

**BRIDGE**

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FADE IN:

BLACK AND WHITE

EXT. A SILVER LAKE BUNGALOW - DAY

The house is tucked away behind a gate and wall, which overflows with lush bougainvillea - typical LA yuppie fare.

We hear the usual sounds of east side Los Angeles: the blare of car alarms, the whine of electric hand saws, the *tap tap tap* of hammers, the roar of garbage trucks and modified engines, the stutter of LAPD and military helicopter blades overhead, etc. Just another noisy-ass day in the city.

CUT TO:

INT. STUDY

We see REBECCA D'ANGELO, a frazzled-looking white woman, middle aged, poking away at a grand piano. She is trying to compose a melody and cannot seem to find the right note to bridge the sequence of sounds. Her walls are lined with music awards; despite her current difficulties, she is very good at what she does.

She winces at the clang of each wrong note and flinches in response to all the noise she hears outside and above her home. Very, very stressed-looking.

Frustrated, she turns around to face a large flat-screen television on the wall behind her that mutely flashes the day's news - another police shooting of an unarmed black man, runaway inflation, the war in Ukraine, Republican & Democrat infighting. Additional sources of anxiety.

Suddenly, her well-trained ears hone in on what sounds like someone digging through the recycling can that sits in front of her house. She's had it, and she throws on a robe, bolts out of the study, through the long hallway of her house and out the front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. SIDEWALK OUTSIDE REBECCA'S HOUSE.

Rebecca shoots out through the front gate to the street in front of her house. There, she sees a MAN rifling through her recycling bin and placing the aluminum cans he finds into a bag he is

carrying. The man's face and clothes are dirty; he appears to be homeless.

REBECCA

Um - excuse me sir, what are you doing???

The man looks up, startled. He nearly drops his bag of her aluminum cans.

MAN

Oh, my bad ma'am, I'm just takin' some of these cans off your hands.

He takes a can out of his bag to show her.

Rebecca simply squints back at the man, implicitly demanding more of an explanation.

MAN

... Uh, I figure they in your recycling bin anyway, I may as well take 'em and make a lil' bit of money off of 'em ... I don't mean no harm.

Rebecca visibly puzzles over this for a few seconds.

REBECCA

Oh...okay...I guess that's fine...

MAN

Yeah, over at the recycling center, I get 5 cents a can, and if you diligent, that can add up.

He flashes a bright smile.

Perhaps it's her scattered mind state - and maybe she needs a break from the piano and the news - but oddly, she is impressed by the man's work ethic.

She uncrosses her arms and takes a few tentative steps toward him; beyond any kind of upper class naivete, there is something unmistakably jovial and kind about him.

REBECCA

Oh, recycling center, I see...that's good. (Beat) Uh, what'd you say your name was?

MAN

I didn't.

Flashes another winning smile.

My name is Gabriel. You can call me Gabe.

He offers his dirty, gloved hand. Rebecca eyes it warily for a few seconds and then takes it.

REBECCA

Hi Gabe, I'm Rebecca.

GABE

Pleased to meet you, Rebecca.

Gabe offers a little curtsy.

Rebecca stifles a giggle, realizing she needed this human contact, no matter where it's coming from.

A brief, awkward pause ensues.

REBECCA

Sooo...I assume you're...unhoused...no, I'm sorry, um, experiencing homelessness, or -

Now it's Gabe's turn - he cuts her off with a laugh.

GABE

I'm *homeless*, yes ma'am.

He laughs again.

They got so many names for it here, it don't really change the underlying fact, do it?

REBECCA

No, I guess it doesn't...

GABE

But yeah, I live in a shelter. I came on a Greyhound from Alabama 'bout 8 years ago. I had a business there that crashed and burned and left me on the streets.

He gives Rebecca a keen look.

Now, I don't know if you ever been to Lanett, Alabama, but it ain't exactly the best place in the world to be homeless...not that being homeless is great anywhere.

Rebecca laughs again, temporarily taken by Gabe's charm. Can't help but relax just a little bit more. Another awkward pause.

GABE

And to be honest, just between me and you -

He gives Rebecca a conspiratorial look.

GABE (cont'd)

- bein' homeless ain't no picnic, but there's a part of me that likes the freedom to roam with no one to answer to.

His look turns keen.

GABE (cont'd)

Now I know what you thinkin': I like the freedom so I can do drugs and alcohol. But nah, that ain't it. You see, ever since I was a little boy, I've been a very happy person, regardless of where I go or who I'm with. A buddy of mine at the shelter says I'm one of them "happy freaks".

Thoughtful pause.

GABE (cont'd)

In a way, as weird as it sounds, I feel like I'm doing the Lord's work out here, livin' with the homeless, liftin' they spirits when they need it...it's a lot of pain and anger out here on these streets...

Rebecca nods, serious and thoughtful, but for a second - oddly and irrationally - also jealous. How nice it would be not to have to worry about composition deadlines every few weeks. She knows this is nonsense, and she loves her job, but her current stress, no matter how much it has been temporarily abated, is getting the best of her.

REBECCA (dreamily)  
I would kill for that kind of freedom...

Gabe eyes her just a little bit, sure she can't mean what she's saying.

GABE  
Yeah, for folks of a certain disposition,  
it ain't half bad.

GABE (cont'd)  
So...what do you do, miss Rebecca?

Rebecca jerks up a bit, broken out of her reverie, and surprised that Gabe has space in his mind to wonder about anything other than his well-being, let alone her occupation.

REBECCA  
Oh me? Um, I'm a composer.

Her response is drowned out by the sound of another helicopter overhead. Gabe cups a hand around an ear in an attempt to hear her.

GABE  
Sorry, didn't catch that!

REBECCA  
These helicopters; they really do go all day. But yes, I said, I'm a composer. I make music for film, television and theater.

GABE  
Oh, that's coo'! Like *Phantom of the Opera*?

Poses, and sings the theme of *Phantom of the Opera* with dramatic flair.

*Duuuuh, duh duh duh duh duuuuhhhhhhh!*

Rebecca starts again and laughs, surprised at the quality of Gabe's singing voice.

REBECCA

Yes! Just like *Phantom of the Opera*. Except now, I'm a bit stuck on a melody I'm working on. And all this noise -

Just then, a huge LADWP truck noisily tumbles by.

- doesn't help my process at all.

GABE

Oh yeah?

Gabe leans in a bit.

Well, can you let me hear it?

Rebecca looks back, confused.

REBECCA

What? ...the melody?

GABE

Sure!

Rebecca hesitates, unsure if she should really hum her melody for this homeless man that she just met.

Then she thinks to herself, *Fuck it. Against all odds, I've really enjoyed this conversation. I actually really like this guy.* She is quietly surprised by this - what would her friends say? No matter - if she's being honest, she is feeling a little outside herself these days.

Throwing whatever reservations she has left to the winds, she closes her eyes and beautifully hums the disconnected fragments to Gabe.

Gabe listens politely and attentively, secretly touched that this random white woman has opened up to him like this.

GABE

Oh snap - I like that! It's real nice.

He looks off in reminiscence.

Then, we SLOWLY ZOOM IN on GABE'S FACE as he says/sings the following.

You know, parts of it remind me of this little ditty we used to sing to each other in grade school back in the day, when we were cuttin' up, playin' the dozens. It go:

*Yo' mama don't wear no drawers  
I saw her when she took 'em off  
And she washed 'em in alcohol  
And then she hung 'em out in the hall*

CUT TO

CLOSE UP OF REBECCA'S FACE, COMPLETELY SHOCKED, AND CAMERA BLOOMING FROM BLACK AND WHITE TO COLOR

REBECCA

Oh my God!

Gabe starts and backs up.

GABE

What? What's wrong?

REBECCA

That's it! That's it! What note did you sing (humorously mimicking) "alcoholllll" in?

GABE

What note? I don't know, I ain't learn it in no music class...

REBECCA

(excitedly)

Can you sing just that word again exactly like you did before?

Gabe is very confused but obliges with a flourish.

GABE

Okay...ALLLLL-CAH-HALLLLLLLL!!!

CUT TO:

Wider shot showing that random passersby are extremely confused by this unlikely exchange.

REBECCA

YES! That *is* it! The missing bridge to the fragments of my melody!

Rebecca is almost manic now, lost in deep thought. Gabe remains confused.

REBECCA (cont'd)

The reason I couldn't find the right note or chord to bridge the melody is because I compose using the *diatonic* scale, which has traditionally been used in Western music, and not the *pentatonic* scale that you were singing in, which is used in Chinese music, West African music and - *ding ding ding* - blues music!

GABE

Oh! I think I follow...so basically, the note I gave you ain't on any of your instruments?

REBECCA

Exactly!

Pauses, considering for exactly half a second. Then, looks earnestly at Gabe.

Look, I know this is all kind of strange and very intense, but this is a huge breakthrough, and...do you want to come in? I need to record you singing that note so I can ask someone to reproduce chords around it on a piano.

GABE

(incredulous)

Uh...okay.

FADE OUT as we see the two of them walking towards Rebecca's house and hear the latter's excited chatter about diatonic and pentatonic scales.

**THE END**