CHORDS
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FADE IN:

INT. RADIO STATION-DAY

A morning radio show with two DJ's, JON and MIKE.

A quiet moment with the sound of a single acoustic guitar. Several people crowd around an observation window to watch guitar player JAISON FREDERICK, mid 30s.

He ends and the few people applaud.

    JON
    Jaison Frederick, ladies and gentlemen!

    JAISON
    Thank you.

They laugh.

    MIKE
    If I could play like that, I'd have to fight the babes off. Just look at the window.

Mike gestures at the women behind the observation window.

    MIKE
    When we said Jaison Frederick was coming in this morning, the entire female staff here let out a squeal that could shatter cement. We even got complaint calls from Central America about the noise.

They laugh again.

    JON
    What do you say we take some calls?

    JAISON
    Sure.

    JON
    Line three, you're on.

    LINE 3
    Am I on?
MIKE
You're on with Jaison Frederick.

LINE 3
I know you're the uncrowned king of the guitar world. I have tickets to all your shows in town.

JAISON
Don't you have a life?

They laugh.

LINE 3
Wouldn't have it any other way. But my question is, how do you feel about other up and coming players?

Jaison has a flash of spite in his eyes.

JAISON
I wish them well. More the merrier, I guess. It's lonely at the top.

MIKE
You don't feel threatened in any way?

He glares at Mike.

JAISON
No.

The musician quickly smiles nervously.

JON
Okay, let's take another call.

INT. LIMO-DAY

Jaison deep in thought as CASS, a pretty professional in her late 20s, tries to talk to him.

CASS
...and we have two interviews tomorrow with Guitar Player and Musician and a MTV crew will be at the stadium Friday. We have another radio spot tomorrow...

She studies her boss.
CASS
Jaison?

Turns to her.

JAISON
Huh? No. Cancel the radio tomorrow. No more live spots and get the question list from the print and TV. Everything must be pre-approved.

She sighs.

CASS
Alright. I found out this Zach Gallan is playing at the Blue Moon tonight.

Hands him a cheap music paper with a small ad circled, ZACH GALLAN AND THE TITANS OF ROCK.

CASS
And I got his demo tape.

She hands him a CD.

JAISON
Good. I always like to check out new talent.

Cass unnerved as he shows no emotion.

EXT. BLUE MOON CLUB-NIGHT

The joint low-rent with equally dressed patrons that file inside.

Jaison's limo passes the club and stops in the shadows just beyond.

INT. LIMO

Jaison dressed down with a cap and sunglasses. Speaks to the DRIVER.

JAISON
You can get something to eat but stay by the phone.

The boss gestures to the cellular in his hand.
DRIVER
Yes sir.

JAISON
And keep the car out of sight.

Yes sir.

Jaison steps out of the car and shuts the door behind him.

DRIVER
Asshole.

EXT. CLUB

The limo pulls off as Jaison pockets the phone.

INT. CLUB-NIGHT

On stage, ZACH GALLAN, mid 20s, finishes an especially passionate and technically precise guitar solo passage of Jimi Hendrix's "Little Wing" with his three piece band. The band swells to the emotion that goes through Zach's body. The song concludes and the audience bursts into a fevered applause.

ZACH
Thank you. We'll be back at eleven.

From the back, Jaison watches as the band rushes off. He intently steps over to the BARTENDER.

BARTENDER
What'll you have?

JAISON
The manager of the band.

BARTENDER
And who shall I say is calling?

Jaison slaps a fifty dollar bill down on the bar. The bartender scoops the bill up and scampers off.

BARTENDER
Yes sir.
INT. DRESSING ROOM

Zach relaxes in a torn and battered couch with the band. VIC, the drummer, throws him a beer.

VIC
Nice show, Zach. Jimi himself would have been proud.

Zach pops open the beer.

ZACH
(overtly insincere)
Yeah, I am good, aren't I?

EDDIE, the bassist, catches a beer.

EDDIE
Maybe he’s actually Jimi. Back from the dead.

They laugh.

EDDIE
So, will you remember us when you make it big, Jimi?

ZACH
You tone-deaf assholes. No chance.

Eddie and Vic look at each other with comedic surprise.

VIC
All this high livin' has gone to his head.

Zach overtly tastes his beer and then scowls.

ZACH
This isn't Dom Perrignon!

Eddie and Vic begins to shake his beers and close in on him.

EDDIE
Perrignon this, buddy.

ZACH
Come on guys.
They let loose with beer shooting out of their cans.

ZACH
Alright, you're out of the Grammy speech!

Eddie and Vic smile and give each other high fives.

Suddenly, ARNOLD, mid 40s, bursts into the room. The red sports jacket and white slacks he wears complement his shady attitude.

ARNOLD
Great show, guys. Great show.

He turns to face Eddie and Vic.

ARNOLD
Guys, Zach has a very important guest. Could you wait in the bar until he's finished?

The two band mates turn sullen and look up at Zach quizzically. The ax man glances back then at Arnold.

ZACH
If it concerns me it concerns them. Who is it?

ARNOLD
Jaison Frederick.

Eddie and Vic turn surprised.

VIC
"The" Jaison Frederick?

ARNOLD
The very same.

Zach seems confused.

ZACH
Why does he want to see me?

ARNOLD
He just does.

EDDIE
No sweat. We're gone.
They begin to exit.

    EDDIE
    But hurry up or all the young ladies
    will be taken. Remember, I do not share.

Eddie exits and Vic stops and pinches Arnold's lapels.

    VIC
    Nice suit, Arnie.

Vic steps out as Arnold glances at Zach before he closes the door.

Zach nervously gulps his beer as he steps over to a make-up mirror. He shuffles through the various garbage of twinkie wrappers, soda cans and guitar strings, and picks out a battered pack of cigarettes. A flick of a lighter, the cigarette relaxes him for a moment before Jaison enters.

The kid sees Jaison in the mirror and stiffens at his blank expression. Zach hesitantly turns.

Unlike the reflection, Jaison greets Zach with a warm smile.

    JAISON
    Excellent show, Zach.

The big shot steps over and shakes hands.

    ZACH
    Uh, thank you, Mr. Frederick. That means
    a lot coming from you.

Jaison laughs politely and motions to the beer cooler.

    ZACH
    Help yourself.

    JAISON
    No, really. You're very good. I've been
    following your progress for some time.

For a moment, the only sound the club through the wall.

The hiss of the beer opening cuts the silence as Jaison slides onto the tattered couch. The kid sits across from him.

    JAISON
    I've been thinking of taking you on.
A reach into his inner breast pocket, Jaison brings out an important looking piece of paper. He tosses it on the coffee table.

JAISON
Go ahead. Read it. See what you think.

Zach picks up the document, opens it up, and glances at Jaison.

EXT. HOUSE-NIGHT
The house beautiful but foreboding, surrounded by a high gate.

The limo pulls up to the front door, Jaison steps out, and leans back into the car.

JAISON
Come by at nine am sharp.

DRIVER
Yes sir.

Jaison closes the door and the car pulls off. Lets himself into the house.

INT. HOUSE
The man closes the door and turns on the lights, the only sound being the waves that crash on the beach outside.

A sigh and steps inside the house and to the liquor cabinet, the walls adorned with gold CDs, magazine covers and posters that feature Frederick. He pours himself a drink.

LATER:

Jaison drunk and wanders his house as his music plays in the background. He bobs his head as he examines that awards on the wall with spite. The song ends and he hesitates, jabs the air words the stereo.

JAISON
I should have done that one different.

With that, Jaison stumbles over to a bookcase and takes out a photo album. He crosses to a desk and with one hand, tosses a stack of mail to the floor. The book drops to the desk with a thud.
Opening the book, he slowly thumbs through several old photos of himself and a band long ago.

Suddenly stops at several photos of a pretty, smiling girl, JENNY, 20s, obviously unpretentious and pure. Slowly turns the pages, variations of pictures of Jenny and himself.

Every so often, a conspicuous gap where a photo obviously was.

Jaison stops and stares at a picture of Jenny and him embracing with as he holds a framed gold record.

He peels the picture off the page and continues to stare at it. A twist in the seat, he takes out a lighter and ignites the photo. The flames creep up to his fingers as he drops it into an empty trash can, still sullen.

JAISON
I should have done that one different.

Aggressively grabs the drink and stands.

JAISON
Screw it! I'm on top of the world!

Jaison collects the scrapbook and angrily tosses it away.

Suddenly, he stops in his tracks when he notices a single envelope on the desk. JAISON FREDERICK stenciled on the front: no stamp, no return address.

Confused, Jaison studies it and then looks at the mail bag. He open it up and reads:

Invitation to Jaison Frederick to be the best there is.

He laughs, crumples the paper up, tosses it away, and takes a big swig of his drink.

JAISON
Idiots.

EXT. BLDG.-DAY

The single story, unassuming building sits on a side street, surrounded by a high chain-link fence and a guard at the gate. Several exotic cars parked out front.
INT. STUDIO-DAY

The ENGINEER and producer, RICH, watch intently as Jaison, alone, performs a searing solo over some backing tracks. He suddenly cuts off in a harsh attack of static.

    RICH
    What's wrong, Jaison?

Jaison aggravated.

    JAISON
    It's not right.

Rich glances at the engineer.

    RICH
    It sounded great in here.

    JAISON
    No! It's not right!

The engineer sighs.

    RICH
    Okay, Jaison. Let's take a break.

The star tosses the guitar away and wanders out of the studio and into the hallway.

INT. HALL

Jaison, runs his fingers through his hair, slumps into a plush chair as he removes a small flask from his pocket. He takes a drink, leans his head back, and closes his eyes.

    VOICE
    Mister Frederick?

Startled, Jaison opens his eyes and looks up at a young, clean cut OFFICE BOY. This boy definitely out of place.

    JAISON
    Yes? What is it?

    OFFICE BOY
    For you, sir.

The boy hands him an envelope and begins to turn.
JAISON

What's this?

The boy turns back.

OFFICE BOY

An envelope, sir.

JAISON

I know that, idiot! Who is it from?

The boy smiles confidently.

OFFICE BOY

I do not know, sir.

With that, he smiles and disappears around the corner. Jaison tears at the envelope.

The letter reads: *Audition to be held at the Rockefeller Building on Sunday October 2nd at 3pm. Suite 1001.*

RICH (O.C.)

Jaison, ready to try it again?

Startled, the big shot crumples the envelope in his hand and straightens up.

JAISON

I didn't see you.

RICH

It's Friday. I'd like to get this track knocked off.

JAISON

Okay. I'm ready.

The two walk into the studio. Jaison tosses the letter to the side.

EXT. FORUM—NIGHT

DJ (V.O.)

...and Jaison Frederick is beginning his three night stint at the Forum, finishing up October second and third. All three shows are sold out but we have his latest single here...

People swarm around the towering arena, wait to get into the
show.

INT. ARENA-STAGE-NIGHT

A sea of rock fans whip into a frenzy at the culmination of Jaison's concert.

INT. BACKSTAGE-NIGHT

Various band members, road crew, girls and sleazy record people drink and talk in the small banquet room.

In a corner booth, Jaison sits quietly and listens to a record company EXECUTIVE.

EXECUTIVE

...and we can put a big campaign behind it. Possibly a home concert video. Maybe an MTV contest.

JAISON

A contest?

EXECUTIVE

Yes. Meet Jaison Frederick, go backstage, get $10,000 spending money. They do it all the time on MTV. Great publicity at a next to nothing cost.

Jaison sighs and gestures to Cass nearby.

JAISON

Excuse me. Maybe you should talk to my assistant. Cass?

She steps over to the two men. Jaison stands and puts Cass in the seat.

JAISON

Just give the proposal to her. She'll evaluate it. I need a drink.

The star smiles overtly and sarcastically, turns away.

As he steps through the crowd, a young, busty GIRL heads him off.

GIRL

That was a great show, Mister Frederick.
Jaison smiles as he checks her out.

**JAISON**

Well thank you.

**GIRL**

I couldn't believe it. You're so passionate.

**JAISON**

Well, thank you. Would you like a drink?

A gesture to the bar.

**GIRL**

Sure.

She smiles, awe in her eyes.

**JAISON**

Be right back.

Jaison steps up to the bar and grabs a drink.

**VOICE (O.C.)**

Mister Frederick?

With a sigh, turns, and freezes when he faces MICHAEL KALIHAN. Despite being very old, the man very large and muscular.

**MICHAEL**

Hello, Mister Frederick. My name is Michael Kalihan.

Michael offers his hand and Jaison hesitantly reaches out, almost hypnotized by this man. They shake.

**JAISON**

Hello, Mister Kalihan. What can I do for you?

**MICHAEL**

We understand you've turned down our invitation.

**JAISON**

I don't understand. What invit...

Jaison realizes, unable to muster a response.
MICHAEL
In all modesty, what we are offering you is truly a great opportunity. Just think about it.

Another smile, the man turns, begins to make his way out of the room, and leaves Jaison motionless. He snaps out of it and rushes over to Cass, gestures to the man.

JAISON
Who is that man?

Cass looks but Michael gone.

CASS
Who?

With a grunt, Jaison rushes out but Michael nowhere in sight. The girl appears, apprehensive.

GIRL
Is everything alright?

Looks her over again and forces a smile.

JAISON
Sure. Let's have a drink.

Leads her back into the party.

INT. HOUSE-BEDROOM-NIGHT

In a darkened bedroom, Jaison and the girl sleep. He awakens with a gasp and looks to her.

A sigh, slips out of the bed, and puts on a pair of pants.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Jaison sits in the living room as he looks over the scrapbook again. This time more sullen than angry. He takes a swig of a drink.

EXT. STREET-INT. LIMO-DAY

Deep in thought, Jaison rides in the back of his limo. The car makes its way through the busy downtown traffic. He balances a drink in his hand.

Slowly, Jaison looks out to the snarl of traffic and sighs. He
turns away and glances out the window, suddenly startled when the car pulls in front of ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, an old but stately building. The clock on the car's bannister reads 2:51. His eyes return to the snarl of traffic outside: the congestion, the closed in feeling, the smog.

DRIVER
Sir, I don't think we can make the sound check in time.

The driver glances back but the back seat empty.

INT. ROCKEFELLER PLAZA-DAY

Donning sunglasses, Jaison nervously glances around the packed elevator full of secretaries and polyester clad businessmen.

The doors open, the elevator clears out, and leaves Jaison alone for the ride to the top.

INT. HALLWAY

Jaison hesitantly steps onto the empty floor. The doors close behind him like iron gates. Only one door, with a 1001 over the top, the walls a blindly stale white.

A step forward, he hesitantly tries the door but locked.

A laugh, he steps back and leans against a wall. He takes the flask out of his pocket and takes another drink.

JAISON (V.O.)
I know what this is. It's Titan Records. They're still bitter about me signing with Columbus. They're playing a joke on me.

Silence returns as Jaison's watch clicks to 3:00 just as the door clicks open, too.

Startled, he cautiously steps forward and pushes the squeaky door open.

INT. OFFICE

Jaison peers around the door at a sweet OLD LADY that sits behind a desk.
OLD LADY
Good afternoon, Mister Frederick. Glad you could make it. Please come in.

Jaison reluctantly steps into the all white room as the door closes behind him.

OLD LADY
I'll just let them know you've arrived.

Before he knows it, the old lady has disappeared into an adjoining office. The door closes behind her.

Jaison's eyes wander the room.

After a few moments, Michael appears again with his gentle but powerful presence.

MICHAEL
Mister Frederick. Good to see you again. Please, come in.

INT. INNER OFFICE

The man leads the star into a huge room, a stark contrast to the last with hardwood floors and stately furnishings.

Several older gentlemen sit behind a long desk at the far wall, a small table with a guitar case to the side.

JAISON
What's this all about?

Michael hesitates and turns as the old men just study the star.

MICHAEL
Jaison, are you happy?

JAISON
What? What are you getting at?

MICHAEL
Are you happy with yourself?

Jaison glares at the stocky old man for a moment.

JAISON
I have everything anyone could hope for.
Michael nods and then turns to the table.

MICHAEL
Jaison Frederick, age 35. Began playing guitar at age 6, never stopped. Started a band called Refuge at age seventeen, first album at age twenty. They had two more albums after that, all million sellers until they broke up when Mister Frederick was 25. He has had five solo albums since then, all chart toppers. Many major magazines have called him the best guitarist in the world.

JAISON
Right.

Jaison takes a drink from his flask as Michael slowly turns around, a perplexed expression on his face.

MICHAEL
What is right, Mister Frederick?

The star waves his hand as he tries to gesture to his words.

JAISON
What you said there.

MICHAEL
So you agree that you are successful and that people have called you the best in the world?

An uneasy look comes over the guest.

JAISON
Yes.

MICHAEL
Do you think so?

JAISON
Do I think so what?

MICHAEL
Do you think you're the best in the world?

Jaison initially startled but turns angry.
JAISON
What the hell is this? Did you find out about the contracts? Those damn kids wouldn't have gone anywhere! At least I gave them a little hope!

Unwavering, Michael steps towards the guitar case as Jaison starts for the door.

MICHAEL
What did you tell Jenny?

He stops, his energy drained.

MICHAEL
"There are two things I love in this world -- you and my guitar. I'll do anything to keep you and I'll do anything to be the best."

Jaison closes his eyes, sighs and then slowly turns.

MICHAEL
Prove what you said. Be the best there is.

Michael holds up the acoustic guitar

EXT. CONCERT HALL-NIGHT

A medium-sized concert hall with a throng of people out front. The marquee announces ZACH GALLAN AND THE TITANS OF ROCK.

INT. CORRIDOR

Zach Gallan and his band stand at the side exit as a throng of fans surround the limousine.

EDDIE
Shit, man. We'll never get through that.

ZACH
Then let's run for it.

Zach leads the way and they make it to the car. The limo speeds away.

INT. WEST END CLUB-NIGHT

The band sits at the best table of the gritty but upper class club. Eddie and Vic stare at a particularly leggy BLONDE at
the bar.

ZACH
Excuse me, gentlemen.

As he stands, Eddie grabs him and adjusts his lapel.

EDDIE
You have to look good when she throws her drink in your face.

ZACH
You bloodhounds can try to catch her. I'm goin' to get some air.

EXT. CLUB

Zach pushes out the door, walks to a corner bus stop, and lights a cigarette.

His head against the bench, he relaxes as the thin but eloquent sound of a guitar drifts down the block. Transfixed, the kid gets up and follows the sound down the shadowy street.

EXT. STREET

As he turns the corner, he sees an older bearded man play a sweet solo on the stoop of a brownstone apartment. He slowly approaches as the man finishes and tosses a twenty dollar bill into the open case.

The man picks up the bill.

MAN
That's not why I'm out here.

ZACH
Keep it. I've got plenty more.

The man studies Zach then slowly pockets the money.

MAN
Thank you.

ZACH
You're very good. Are you playin' anywhere?

MAN
Right here.
Zach begins to pack up his guitar.

ZACH
You should play somewhere. I could help you.

MAN
I tried that. When I gave it up, I realized--how good I could be.

Zach startled by this statement.

FEMALE VOICE
Honey?

The kid looks up to JENNY in a first story window.

JENNY
Let's go to bed.

The man glances up.

MAN
I'll be right in.

The man stands, turns, stops, and glances back at the kid.

MAN
Never forget why you play. Never.

He turns and steps into the building. Zach watches him for a moment before he turns back to the club.

NEWSCAST (V.O.)
...and in other news, lawyers are trying to sort out the massive estate of musician Jaison Frederick who disappeared over two years ago...