her.

## **5. A Piano in the Wilderness**

The old piano became the centerpiece of the evening. Its battered exterior and uneven tone seemed to embody the spirit of the camp—imperfect, yet perfect for soulful music. As Sarah sat at the keys, she felt a deep connection to the instrument, as if it were an old soul with stories of its own to tell.

Zack stood beside her, strumming his guitar, while Zeke added flourishes with his harmonica. The other musicians took turns joining in, improvising melodies that flowed seamlessly together. Each note carried a piece of their lives—a shared moment, a memory, a longing for the open road.

Sarah began to experiment, blending her classical training with the free-spirited energy of the group. Her hands moved with newfound confidence, weaving intricate patterns that complemented Zack's steady rhythm and Zeke's soulful harmonica. Together, they created a sound that was both unique and timeless.

As the music grew, others in the camp joined in, clapping their hands, stomping their feet, or humming along. It wasn't just a performance—it was a celebration of life, of connection, of the simple joy of being together under the open sky.

"Where did this piano even come from?" Sarah asked during a pause in the music.

Zack chuckled. "Ah, that's a story in itself. Found it abandoned near a train yard in Chicago. Took a bit of effort to get it here, but it's been worth every splinter and sore muscle. This old gal's seen some of the best and the worst of us, and she's still standing."



Sarah ran her fingers lightly over the keys, marveling at the resilience of the instrument—and the people who had brought it here. “It’s amazing,” she said softly.

“Kind of like life, isn’t it?” Zack replied, his tone reflective. “We all take a few knocks, but it’s the music we make along the way that keeps us going.”

That night, the piano didn’t just play music—it brought the camp together in a way Sarah had never experienced before. The instrument, though worn and imperfect, became a symbol of the resilience and beauty of the hobo community—an example of their ability to find harmony in the unlikeliest of places.

As the fire burned low and the stars shimmered above, Sarah realized she wasn’t just playing music; she was sharing a piece of herself, and in return, she was receiving something priceless.

## 6. Stories by Firelight

As the final notes of their latest song faded into the night, the group settled into a comfortable silence, the crackling of the fire filling the space where music had been moments before. The warmth of the flames cast flickering shadows on their faces, and Sarah felt a deep sense of peace, as though she had found a hidden pocket of the world where time slowed down.

Zack broke the silence, his gravelly voice carrying the weight of years. “You know,” he began, “music’s a beautiful thing, but a good story—well, that stays with you forever.” He leaned forward, the firelight reflecting in his eyes. “I’ve seen things on the rails that most folks couldn’t dream of. Some of it good, some of it bad, but all of it worth telling.”

The group murmured in agreement, settling in as Zack began to speak. He told of his first journey on a freight train at the age of 18, the thrill of leaping aboard while it was still moving, the wind in his face, and



the feeling of absolute freedom. He recounted how he learned the hobo codes—symbols left by travelers to warn of danger or to share where kindness could be found.

Zack's stories painted vivid pictures in Sarah's mind: a rainy night in Seattle when a stranger shared his last loaf of bread; a starlit evening in the Mojave Desert where a group of travelers exchanged songs and laughter around a fire; a narrow escape from a grumpy yardmaster in Kansas City. Each tale carried an undercurrent of resilience, hope, and the unyielding pull of the horizon.

When Zack paused to take a sip from his tin cup, Zeke chimed in with his own tale—of a time he played his harmonica on the streets of Memphis and earned enough coins to buy a meal for a hungry child. Others joined in, sharing fragments of their lives, their voices weaving a patchwork of human experience that was both humbling and inspiring.

Sarah listened intently, with admiration of Zack's worthwhile accomplishments. She realized that these weren't just stories—they were lessons, etched into the lives of those who had lived them. They spoke of hardship and loss, but also of kindness, perseverance, and the joy of simple things.

As the fire burned lower, Zack turned to Sarah. "What about you, kid? You've got a story in you, I can tell. Everyone does."

She hesitated, unsure how her life as a pianist could compare to the rich tapestry of experiences she had just heard. But as the group waited expectantly, she found herself opening up, sharing her journey—the endless hours of practice, the triumphs and disappointments, and how Zack's music at the station had reignited her passion for playing.

When she finished, Zack nodded approvingly. "Every story's worth telling," he said. "And yours is just getting started."

The group murmured their agreement, and Sarah felt a warm glow of belonging. For the first time in a long while, she felt not just heard, but understood.

## **7. The Bonds of Music**

As the night deepened, the group drifted back to their instruments, drawn once more to the unspoken connection that music seemed to forge between them. Sarah returned to the old piano, her fingers finding a gentle melody that filled the quiet air. Zack joined in with his guitar, strumming softly, while Zeke's harmonica added a soulful undertone.



The music felt different this time—not just a performance, but a conversation. Each note seemed to carry unspoken words, telling stories that words alone couldn't express. It was as though the music had become a thread, weaving together the lives and experiences of everyone around the fire.

Zack leaned toward Sarah as he played, his voice low and reflective. “You know, music has a way of binding people. It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done—it speaks to something deeper, something that connects us all.”

Sarah nodded, her hands moving instinctively over the keys. “I never realized it until now,” she admitted. “I've always thought of music as something you create, something you practice until it's perfect. But here, it feels... alive. Like it's not just mine—it belongs to everyone who hears it.”

“That's the beauty of it,” Zack replied with a grin. “Out here, we don't care about perfect. We care about real.”

As the music swelled, Sarah felt a sense of freedom she had never known before. The rigid structure of her classical training melted away, replaced by the joy of improvisation and collaboration. She found herself laughing when she hit a wrong note, something she would have agonized over before.

The others fed off her energy, their instruments coming alive in ways that seemed almost surreal. The violinist played with wild abandon, his bow dancing across the strings. The makeshift drummer tapped out an infectious rhythm that had everyone clapping along.

By the time the last song ended, the group was breathless with laughter and joy. “Your piano playing was exceptional. Your improvisation, musical expression, and ability to harmonize with other instruments are quite remarkable,” Zeke said, tipping his harmonica toward Sarah.

“Thank you. The talented musicians in this band bring out the best in my music,” she replied, her smile brighter than the firelight.

As the embers of the fire glowed softly, Zack spoke again, his voice tinged with both wisdom and gratitude. “It's not just the music that binds us—it's what we share through it. Our stories, our struggles, our dreams. Every note we play is a reminder that none of us are alone.”

Sarah looked around the circle, seeing her own feelings reflected in the faces of those around her. She realized that music wasn't just a performance or a craft—it was a bridge, a way to connect with others on the deepest level.

## 8. Dawn's Farewell

The first light of dawn painted the horizon in shades of pink and gold, signaling the end of their night together. The fire had burned down to glowing embers, and the music had softened into a lullaby that seemed to welcome the new day.

Zack strummed his guitar one last time, the chords slow and deliberate, as if savoring each note. Sarah joined him at the piano, her fingers brushing softly over the keys, creating a melody that felt like a quiet goodbye. The others added their instruments in gentle harmony, crafting a bittersweet song that seemed to carry the weight of parting and the promise of reunion.



As the final notes hung in the air, the camp fell silent. No one spoke at first, as if words might break the fragile beauty of the moment. Sarah glanced at Zack, whose eyes reflected a mixture of contentment and melancholy.

“Well,” Zack said, breaking the silence, “every journey has its stops. This one’s been a good one.”

Sarah smiled, though feeling sad at the same time. “It’s been more than good,” she said. “It’s been unforgettable.”

Zeke leaned forward, his harmonica resting in his lap. “You’ll take this with you, won’t you?” he asked, his voice hopeful. “The music, the stories—it’s part of you now.”

“I will,” Sarah promised, her voice steady despite the lump in her throat. “You’ve all given me something I didn’t know I was missing.”

Zack chuckled. “That’s the adventure of the road. You never know what you’ll find—or who you’ll meet.”



As the group began to pack away their instruments and scatter the remnants of the fire, Sarah felt a deep sense of gratitude. She had come here looking for a musician but had found a family of sorts—a community bound not by blood, but by a shared love of music and life.

Before she left, Zack approached her, his guitar slung over his shoulder. “Take this,” he said, handing her a small, dog-eared journal.

“What’s this?” Sarah asked, flipping through the pages filled with handwritten notes, lyrics, and sketches.

“Just some of my songs and stories,” Zack said. “Figured you might like to keep them alive in your own way.”

Touched beyond words, Sarah nodded. “Thank you,” she whispered.



As she walked back toward the covered bridge, the sounds of the camp fading behind her, Sarah felt a sense of renewal. The music they had played together wasn’t just an experience—it was a turning point. She knew it would stay with her, shaping her art and her life in ways she couldn’t yet imagine.

Behind her, Zack watched her go, his hand resting on the neck of his guitar. “She’s got the spark,” he said to Zeke, who nodded in agreement.

“She’ll carry it forward,” Zeke replied. “And that’s all we can ask.”

## 9. New Horizons

As Sarah returned to her everyday life, the night by the campfire lingered in her mind like a favorite melody. The stories Zack had told, the impromptu songs they had played together, and the warmth of the hobo community became a wellspring of inspiration.

Her piano no longer felt like just an instrument; it was now a vessel for stories, emotions, and connections. She began to compose pieces that blended the structure of her classical training with the freedom and raw energy she had experienced at the camp. Her music, once precise and rigid, now flowed with a newfound spontaneity and soul.

The dog-eared journal Zack had given her became her most cherished possession. She poured over his scribbled lyrics and notes, feeling as though she were hearing his voice with every word. Inspired by his journey, she decided to weave his tales into her own compositions, preserving the spirit of the rails and the people who had traveled them.

With time, Sarah's music reached new audiences. She began performing in small and large venues, sharing not only her songs but also the stories that had inspired them. She told of Old Zack, the wandering guitarist who had seen the world from the rails, and of the night she joined a group of strangers by a campfire and found a piece of herself she hadn't known was missing.

Her performances resonated deeply with listeners, many of whom found comfort in the themes of connection and resilience. People would approach her after shows, sharing their own stories of unexpected encounters and the power of music to heal and unite.

But it wasn't just Sarah who had changed. Her experience rippled outward, touching the lives of others. The people who heard her music often found themselves inspired to embrace spontaneity, to seek out new connections, and to share their own stories in whatever way they could.

For Sarah, the lessons she had learned by the riverside became a guiding philosophy: life was about more than reaching destinations—it was about the moments, the connections, and the melodies created along the way. And just as Zack had passed his stories on to her, she now felt a responsibility to carry them forward, ensuring they were never forgotten.

Zack's words echoed in her mind whenever she sat at the piano: "It's not about perfect—it's about real." And as she played, Sarah knew she was doing exactly what Zack would have wanted: she was keeping the music alive, letting it connect her to the world, and following wherever it might lead.

## **10. Legacy of the Rails**

Years passed, and Sarah's music continued to flourish, but Zack's influence never left her. Though they had parted ways that morning by the river, his spirit had woven itself into the fabric of her life. It wasn't just his music she carried with her—it was his way of seeing the world. Through Zack, Sarah learned that every journey was a story worth telling, every person was a story worth hearing, and every moment, no matter how fleeting, was an opportunity to create something beautiful.



She never saw Zack again after that night by the campfire, but his legacy lived on in every song she played, in every story she shared, and in the community of musicians she had built around her. She often thought back to the hobo camp by the river, to the group of wanderers who had embraced her so freely. She had been a stranger to them, but through music, they had made her feel like one of their own. That simple gift of acceptance and connection was something Sarah carried with her every day.

One day, while performing at a small music festival in the Pacific Northwest, Sarah was approached by an older man in a weathered leather jacket. His eyes sparkled with the same youthful energy as Zack's, and his voice held a rough, but friendly, edge.



“You wouldn’t happen to know a fellow named Zack, would you?” he asked, his voice tinged with hope.

Just hearing the name Zack, brought back wonderful memories of Zack. She hadn’t expected to hear that name again, not like this. “Zack? You mean the old guitarist?”

The man nodded, a soft smile spreading across his face. “I met him years ago, near a train yard in Chicago. He gave me a guitar pick and told me to keep playing, even when the world didn’t make sense.”

Sarah felt a lump form in her throat. “He gave me something, too,” she said quietly. “He gave me his stories, his music, and courage to live my dream.”

The man’s smile widened. “Well, it looks like we’re both part of his story, then.”

That moment, standing there with this stranger, was a reminder of the interconnectedness of it all. Zack had touched lives all across the country, and now, through Sarah, his legacy was growing even larger. His stories weren’t just his anymore—they had become part of a larger, living narrative, passed from one person to the next, from one song to the next.

As Sarah sat back at her piano later that evening, the sound of her fingers gliding over the keys filled the air, but this time it was different. She realized that she wasn’t just playing for herself anymore. She was playing for Zack, for the countless travelers whose lives had been shaped by the rails, for every person whose life had been touched by music and stories.

And so, the legacy of the rails continued, not just through the steel tracks that stretched across the country, but through the music that transcended time, space, and circumstance. Zack may have been the last of his kind, but his spirit lived on in Sarah’s music, and in those who heard it. The road was his home, and it was now hers, too, carrying the songs of wanderers far and wide, the echoes of a life lived in harmony with the world.

The End.



## **The Old Piano**

### **Verse 1**

Old Zack walked with the rhythm of the rails,  
His backpack heavy with stories and tales.  
From the Pacific Coast to the Florida sands,  
Making music, and telling stories, across the land.

### **Verse 2**

I heard his melody, one afternoon,  
Strumming a soulful song, yet beautiful tune.  
I stopped, transfixed, as the guitar sang,  
Each note vibrating truth, freedom it rang.

### **Chorus**

Oh, the rails are long, and the stories grow deep,  
With music and memories, treasures to keep.  
It's not just the journey, but those we meet along the way,  
Our songs, stories, love and kindness, can brighten one's day.

### **Verse 3**

Down by the bridge, a campfire burned,  
A gathering of wanderers, each with lessons earned.  
The harmonica wept, the violin soared,  
Together we played, no one was ignored.

### **Bridge**

"Music binds us," Zack softly said,  
Music calms the mind, relieving fear and dread.  
Through hardships and joys, the melody stays,  
A light for the soul in life's shadowed maze."

### **Verse 4**

I joined with a hesitant hand,  
The old piano played its part in the band.  
My classical world met their untamed sound,  
And a fusion of stories in the music was found.

### **Chorus**

Oh, the rails are long, and the stories grow deep,  
With music and memories, treasures to keep.  
It's not just the journey, but those we meet along the way,  
Our songs, stories, love and kindness, can brighten one's day.

### **Outro**

Years passed, but Zack's spirit remained,  
In my songs, his wisdom sustained.  
The rails may rust, but the music stays,  
A legacy of freedom, guiding new days.

## "Words and Songs"

### Verse 1

There's a rhythm in the journey, a song in every mile,  
We travel optimistically, greeting people with a smile.  
The tracks that stretch forever, the stars that guide the way,  
We don't regret our choice to travel, but greet each new day.

### Verse 2

It's not the path we're walking, but the people we come to know,  
The stories shared with others, the seeds of kindness sown.  
Each moment is a musical note, a song building over time,  
Each step is a moment, to be treasured, even if an uphill climb.

### Verse 3

The strings we play are weathered, but their song still rings so true,  
Each note a thread that ties the old with all that's bright and new.  
The echo of a voice we meet, the strum of distant strings,  
Together they remind us of the joy connection brings.

### Bridge

We carry more than backpacks; we carry words and songs,  
A symphony of strangers picks us up when we're not strong.  
The rails beneath may rust away, the bridges may decay,  
But the ties we make along the way will never fade away.

### Outro

So play the song, embrace the journey, let stories map the trail,  
Travel slow, for it's not the strength of the gale, but the set of your sail.  
And when the road has ended, and the final song's been sung,  
Your song will be passed on to those whose lives have just begun.



## **“Moving On”**

### **Verse 1:**

Worn leather boots and a weathered pack  
Six decades riding on steel railroad tracks  
With stories to tell and miles left to roam  
The rails are my pathway, the world is my home

### **Verse 2:**

Oh, these railroads keep calling my name  
Traveling is my story, my claim to fame  
From boxcar to boxcar, through sunshine and rain  
I'm living my freedom, not bound by chains

### **Verse 3:**

Crossed continents wide, from Texas to Spain  
My ticket's free, braving the wind and the rain  
With no material wealth, just memories so bright  
Just me and the train rolling, on through the night

### **Verse 4:**

They say settle down, but my itchy feet say move on  
These tracks are my compass, guiding my journey along  
To far away places, I travel to be free  
More important than the destination, is the journey.

### **Verse 5:**

Oh, these railroads keep calling my name  
Traveling is my story, without regret or shame  
From boxcar to boxcar, through sunshine and rain  
I'm moving on down the line, on the freedom train

### **Verse 6:**

The rhythmic chugging, the clickety-clack  
Lulls me to sleep, as I move on down the tracks  
Moving on, down the line, the train chugging along  
I'll keep on moving, yes, keep on moving, moving on